

Volume 3: Sermons 401-600

800
Sermons

C. H. Spurgeon

THE SERMONS OF
CHARLES
SPURGEON

IN FOUR Volumes



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The Sermons of Charles Spurgeon

Vol. 3 401-600

by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

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Law And Grace

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. - Romans 5:20

There is no point upon which men make greater mistakes than upon the relation which exists between the law and the gospel. Some men put the law instead of the gospel: others put the gospel instead of the law; some modify the law and the gospel, and preach neither law nor gospel: and others entirely abrogate the law, by bringing in the gospel. Many there are who think that the law is the gospel, and who teach that men by good works of benevolence, honesty, righteousness, and sobriety, may be saved. Such men do err. On the other hand, many teach that the gospel is a law; that it has certain commands in it, by obedience to which, men are meritoriously saved; such men err from the truth, and understand it not.

A certain class maintain that the law and the gospel are mixed, and that partly by observance of the law, and partly by God's grace, men are saved. These men understand not the truth, and are false teachers. This morning I shall attempt - God helping me to show you what is the design of the law, and then what is the end of the gospel. The coming of the law is explained in regard to its objects: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound." Then comes the mission of the gospel: "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

I shall consider this text in two senses this morning. First, *as it respects the world at large and the entrance of the law into it*; and then afterwards, *as respecting the heart of the convinced sinner, and the entrance of the law into the conscience*.

I. First, we shall speak of the text as CONCERNING THE WORLD.

The object of God in sending the law into the world was "that the offence might abound." But then comes the gospel, for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." First, then, in reference to the entire world, *God sent the law into the world "that the offence might abound."* There was sin in the world long before God sent the law. God gave his law that the offence might seem to be an offence; ay, and that the offence might abound exceedingly more than it could have done without its coming. There was sin long before Sinai smoked; long ere the mountain trembled beneath the weight of Deity, and the dread trumpet sounded exceeding loud and long, there had been transgression. And where that law has never been heard, in heathen countries where that word has never gone forth, yet there is sin, - because, though men cannot sin against the law which they have never seen, yet they can all rebel against the light of nature, against the dictates of conscience, and against that traditional remembrance of right and wrong, which has followed mankind from the place where God created them. All men, in every land, have consciences, and therefore all men can sin. The ignorant Hottentot, who has never heard anything of a God, has just so much of the light of nature, that in the things that are outwardly good or bad he will discern the difference; and though he foolishly bows down to stocks and stones, he has a judgment which, if he used it, would teach him better. If he

chose to use his talents, he might know there is a God; for the Apostle, when speaking of men who have only the light of nature, plainly declares that "the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Romans 1:20. Without a divine revelation men can sin, and sin exceedingly - conscience, nature, tradition, and reason, being each of them, sufficient to condemn them for their violated commandments. The law makes no one a sinner; all men are such in Adam, and were so practically before its introduction. It entered that "the offence might *abound*." Now this seems a very terrible thought at first sight, and many ministers would have shirked this text altogether. But when I find a verse I do not understand, I usually think it is a text I *should* study; and I try to seek it out before my heavenly Father, and then when he has opened it to my soul, I reckon it my duty to communicate it to you, with the holy aid of the Spirit. "The law entered that the offence might abound." I will attempt to show you how the law makes offenses "abound."

1. First of all, the law tells us that *many things are sins which we should never have thought to be so if it had not been for the additional light*. Even with the light of nature, and the light of conscience, and the light of tradition, there are some things we should never have believed to be sins had we not been taught so by the law. Now, what man by light of conscience, would keep holy the Sabbath-day - suppose he never read the Bible, and never heard of it? If he lived in a South Sea island he might know there was a God, but not by any possibility could he find out that the seventh part of his time should be set apart to that God. We find that there are certain festivals and feasts among heathens, and that they set apart days in honour of their fancied gods; but I should like to know where they could discover that there was a certain *seventh* day to be set apart to God, to spend the time in his house of prayer. How could they, unless indeed, tradition may have handed down the fact of the original consecration of that day by the creating Jehovah. I cannot conceive it possible that either conscience or reason could have taught them such a command as this: Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son,

nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. Moreover, if in the term "law" we comprehend the ceremonial ritual, we can plainly see that many things, in appearance quite indifferent, were by it constituted sins. The eating of animals that do not chew the cud and divide the hoof, the wearing of linsey-woolsey, the sitting on a bed polluted by a leper - with a thousand other things, all seem to have no sin in them, but the law made them into sins, and so made the offence to abound.

2. It is a fact which you can verify by looking at the working of your own mind, *that law has a tendency to make men rebel*. Human nature rises against restraint. I had not known lust except the law had said, "Thou shalt not covet." The depravity of man is excited to rebellion by the promulgation of laws. So evil are we, that we conceive at once the desire to commit an act, simply because it is forbidden. Children, we all know, as a rule, will always desire what they may not have, and if forbidden to touch anything, will either do so when an opportunity serves, or will long to be able to do so. The same tendency any student of human nature can discern in man-kind at large. Is then the law chargeable with my sin? God forbid. "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me." Romans 7:7,8,11. The law is holy, and just, and good, *it is not faulty*, but *sin* uses it as an occasion of offence, and rebels when it ought to obey. Augustine placed the truth in a clear light when he wrote - "The law is not in fault, but our evil and wicked nature; even as a heap of lime is still and quiet until water be poured thereon, but then it begins to smoke and burn, not from the fault of the water, but from the nature and kind of the lime which will not endure it." Thus, you see, this is a second sense in which the entrance of the law causes the offence to abound.

3. Yet again, the law *increases the sinfulness of sin, by removing all excuse of ignorance*. Until men know the law, their crimes have at least a palliation of partial ignorance, but when the code of rules is spread before them, their offenses become greater, since they are committed against light and knowledge. He who sins against conscience shall be condemned; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy

who despises the voice of Jehovah, defies his sacred sovereignty, and willfully tramples on his commands. The more light the greater guilt - the law affords that light, and so causes us to become double offenders. Oh, ye nations of the earth who have heard the law of Jehovah, your sin is increased, and your offence abounds.

Methinks I hear some say, "How unwise it must have been that a law should come to make these things abound!" Does it not, at first sight, seem very harsh that the great author of the world should give us a law which will not justify, but indirectly cause our condemnation to be greater? Does it not seem to be a thing which a gracious God would not reveal, but would have withheld? But, know ye, "that the foolishness of God is wiser than men;" and understand ye that there is a gracious purpose even here. Natural men dream that by a strict performance of duty they shall obtain favor, but God saith thus: "I will show them their folly by proclaiming a law so high that they will despair of attaining unto it. They think that works will be sufficient to save them. They think falsely, and they will be ruined by their mistake. I will send them a law so terrible in its censures, so unflinching in its demands, that they cannot possibly obey it, and they will be driven even to desperation, and come and accept my mercy through Jesus Christ. They cannot be saved by the law - not by the law of nature. As it is, they have sinned against it. But yet, I know, they have foolishly hoped to keep my law, and think by works of the law they may be justified; whereas I have said, 'By the works of the law no flesh living can be justified;' therefore I will write a law - it shall be a black and heavy one - a burden which they cannot carry; and then they will turn away and say, 'I will not attempt to perform it; I will ask my Saviour to bear it for me.'" Imagine a case - Some young men are about to go to sea, where I foresee they will meet with a storm. Suppose you put me in a position where I may cause a tempest before the other shall arise. Well, by the time the natural storm comes on, those young men will be a long way out at sea, and they will be wrecked and ruined before they can put back and be safe. But what do I? Why, when they are just at the mouth of the river, I send a storm, putting them in the greatest danger, and precipitating them ashore, so that they are saved. Thus did God. He sends a law which shows them the roughness of the journey. The tempest of law compels them to put back to the harbour of free grace, and saves

them from a most terrible destruction, which would otherwise overwhelm them. The law never came to save men. It never was its intention at all. It came on purpose to make the evidence complete that salvation by works is impossible, and thus to drive the elect of God to rely wholly on the finished salvation of the gospel. Now, just to illustrate my meaning, let me describe it by one more figure. You all remember those high mountains called the Alps. Well, it would be a great mercy if those Alps were a little higher. It would have been, at all events, for Napoleon's soldiers when he led his large army over, and caused thousands to perish in crossing. Now, if it could have been possible to pile another Alps on their summit, and make them higher than the Himalaya, would not the increased difficulty have deterred him from his enterprise, and so have averted the destruction of thousands? Napoleon demanded, "Is it possible?" "Barely possible," was the reply. "*Avancez*," cried Buonaparte; and the host were soon toiling up the mountain side. Now, by the light of nature, *it does seem possible* for us to go over this mountain of works, but all men would have perished in the attempt, the path even of this lower hill being too narrow for mortal footsteps. God, therefore, puts another law, like a mountain, on the top; and now the sinner says, "I cannot climb over that. It is a task beyond Herculean might. I see before me a narrow pass, called the pass of Jesus Christ's mercy - the pass of the cross - methinks I will wend my way thither." But if it had not been that the mountain was too high for him, he would have gone climbing up, and climbing up, until he sank into some chasm, or was lost under some mighty avalanche, or in some other way perished eternally. But the law comes that the whole world might see the impossibility of being saved by works.

Let us turn to the more pleasing part of the subject - the *superabundance of grace*. Having bewailed the devastations and injurious deeds of sin, it delights our hearts to be assured that "grace did much more abound."

1. *Grace excels sin in the numbers it brings beneath its sway*. It is my firm belief that the number of the saved will be far greater than the damned. It is written that in all things Jesus shall have pre-eminence; and why is this to be left out? Can we think that Satan will have more followers than Jesus? Oh, no; for while *it is* written that the redeemed are

a number that no man can number; it is *not* recorded that the lost are beyond numeration. True, we know that the visible elect are ever a *remnant* but then there are others to be added. Think for a moment of the army of infant souls who are now in heaven. These all fell in Adam, but being all elect, were all redeemed and regenerated, and were privileged to fly from the mother's breasts to glory. Happy lot, which we who are spared might well envy. Nor let it be forgotten that the multitudes of converts in the millennial age will very much turn the scale. For then the world will be exceedingly populous, and a thousand years of a reign of grace might easily suffice to overcome the majority accumulated by sin during six thousand years of its tyranny. In that peaceful period, when all shall know him, from the least even unto the greatest, the sons of God shall fly as doves to their windows, and the Redeemer's family shall be exceedingly multiplied.

What though those who have been deluded by superstition, and destroyed by lust, must be counted by thousands - grace has still the pre-eminence. Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten-thousands. We admit that the number of the damned will be immense, but we do think that the two states of infancy and millennial glory will furnish so great a reserve of saints that Christ shall win the day. The procession of the lost may be long; there must be thousands, and thousands, and thousands, of those who have perished, but the greater procession of the King of kings shall be composed of larger hosts than even these. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more *abound*." The trophies of free grace will be far more than the trophies of sin.

Yet again. Grace doth "*much* more abound," - because a time shall come when the world shall be all full of grace; whereas there has never been a period in this world's history when it was wholly given to sin. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, there was still a display of grace in the world; for in the garden at the close of the day, God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shalt bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;" and since that first transgression, there has never been a moment when grace has entirely lost its footing in the earth. God has always had his servants on earth; at times they have been hidden by fifties in the caves, but they have

never been utterly cut off. Grace might be low; the stream might be very shallow, but it has never been wholly dry. There has always been a salt of grace in the world to counteract the power of sin. The clouds have never been so universal as to hide the day. But the time is fast approaching when grace shall extend all over our poor world and be universal. According to the Bible testimony, we look for the great day when the dark cloud which has swathed this world in darkness shall be removed, and it shall shine once more like all its sister planets. It hath been for many a long year clouded and veiled by sin and corruption; but the last fire shall consume its rags and sackcloth. After that fire, the world in righteousness shall shine. The huge molten mass now slumbering in the bowels of our common mother shall furnish the means of purity. Palaces, and crowns, and peoples, and empires, are all to be melted down; and after like a plague-house, the present creation has been burned up entirely, God will breathe upon the heated mass, and it will cool down again. He will smile on it as he did when he first created it, and the rivers will run down the new-made hills, the oceans will float in new-made channels; and the world will be again the abode of the righteous for ever and for ever. This fallen world will be restored to its orbit; that gem which was lost from the sceptre of God shall be set again, yea, he shall wear it as a signet about his arm. Christ died for the world; and what he died for, he will have. He died for the whole world, and the whole world he will have, when he has purified it and cleansed it and fitted it for himself. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" for grace shall be universal, whereas sin never was.

One thought more. Hath the world lost its possessions by sin? It has gained far more by grace. True, we have been expelled a garden of delights, where peace, love, and happiness found a glorious habitation. True, Eden is not ours, with its luscious fruits, its blissful bowers, and its rivers flowing o'er sands of gold, but we have through Jesus a fairer habitation. He hath made us sit together in heavenly places - the plains of heaven exceed the fields of paradise in the ever-new delights which they afford, while the tree of life, and the river from the throne render the inhabitants of the celestial regions more than emparadised. Did we lose natural life and subject ourselves to painful death by sin? Has not grace revealed an immortality for the sake of which we are too glad to die? Life

lost in Adam is more restored in Christ. We admit that our original robes were rent in sunder by Adam, but Jesus has clothed us with a divine righteousness, far exceeding in value even the spotless robes of created innocence. We mourn our low and miserable condition, through sin, but we will rejoice at the thought, that we are now more secure than before we fell, and are brought into closer alliance with Jesus than our standing could have procured us. O Jesus! thou hast won us an inheritance more wide than our sin has ever lavished. Thy grace has overtopped our sins. "Grace doth much more abound."

II. Now we come to the second part of the subject, and that is THE ENTRANCE OF THE LAW INTO THE HEART.

We have to deal carefully when we come to deal with internal things; it is not easy to talk about this little thing, the heart. When we begin to meddle with the law of their soul, many become indignant, but we do not fear their wrath. We are going to attack the hidden man this morning. The law entered their hearts that sin might abound, "but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

1. The law causes the offence to abound by *discovering sin to the soul*. When once God the Holy Ghost applies the law to the conscience, secret sins are dragged to light, little sins are magnified to their true size, and things apparently harmless become exceedingly sinful. Before that dread searcher of the hearts and trier of the reins makes his entrance into the soul, it appears righteous, just, lovely, and holy; but when he reveals the hidden evils, the scene is changed. Offenses which were once styled peccadilloes, trifles, freaks of youth, follies, indulgences, little slip, &c., then appear in their true colour, as breaches of the law of God, deserving condign punishment.

John Bunyan shall explain my meaning by an extract from his famous allegory: "Then the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a very large parlour that was full of dust, because never swept; in which after he had reviewed it a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep. Now, when he began to sweep, the dust became so abundantly to fly about, that Christian had almost therewith been

choked. Then said Interpreter to a damsel that stood by, 'Bring hither water, and sprinkle the room'; the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure. Then said Christian, 'What means this?' The Interpreter answered, 'This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel. The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep, at first, is the law; but she that brought the water and did sprinkle it, is the gospel. Now, whereas thou sawest that as soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about, that the room could not by him be cleansed, but that thou wast almost choked therewith; this is to show thee, that the law, instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, doth revive, Romans 7:9, put strength into, 1 Corinthians 15:56, and increase it in the soul, Romans 5:20, even as it doth discover and forbid it, for that doth not give power to subdue. Again, as thou sawest the damsel sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure; this is to show thee, that when the gospel comes in the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then, I say, even as thou sawest the damsel lay the dust by sprinkling the floor with water, so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through the faith of it, and consequently fit for the King of glory to inhabit.'"

The heart is like a dark cellar, full of lizards, cockroaches, beetles, and all kinds of reptiles and insects, which in the dark we see not, but the law takes down the shutters and lets in the light, and so we see the evil. Thus sin becoming apparent by the law, it is written the law makes the offence to abound.

2. Once again. *The law, when it comes into the heart, shows us how very black we are.* Some of us know that we are sinners. It is very easy to say it. The word "sinner" hath only two syllables in it, and many there be who frequently have it on their lips, but who do not understand it. They see their sin, but it does not appear exceedingly sinful till the law comes. We think there is something sinful in it; but when the law comes, we detect its abomination. Has God's holy light ever shone into your souls? Have you had the fountains of your great depravity and evil broken up, and been wakened up sufficiently to say, "O God! I have sinned?" Now, if you have your hearts broken up by the law, you will find the heart is more

deceitful than the devil. I can say this of myself, I am very much afraid of mine, it is so bad. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things." The devil is one of the things; therefore, it is worse than the devil - "and desperately wicked." How many do we find who are saying, "Well, I trust I have a very good heart at the bottom. There may be a little amiss at the top, but I am very good-hearted at bottom." If you saw some fruit on the top of a basket that was not quite good, would you buy the basket because they told you, "Ay, but they are good at the bottom?" "No, no," you would say, "they are sure to be best at the top, and if they are bad there, they are sure to be rotten below." There are many people who live queer lives, and some friends say, "He is good-hearted at bottom; he would get drunk sometimes, but he is very good-hearted at the bottom." Ah! never believe it. Men are seldom estimated better than they seem to be. If the outside of the cup or platter is clean, the inside may be dirty, but if the outside is impure, you may always be sure the inside is no better. Most of us put our goods in the window - keep all our good things in the front, and bad things behind. Let you and I, instead of making excuses about ourselves, about the badness of our hearts, if the law has entered into your soul, bow down and say, "O the sin - O the uncleanness - the blackness - the awful nature of our crimes!" "The law entered that the offence may abound."

3. The law reveals the exceeding abundance of sin, *by discovering to us the depravity of our nature*. We are all prepared to charge the serpent with our guilt, or to insinuate that we go astray, from the force of ill example - but the Holy Spirit dissipates these dreams by bringing the law into the heart. Then the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the chambers of the imagery are opened, the innate evil of the very essence of fallen man is discovered.

The law cuts into the core of the evil, it reveals the seat of the malady, and informs us that the leprosy lies deep within. Oh! how the man abhors himself when he sees all his rivers of water turned into blood, and loathsomeness creeping over all his being. He learns that sin is no flesh wound, but a stab in the heart; he discovers that the poison has impregnated his veins, lies in his very marrow, and hath its fountain in his inmost heart. Now he loathes himself, and would fain be healed. Actual sin seems not half so terrible as in-bred sin, and at the thought of

what he is, he turns pale, and gives up salvation by works as an impossibility.

4. Having thus removed the mask and shown the desperate case of the sinner, the relentless law causes the offence to abound yet more by *bringing home the sentence of condemnation*. It mounts the judgment seat, puts on the black cap, and pronounces the sentence of death. With a harsh un pitying voice it solemnly thunders forth the words, "Condemned already." It bids the soul prepare its defence, knowing well that all apology has been taken away by its former work of conviction. The sinner is therefore speechless, and the law, with frowning looks, lifts up the veil of hell, and gives the man a glimpse of torment. The soul feels that the sentence is just, that the punishment is not too severe, and that mercy it has no right to expect; it stands quivering, trembling, fainting, and intoxicated with dismay, until it falls prostrate in utter despair. The sinner puts the rope around his own neck, arrays himself in the attire of the condemned, and throws himself at the foot of the King's throne, with but one thought, "I am vile"; and with one prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

5. Nor does the law cease its operations even here, for it renders the offence yet more apparent *by discovering the powerlessness occasioned by sin*. It not only condemns but it actually kills. He who once thought that he could repent and believe at pleasure, finds in himself no power to do either the one or the other.

When Moses smites the sinner he bruises and mangles him with the first blow, but at a second or a third, he falls down as one dead. I myself have been in such a condition that if heaven could have been purchased by a single prayer I should have been damned, for I could no more pray than I could fly. Moreover, when we are in the grave which the law has digged for us, we feel as if we did not feel, and we grieve because we cannot grieve. The dread mountain lies upon us which renders it impossible to stir hand or foot, and when we would cry for help our voice refuses to obey us. In vain the minister cries, "Repent," Our hard heart will not melt; in vain he exhorts us to believe; that faith of which he speaks seems to be as much beyond our capacity as the creation of the universe. Ruin is

now become ruin indeed. The thundering sentence is in our ears, "CONDEMNED ALREADY," another cry follows it, "DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS," and a third, more awful and terrible, mingles its horrible warning, "*The wrath to come - the wrath to come.*" In the opinion of the sinner he is now cast out as a corrupt carcass, he expects each moment to be tormented by the worm that never dies and to lift up his eyes in hell. Now is mercy's moment, and we turn the subject from condemning law to abounding grace.

Listen, O heavy laden, condemned sinner, while in my Master's name, I publish superabounding grace. *Grace excels sin in its measure and efficacy.* Though your sins are many, mercy hath many pardons. Though they excel the stars, the sands, the drops of dew in their number, one act of remission can cancel all. Your iniquity, though a mountain, shall be cast into the midst of the sea. Your blackness shall be washed out by the cleansing flood of your Redeemer's gore. Mark! I said YOUR sins, and I meant to say so, for if you are now a law-condemned sinner, I know you to be a vessel of mercy by that very sign. Oh, hellish sinners, abandoned profligates, off-casts of society, outcasts from the company of sinners themselves, if ye acknowledge your iniquity, here is mercy, broad, ample, free, immense, INFINITE. Remember this O sinner, -

"If all the sins that men have done,
In will, in word, in thoughts, in deed,
Since words were made, or time began,
Were laid on one poor sinner's head.
The stream of Jesus' precious blood
Applied, removes the dreadful load."

Yet again, grace excelleth sin in another thing. *Sin shows us its parent, and tells us our heart is the father of it, but grace surpasseth sin there, and shows the Author of grace - the King of kings.* The law traces sin up to our heart; grace traces its own origin to God, and
"In his sacred breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me."
O Christian, what a blessed thing grace is, for its source is in the everlasting mountains. Sinner, if you are the vilest in the world, if God

forgives you this morning, you will be able to trace your pedigree to him, for you will become one of the sons of God, and have him always for your Father. Methinks I see you a wretched criminal at the bar, and I hear mercy cry, "Discharge him!" He is pallid, halt, sick, maimed - heal him. He is of a vile race - lo, I will adopt him into my family. Sinner! God taketh thee for his son. What, though thou art poor, God says, "I will take thee to be mine for ever. Thou shalt be my heir. There is thy fair brother. In ties of blood he is one with thee - Jesus is thy actual brother!" Yet how came this change? Oh! is not that an act of mercy? "Grace did much more abound."

"Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family."

Grace outdoes sin, for it lifts us higher than the place from which we fell.

And again, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; *because the sentence of the law may be reversed, but that of grace never can.* I stand here and feel condemned, yet, perhaps, I have a hope that I may be acquitted. There is a dying hope of acquittal still left. But when we are justified, there is no fear of condemnation. I cannot be condemned if I am once justified; *fully* absolved I am by grace. I defy Satan to lay hands on me, if I am a justified man. The state of justification is an unvariable one, and is indissolubly united to glory. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Oh! poor condemned sinner, doth not this charm thee, and make thee in love with free grace? And all this is YOURS. Your crimes, if once blotted out, shall never be laid to your charge again. The justification of the gospel is no Arminian sham, which may be reversed if

you should in future turn aside. No; the debt once paid, cannot be demanded twice - the punishment, once endured, cannot again be inflicted. Saved, saved, saved, entirely saved by divine grace, you may walk without fear the wide world over.

And yet, once more. Just as sin makes us sick, and grievous, and sad, so does grace make us *far more joyful and free*. Sin causeth one to go about with an aching heart, till he seems as if the world would swallow him, and mountains hang above ready to drop upon him. This is the effect of the law. The law makes us sad; the law makes us miserable. But, poor sinner, grace removeth the evil effects of sin upon your spirit, if thou dost believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt go out of this place with a sparkling eye and a light heart. Ah! well do I remember the morning when I stepped into a little place of worship, as miserable almost as hell could make me - being ruined and lost. I had often been at chapels where they spoke of the law, but I heard not the gospel. I sat down the pew a chained and imprisoned sinner; the Word of God came, and I went out free. Though I went in miserable as hell, I went out elated and joyful. I sat there black; I went away whiter than driven snow. God had said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow." Why not this be thy lot, my brother, if thou feelest thyself a sinner now? It is all he asks of thee, to feel thy need of him, this thou hast, and now the blood of Jesus lies before thee. "The law has entered that sin might abound." Thou art forgiven, only believe it; elect, only believe it; 'tis the truth that thou are saved.

And now, lastly, poor sinner, has sin made thee unfit for heaven? Grace shall render thee a fit companion for seraphs and the just made perfect. Thou who art to-day lost and destroyed by sin, shalt one day find thyself with a crown upon thy head, and a golden harp in thine hand, exalted to the throne of the Most High. Think, O drunkard, if thou repentest, there is a crown laid up for thee in heaven. Ye guiltiest, most lost and depraved, are ye condemned in your conscience by the law? Then I invite you, in my Master's name, to accept pardon through his blood. He suffered in your stead, he has atoned for your guilt and you are acquitted. Thou art an object of his eternal affection, the law is but a schoolmaster, to bring thee to Christ. Cast thyself on him. Fall into the arms of saving grace. No

works are required, no fitness, no righteousness, no doings. Ye are complete in him who said, "It is finished."

"Ye debtors whom he gives to know
That you ten thousand talents owe,
When humble at his feet you fall,
Your gracious God forgives them all.

"Slaves, that have borne the heavy chain
Of sin, and hell's tyrannic reign,
To liberty assert your claim,
And urge the great Redeemer's name.

"The rich inheritance of heaven,
Your joy, your boast, is freely giv'n;
Fair Salem your arrival waits,
With golden streets, and pearly gates.

"Her blest inhabitants no more
Bondage and poverty implore!
No debt, but love immensely great;
Their joy still rises with the debt."

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Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Lead us not into temptation. - Matthew 6:13

Looking over a book of addresses to young people the other day, I met with the outline of a discourse which struck me as being a perfect gem. I will give it to you. The text is the Lord's prayer, and the exposition is divided into most instructive heads. "Our Father which art in heaven:" a child away from home. "Hallowed be thy name:" a worshipper. "Thy

kingdom come:" a subject. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven:" a servant. "Give us this day our daily bread:" a beggar. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors:" a sinner. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:" a sinner in danger of being a greater sinner still. The titles are in every case most appropriate, and truthfully condense the petition. Now if you will remember the outline you will notice that the prayer is like a ladder. The petitions begin at the top and go downward. "Our Father which art in heaven:" a child, a child of the heavenly Father. Now to be a child of God is the highest possible position of man. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." This is what Christ is-the Son of God, and "Our Father" is but a plural form of the very term which he uses in addressing God, for Jesus says, "Father." It is a very high, gracious, exalted position, which by faith we dare to occupy when we intelligently say, "Our Father which art in heaven." It is a step down to the next- "Hallowed be thy name." Here we have a worshipper adoring with lowly reverence the thrice holy God. A worshipper's place is a high one, but it attains not to the excellence of the child's position. Angels come as high as being worshippers, their incessant song hallows the name: of God; but they cannot say, "Our Father," "for unto which of the angels. hath he said, `thou art my son'?" They must be content to be within one step of the highest, but they cannot reach the summit, for neither by adoption, regeneration, nor by union to Christ, are they the children of God. "Abba, Father," is for men, not for angels, and therefore the worshipping sentence of the prayer is one step lower than the opening "Our Father." The next petition is for us as subjects, "Thy kingdom come." The subject comes lower than the worshipper, for worship is an elevated engagement wherein man exercises a priesthood and is seen in lowly but honorable estate. The child worships and then confesses the Great Father's royalty. Descending still, the next position is that of a servant, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That is another step lower than a subject, for her majesty the Queen has many subjects who are not her servants. They are not bound to wait upon her in the palace with personal service though they own her as their honored sovereign. Dukes and such like are her subjects, but not her servants. The servant is a grade below the subject. Every one will own that the next petition is lower by far, for it is that of a beggar "Give us this day our daily

bread"-a beggar for bread-an every-day beggar-one who has continually to appeal to charity, even for his livelihood. This is a fit place for us to occupy who owe our all to the charity of heaven. But there is a step lower than the beggar's, and that is the sinner's place. "Forgive" is lowlier than "give." "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Here too we may each one take up his position, for no word better befits our unworthy lips than the prayer "Forgive." As long as we live and sin we ought to weep and cry, "Have mercy on us, O Lord." And now, at the very bottom of the ladder, stands a sinner, afraid of yet greater sin, in extreme danger and in conscious weakness, sensible of past sin and fearful of it for the future: hear him as with trembling lip he cries in the words of our text, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

And yet, dear friends, though I have thus described the prayer as a going downward, downward is in matters of grace much the same as upward, as we could readily show if time permitted. At any rate the down-going process of the prayer might equally well illustrate the advance of the divine life in the soul. The last clause of the prayer contains in it a deeper inward experience than the earlier part of it. Every believer is a child of God, a worshipper, a subject, a servant, a beggar, and a sinner; but it is not every man who perceives the allurements which beset him, or his own tendency to yield to them. It is not every child of God, even when advanced in years, who knows to the full the meaning of being led into temptation; for some follow an easy path and are seldom buffeted; and others are such tender babes that they hardly know their own corruptions. Fully to understand our text a man should have had sharp brushes in the wars and have done battle against the enemy within his soul for many a day. He who has escaped as by the skin of his teeth, offers this prayer with an emphasis of meaning. The man who has felt the fowler's net about him-the man who has been seized by the adversary and almost destroyed-he prays with awful eagerness, "Lead us not into temptation."

I purpose at this time, in trying to commend this prayer to you, to notice, first of all, the spirit which suggests such a petition; secondly, the trials which such a prayer deprecates; and then, thirdly, the lessons which it teaches.

I. WHAT SUGGESTS SUCH A PRAYER AS THIS?- "Lead us not into temptation."

First, from the position of the clause, I gather, by a slight reasoning process, that it is suggested by watchfulness. This petition follows after the sentence, "Forgive us our debts." I will suppose the petition to have been answered, and the man's sin is forgiven. What then? If you will look back upon your own lives you will soon perceive what generally happens to a pardoned man, for "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." One believing man's inner experience is like another's, and your own feelings were the same as mine. Very speedily after the penitent has received forgiveness and has the sense of it in his soul he is tempted of the devil, for Satan cannot bear to lose his subjects, and when he sees them cross the border line and escape out of his hand, he gathers up all his forces and exercises all his cunning if, perchance, he may slay them at once. To meet this special assault the Lord makes the heart watchful. Perceiving the ferocity and subtlety of Satan's temptations, the new-born believer, rejoicing in the perfect pardon he has received, cries to God, "Lead us not into temptation." It is the fear of losing the joy of pardoned sin which thus cries out to the good Lord- "Our Father, do not suffer us to lose the salvation we have so lately obtained. Do not even subject it to jeopardy. Do not permit Satan to break our newfound peace. We have but newly escaped, do not plunge us in the deeps again. Swimming to shore, some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, we have come safe to land; constrain us not to tempt the boisterous main again. Cast us not upon the rough billows any more. O God we see the enemy advancing: he is ready if he can to sift us as wheat. Do not suffer us to be put into his sieve, but deliver us, we pray thee." It is a prayer of watchfulness; and mark you, though we have spoken of watchfulness as necessary at the commencement of the Christian life, it is equally needful even to the close. There is no hour in which a believer can afford to slumber. Watch, I pray you, when you are alone, for temptation, like a creeping assassin, has its dagger for solitary hearts. You must bolt and bar the door well if you would keep out the devil. Watch yourself in public, for temptations in troops cause their arrows to fly by day. The choicest companions you can select will not be without some evil

influence upon you unless you be on your guard. Remember our blessed Master's words, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch," and as you watch this prayer will often rise from your inmost heart:

"From dark temptation's power,
From Satan's wiles defend;
Deliver in the evil hour,
And guide me to the end."
It is the prayer of watchfulness.

Next, it seems to me to be the natural prayer of holy horror at the very thought of falling again into sin. I remember the story of a pitman who, having been a gross blasphemer, a man of licentious life and everything that was bad, when converted by divine grace, was terribly afraid lest his old companions should lead him back again. He knew himself to be a man of strong passions, and very apt to be led astray by others, and therefore in his dread of being drawn into his old sins, he prayed most vehemently that sooner than ever he should go back to his old ways he might die. He did die there and then. Perhaps it was the best answer to the best prayer that the poor man could have offered. I am sure any man who has once lived an evil life, if the wondrous grace of God has snatched him from it, will agree that the pitman's prayer was not one whit too enthusiastic. It were better for us to die at once than to live on and return to our first estate and bring dishonor upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. The prayer before us springs from the shrinking of the soul at the first approach of the tempter. The footfall of the fiend falls on the startled ear of the timid penitent; he quivers like an aspen leaf, and cries out, What, is he coming again? And is it possible that I may fall again? And may I once more defile these garments with that loathsome murderous sin which slew my Lord? "O my God," the prayer seems to say, "keep me from so dire an evil. Lead me, I pray thee, where thou wilt-ay, even through death's dark valley, but do not lead me into temptation, lest I fall and dishonor thee." The burnt child dreads the fire. He who has once been caught in the steel trap carries the scars in his flesh and is horribly afraid of being again held by its cruel teeth.

The third feeling, also, is very apparent; namely, diffidence of personal

strength. The man who feels himself strong enough for anything is daring, and even invites the battle which will prove his power. "Oh," says he, "I care not; they may gather about me who will; I am quite able to take care of myself and hold my own against any number." He is ready to be led into conflict, he courts the fray. Not so the man who has been taught of God and has learned his own weakness; he does not want to be tried, but seeks quiet places where he may be out of harm's way. Put him into the battle and he will play the man, let him be tempted and you will see how steadfast he will be; but he does not ask for conflict, as, methinks, few soldiers will who know what fighting means. Surely it is only those who have never smelt gunpowder, or seen the corpses heaped in bloody masses on each other, that are so eager for the shot and shell, but your veteran would rather enjoy the piping times of peace. No experienced believer ever desires spiritual conflict, though perchance some raw recruits may challenge it. In the Christian a recollection of his previous weakness-his resolutions broken, his promises unkept-makes him pray that he may not in future be severely tested. He does not dare to trust himself again. He wants no fight with Satan, or with the world; but he asks that if possible he may be kept from those severe encounters, and his prayer is, "Lead us not into temptation." The wise believer shows a sacred diffidence-nay, I think I may say an utter despair of himself: and even though he knows that the power of God is strong enough for anything, yet is the sense of his weakness so heavy upon him that he begs to be spared too much trial. Hence the cry, "Lead us not into temptation."

Nor have I quite exhausted, I think, the phases of the spirit which suggests this prayer, for it seems to me to arise somewhat out of charity. "Charity?" say you. "How so?" Well, the connection is always to be observed, and by reading the preceding sentence in connection with it we get the words, "as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation." We should not be too severe with those persons who have done wrong, and have offended us, but pray, "Lord, lead us not into temptation." Your maid-servant, poor girl, did purloin a trifle from your property. I make no excuse for her theft, but I beseech you pause awhile before you quite ruin her character for life. Ask yourself, "Might not I have done the same had I been in her position? Lord, lead me not into temptation." It is true it was very wrong in that young man to deal so

dishonestly with your goods. Still, you know, he was under great pressure from a strong hand, and only yielded from compulsion. Do not be too severe. Do not say, "I will push the matter through; I will have the law of him." No, but wait awhile; let pity speak, let mercy's silver voice plead with you. Remember yourself, lest you also be tempted, and pray, "Lead us not into temptation." I am afraid that badly as some behave under temptation, others of us might have done worse if we had been there. I like, if I can, to form a kind judgment of the erring; and it helps me to do so when I imagine myself to have been subject to their trials, and to have looked at things from their point of view, and to have been in their circumstances, and to have nothing of the grace of God to help me: should I not have fallen as badly as they have done, or even gone beyond them in evil? May not the day come to you who show no mercy in which you may have to ask mercy for yourselves? Did I say-may it not come to you? Nay, it must come to you. When leaving all below you will have to take a retrospective view of your life, and see much to mourn over, to what can you appeal then but to the mercy of God? And what if he should answer you, "An appeal was made to your mercy, and you had none. As you rendered unto others so will I render unto you." What answer would you have if God were so to treat you? Would not such an answer be just and right? Should not every man be paid in his own coin when he stands at the judgment seat? So I think that this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," should often spring up from the heart through a charitable feeling towards others who have erred, who are of the same flesh and blood as ourselves. Now, whenever you see the drunkard reel through the streets do not glory over him, but say, "Lead us not into temptation." When you take down the papers and read that men of position have betrayed their trust for gold, condemn their conduct if you will, but do not exult in your own steadfastness, rather cry in all humility, "Lead us not into temptation." When the poor girl seduced from the paths of virtue comes across your way, look not on her with the scorn that would give her up to destruction, but say, "Lead us not into temptation." It would teach us milder and gentler ways with sinful men and women if this prayer were as often in our hearts as it is upon our lips.

Once more, do you not think that this prayer breathes the spirit of confidence-confidence in God? "Why," says one, "I do not see that." To

me-I know not whether I shall be able to convey my thought-to me there is a degree of very tender familiarity and sacred boldness in this expression. Of course, God will lead me now that I am his child. Moreover, now that he has forgiven me, I know that he will not lead me where I can come to any harm. This my faith ought to know and believe, and yet for several reasons there rises to my mind a fear lest his providence should conduct me where I shall be tempted. Is that fear right or wrong? It burdens my mind; may I go with it to my God? May I express in prayer this misgiving of soul? May I pour out this anxiety before the great, wise, loving God? Will it not be impertinent? No, it will not, for Jesus puts the words into my mouth and says, "After this manner pray ye." You are afraid that he may lead you into temptation; but he will not do so; or should he see fit to try you, he will also afford you strength to hold out to the end. He will be pleased in his infinite mercy to preserve you. Where he leads it will be perfectly safe for you to follow, for his presence will make the deadliest air to become healthful. But since instinctively you have a dread lest you should be conducted where the fight will be too stern and the way too rough, tell it to your heavenly Father without reserve. You know at home if a child has any little complaint against his father it is always better for him to tell it. If he thinks that his father overlooked him the other day, or half thinks that the task his father has given him is too severe, or fancies that his father is expecting too much of him-if he does not say anything at all about it, he may sulk and lose much of the loving tenderness which a child's heart should always feel. But when the child frankly says, "Father, I do not want you to think that I do not love you or that I cannot trust you, but I have a troublous thought in my mind, and I will tell it right straight out"; that is the wisest course to follow, and shows a filial trust. That is the way to keep up love and confidence. So if thou hast a suspicion in thy soul that mayhap thy Father might put thee into temptation too strong for thee, tell it to him. Tell it to him, though it seems taking a great liberty. Though the fear may be the fruit of unbelief yet make it known to thy Lord, and do not harbour it sullenly. Remember the Lord's prayer was not made for him, but for you, and therefore it reads matters from your standpoint and not from his. Our Lord's prayer is not for our Lord; it is for us, his children; and children say to their fathers ever so many things which it is quite proper for them to say, but which are not wise and accurate after

the measure of their parents' knowledge. Their father knows what their hearts mean, and yet there may be a good deal in what they say which is foolish or mistaken. So I look upon this prayer as exhibiting that blessed childlike confidence which tells out to its father a fear which grieves it, whether that fear be altogether correct or no. Beloved, we need not here debate the question whether God does lead into temptation or not, or whether we can fall from grace or not; it is enough that we have a fear, and are permitted to tell it to our Father in heaven. Whenever you have a fear of any kind, hurry off with it to him who loves his little ones, and like a father pities them and soothes even their needless alarms.

Thus have I shown that the spirit which suggests this prayer is that of watchfulness, of holy horror at the very thought of sin, of diffidence of our own strength, of charity towards others, and of confidence in God.

II. Secondly, let us ask, WHAT ARE THESE TEMPTATIONS WHICH THE PRAYER DEPRECATES? or say rather, what are these trials which are so much feared?

I do not think the prayer is intended at all to ask God to spare us from being afflicted for our good, or to save us from being made to suffer as a chastisement. Of course we should be glad to escape those things; but the prayer aims at another form of trial, and may be paraphrased thus- "Save me, O Lord, from such trials and sufferings as may lead me into sin. Spare me from too great trials, lest I fall by their overcoming my patience, my faith, or my steadfastness."

Now, as briefly as I can, I will show you how men may be led into temptation by the hand of God. And the first is by the withdrawal of divine grace. Suppose for a moment-it is only a supposition-suppose the Lord were to leave us altogether, then should we perish speedily; but suppose-and this is not a barren supposition- that he were in some measure to take away his strength from us, should we not be in an evil case? Suppose he did not support our faith what unbelief we should exhibit. Suppose he refused to support us in the time of trial so that we no longer maintained our integrity, what would become of us? Ah, the most upright man would not be upright long, nor the most holy, holy any more.

Suppose, dear friend,-you who walk in the light of God's countenance and bear life's yoke so easily because he sustains you-suppose his presence were withdrawn from you, what must be your portion? We are all so like to Samson in this matter that I must bring him in as the illustration, though he has often been used for that purpose by others. So long as the locks of our head are unshorn we can do anything and everything: we can rend lions, carry gates of Gaza, and smite the armies of the alien. It is by the divine consecrating mark that we are strong in the power of his might; but if the Lord be once withdrawn and we attempt the work alone, then are we weak as the tiniest insect. When the Lord hath departed from thee, O Samson, what art thou more than another man? Then the cry, "the Philistines be upon thee, Samson," is the knell of all thy glory, Thou dost vainly shake those lusty limbs of thine. Now thou wilt have thine eyes put out and the Philistines will make sport of thee. In view of a like catastrophe we may well be in an agony of supplication. Pray then, "Lord, leave me not; and lead me not into temptation by taking thy Spirit from me."

"Keep us, Lord, oh keep us ever,
Vain our hope if left by thee
We are thine, oh leave us never,
Till thy face in heaven we see;
There to praise thee
Through a bright eternity."

"All our strength at once would fail us,
If deserted, Lord, by thee;
Nothing then could aught avail us,
Certain our defeat would be
Those who hate us
Thenceforth their desire would see."

Another set of temptations will be found in providential conditions. The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, shall be my illustration here. "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in

vain." Some of us have never known what actual want means, but have from our youth up lived in social comfort. Ah, dear friends, when we see what extreme poverty has made some men do, how do we know that we should not have behaved even worse if we had been as sorely pressed as they? We may well shudder and say, " Lord, when I see poor families crowded together in one little room where there is scarcely space to observe common decency; when I see hardly bread enough to keep the children from crying for hunger; when I see the man's garments wearing out upon his back, and by far too thin to keep out the cold; I pray thee subject me not to such trial, lest if I were in such a case I might put forth my hand and steal. Lead me not into the temptation of pining want."

And, on the other hand, look at the temptations of money when men have more to spend than they can possibly need, and there is around them a society which tempts them into racing, and gambling, and whoredom, and all manner of iniquities. The young man who has a fortune ready to hand before he reaches years of discretion, and is surrounded by flatterers and tempters all eager to plunder him; do you wonder that he is led into vice, and becomes a ruined man morally? Like a rich galleon waylaid by pirates, he is never out of danger; is it a marvel that he never reaches the port of safety? Women tempt him, men flatter him, vile messengers of the devil fawn upon him, and the young simpleton goes after them like an ox to the slaughter, or as a bird hasteth to the snare and knoweth not that it is for his life. You may very well thank heaven you never knew the temptation, for if it were put in your way you would also be in sore peril. If riches and honor allure you, follow not eagerly after them, but pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

Providential positions often try men. There is a man very much pushed for ready money in business; how shall he meet that heavy bill? If he does not meet it there will be desolation in his family; the mercantile concern from which he now draws his living will be broken up; everybody will be ashamed of him, his children will be outcasts, and he will be ruined. He has only to use a sum of trust money: he has no right to risk a penny of it, for it is not his, but still by its temporary use he may perchance tide over the difficulty. The devil tells him he can put it back in a week. If he does touch that money it will be a roguish action, but then he says, "Nobody

will be hurt by it, and it will be a wonderful accommodation," and so on. If he yields to the suggestion, and the thing goes right, there are some who would say, "Well, after all, there was not much harm in it, and it was a prudent step, for it saved him from ruin." But if it goes wrong, and he is found out, then everybody says, "It was a shameful robbery. The man ought to be transported." But, brethren, the action was wrong in itself, and the consequences neither make it better nor worse. Do not bitterly condemn, but pray again and again, "Lead us not into temptation. Lead us not into temptation." You see God does put men into such positions in providence at times that they are severely tried. It is for their good that they are tried, and when they can stand the trial they magnify his grace, and they themselves become stronger men: the test has beneficial uses when it can be borne, and God therefore does not always screen his children from it. Our heavenly Father has never meant to cuddle us up and keep us out of temptation, for that is no part of the system which he has wisely arranged for our education. He does not mean us to be babies in go-carts all our lives. He made Adam and Eve in the garden. and he did not put an iron pallisade round the tree of knowledge, and say, "You cannot get at it." No, he warned them not to touch the fruit, but they could reach the tree if they would. He meant that they should have the possibility of attaining the dignity of voluntary fidelity if they remained steadfast, but they lost it by their sin; and God means in his new creation not to shield his people from every kind of test and trial, for that were to breed hypocrites and to keep even the faithful weak and dwarfish. The Lord does sometimes put the chosen where they are tried, and we do right to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

And there are temptations arising out of physical conditions. There are some men who are very moral in character because they are in health; and there are other men who are very bad, who, I do not doubt, if we knew all about them, should have some little leniency shown them, because of the unhappy conformation of their constitution. Why, there are many people to whom to be cheerful and to be generous is no effort whatsoever, while there are others who need to labor hard to keep themselves from despair and misanthropy. Diseased livers, palpitating hearts, and injured brains are hard things to struggle against. Does that poor old lady complain? She has only had the rheumatism thirty years,

and yet she now and then murmurs!

How would you be if you felt her pains for thirty minutes? I have heard of a man who complained of everybody. When he came to die, and the doctors opened his skull they found a close fitting brain-box, and that the man suffered from an irritable brain. Did not that account for a great many of his hard speeches? I do not mention these matters to excuse sin, but to make you and myself treat such people as gently as we can, and pray, "Lord, do not give me such a brain-box, and do not let me have such rheumatisms or such pains, because upon such a rack I may be much worse than they are. Lead us not into temptation." So, again, mental conditions often furnish great temptations. When a man becomes depressed he becomes tempted. Those among us who rejoice much often sink about as much as we rise, and when everything looks dark around us Satan is sure to seize the occasion to suggest despondency. God forbid that we should excuse ourselves, but, dear brother, pray that you be not led into this temptation. Perhaps if you were as much a subject of nervousness and sinking of spirit as the friend you blame for his melancholy, you might be more blameworthy than he, therefore pity rather than condemn.

And, on the other hand, when the spirits are exhilarated and the heart is ready to dance for joy, it is very easy for levity to step in and for words to be spoken amiss. Pray the Lord not to let you rise so high nor sink so low as to be led into evil. "Lead us not into temptation," must be our hourly prayer.

Further than this, there are temptations arising out of personal associations, which are formed for us in the order of providence. We are bound to shun evil company, but there are cases in which, without fault on their part, persons are made to associate with bad characters. I may instance the pious child whose father is a swearer, and the godly woman lately converted, whose husband remains a swearer and blasphemes the name of Christ. It is the same with workmen who have to labor in workshops, where lewd fellows at every half-a-dozen words let fall an oath, and pour forth that filthy language which shocks us every day more and more. I think that in London our working people talk more filthily

than ever they did; at least, I hear more of it as I pass along or pause in the street. Well, if persons are obliged to work in such shops, or to live in such families there may come times when under the lash of jest and sneer and sarcasm the heart may be a little dismayed and the tongue may refuse to speak for Christ. Such a silence and cowardice are not to be excused, yet do not censure thy brother, but say, "Lord, lead me not into temptation." How know you that you would be more bold? Peter quailed before a talkative maid, and you may be cowed by a woman's tongue. The worst temptation for a young Christian that I know of is to live with a hypocrite—a man so sanctified and demure that the young heart, deceived by appearances, fully trusts him while the wretch is false at heart and rotten in life. And such wretches there are who, with the pretense and affectation of sanctimoniousness, will do deeds at which we might weep tears of blood: young people are frightfully staggered, and many of them become deformed for life in their spiritual characteristics through associating with such beings as these. When you see faults caused by such common but horrible causes, say to yourself, "Lord, lead me not into temptation. I thank thee for godly parents and for Christian associations and for godly examples; but what might I have been if I had been subjected to the very reverse? If evil influences had touched me when like a vessel I was upon the wheel, I might have exhibited even grosser failings than those which I now see in others."

Thus I might continue to urge you to pray, dear friends, against various temptations; but let me say, the Lord has for some men very special tests, such as may be seen in the case of Abraham. He gives him a son in his old age, and then says to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering." You will do right to pray, "Lord, lead me not into such a temptation as that. I am not worthy to be so tried. Oh do not so test me." I have known some Christians sit down and calculate whether they could have acted as the patriarch did. It is very foolish, dear brother. When you are called upon to do it you will be enabled to make the same sacrifice by the grace of God, but if you are not called upon to do it, why should the power be given? Shall God's grace be left unused? Your strength shall be equal to your day, but it shall not exceed it. I would have you ask to be spared the sterner tests.

Another instance is to be seen in Job. God gave Job over to Satan with a limit, and you know how Satan tormented him and tried to overwhelm him. If any man were to pray, "Lord, try me like Job," it would be a very unwise prayer. "Oh, but I could be as patient as he," say you. You are the very man who would yield to bitterness, and curse your God. The man who could best exhibit the patience of Job will be the first, according to his Lord's bidding, fervently to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Dear friends, we are to be prepared for trial if God wills it, but we are not to court it, but are rather to pray against it, even as our Lord Jesus, though ready to drink the bitter cup, yet in an agony exclaimed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Trials sought after are not such as the Lord has promised to bless. No true child asks for the rod.

To put my meaning in a way in which it will be clearly seen let me tell an old story. I have read in history that two men were condemned to die as martyrs in the burning days of Queen Mary. One of them boasted very loudly to his companion of his confidence that he should play the man at the stake. He did not mind the suffering, he was so grounded in the gospel that he knew he should never deny it. He said that he longed for the fatal morning even as a bride for the wedding. His companion in prison in the same chamber was a poor trembling soul, who could not and would not deny his Master; but he told his companion that he was very much afraid of the fire. He said he had always been very sensitive of suffering, and he was in great dread that when he began to burn the pain might cause him to deny the truth. He besought his friend to pray for him, and he spent his time very much in weeping over his weakness and crying to God for strength. The other continually rebuked him, and chided him for being so unbelieving and weak. When they both came to the stake, he who had been so bold recanted at the sight of the fire and went back ignominiously to an apostate's life, while the poor trembling man whose prayer had been, "Lead me not into temptation," stood firm as a rock, praising and magnifying God as he was burnt to a cinder. Weakness is our strength; and our strength is weakness. Cry unto God that he try you not beyond your strength; and in the shrinking tenderness of your conscious weakness breathe out the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." Then if he does lead you into the conflict, his Holy Spirit will

strengthen you, and you will be brave as a lion before the adversary. Though trembling and shrinking within yourself before the throne of God, you would confront the very devil and all the hosts of hell without one touch of fear. It may seem strange, but so the case is.

III. And now I conclude with the last head - THE LESSONS WHICH THIS PRAYER TEACHES. I have not time to enlarge. I will just throw them out in the rough.

The first lesson from the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," is this: Never boast your own strength. Never say, "Oh, I shall never fall into such follies and sins. They may try me, but they will find more than a match in me." Let not him that putteth on his harness boast as though he were putting it off. Never indulge one thought of congratulation as to self-strength. You have no power of your own, you are as weak as water. The devil has only to touch you in the right place and you will run according to his will. Only let a loose stone or two be moved and you will soon see that the feeble building of your own natural virtue will come down at a run. Never court temptation by boasting your own capacity.

The next thing is, never desire trial. Does anybody ever do that? Yes; I heard one say the other day that God had so prospered him for years that he was afraid he was not a child of God, for he found that God's children were chastised, and therefore he almost wished to be afflicted. Dear brother, do not wish for that: you will meet with trouble soon enough. If I were a little boy at home, I do not think I should say to my brother, because he had been whipped, "I am afraid I am not my father's child, and fear that he does not love me because I am not smarting under the rod. I wish he would whip me just to let me know his love." No; no child would ever be so stupid. We must not for any reason desire to be afflicted or tried, but must pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

The next thought is, never go into temptation. The man who prays "Lead us not into temptation," and then goes into it is a liar before God. What a hypocrite a man must be who utters this prayer, and then goes off to the theater! How false is he who offers this prayer and then stands at the bar and drinks and talks with depraved men and bedizened girls! "Lead us

not into temptation," is shameful profanity when it comes from the lips of men who resort to places of amusement whose moral tone is bad. , "Oh," say you, "you should not tell us of such things." Why not? Some of you do them, and I make bold to rebuke evil wherever it is found, and shall do so while this tongue can move. There is a world of cant about. People go to church and say, "Lead us not into temptation," and then they know where temptation is to be found, and they go straight into it. You need not ask the Lord not to lead you there; he has nothing to do with you. The devil and you between you will go far enough without mocking God with your hypocritical prayers. The man who goes into sin wilfully with his eyes open, and then bends his knee, and says half-a-dozen times over in his church on a Sunday morning "Lead us not into temptation," is a hypocrite without a mask upon him. Let him take that home to himself, and believe that I mean to be personal to him, and to such barefaced hypocrites as he.

The last word is, if you pray God not to lead you into temptation, do not lead others there. Some seem to be singularly forgetful of the effect of their example. for they will do evil things in the presence of their children and those who look up to them. Now I pray you consider that by ill example you destroy others as well as yourself. Do nothing, my dear brother, of which you have need to be ashamed, or which you would not wish others to copy. Do the right at all times, and do not let Satan make a "cat's paw" of you to destroy the souls of others: do you pray, "Lead us not into temptation"; then do not lead your children there. They are invited during the festive season to such and such a family party, where there will be everything but what will conduce to their spiritual growth or even to their good morals: do not allow them to go. Put your foot down. Be steadfast about it. Having once prayed, "Lead us not into temptation," act not the hypocrite by allowing your children to go into it.

God bless these words to us. May they sink into our souls, and if any feel that they have sinned, oh that they may now ask forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ, and find it by faith in him. When they have obtained mercy, let their next desire be that they may be kept in future from sinning as they did before, and therefore let them pray, "Lead us not into temptation." God bless you.

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The Leafless Tree

But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and it shall be eaten as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof. - Isaiah 6:3

Our first business to-night will be briefly to explain the metaphor employed in the text. The prophet was told that despite all the remonstrances he was instructed to deliver, and notwithstanding the eloquent earnestness of his lips, which had been just touched by a live coal from off the altar, still the people of Israel would persevere in their sins, and would therefore be certainly destroyed. He asked the question, "Lord, how long?" that is, How long will the people be thus impenitent? How long will thy sore judgment thus continue? And he was informed that God would waste and destroy the cities and their inhabitants, till the land should be utterly desolate. Then it was added, for his comfort, "Yet in it shall be a tenth." And so it happened; for when "Nebuchadnezzar carried away all Jerusalem," the historian gives this reservation—"none remained save the poorer sort of the people of the land." They were left by the captain of the guard, "to be vine-dressers and husbandmen." Thus in it there was a tenth; this small remnant of the people, however, was to be nearly destroyed too. "It shall return and shall be eaten;" the sense is, eaten up or consumed. The poor creatures left in the land, many of them fled into Egypt at the time of the conspiracy of Ishmael (not Ishmael, the son of Hagar, but an unworthy member of the royal family of Judah), and there in Egypt most of them were cut off and perished. "But," says God, "although this tenth only shall be preserved, and then even this small part shall be subjected to many perils yet Israel shall not be destroyed, for it shall be as a terebinth tree and as an oak;" their "substance is in them, when they cast their leaves," and so lose their verdure and their beauty; thus, in like manner, a holy seed, a chosen remnant, shall still be the substance of the children of Israel, when the fruitful land is stripped of its foliage, and that fair garden of earth is barren as the desert.

The figure is taken, first of all, from the terebinth or turpentine tree—here translated the teil tree. That tree is an evergreen, with this exception, that in very severe and inclement weather it loses its leaves; but even then the terebinth tree is not dead. And so of the oak; it loses its leaves every year, of course, but even then it is not dead. "So," says God, "you have seen the tree in winter, standing naked and bare, without any sign of life, its roots buried in the hard and frozen soil, and its naked branches exposed to every blast, without a bloom or a bud; yet the substance is in the tree when the leaves are gone. It is still alive, and it shall, by and by, in due season, bud and bloom; so," says he, "Nebuchadnezzar shall cut off all the leaves of the tree of Israel—take away the inhabitants, only a tenth shall be left, and they shall well nigh be eaten up; still the church of God and the Israel of God never shall be destroyed; they shall be like the terebinth tree and the oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

I hope I have made the meaning of the passage as plain as words can make it. Now, then, for the application—first, *to the Jews*; secondly, *to the Church*; thirdly, *to each believer*.

I. First, TO THE JEWS.

What a history is the history of the Jew! He has antiquity stamped upon his forehead. His is a lineage more noble than that of any knights or even kings of this our island, for he can trace his pedigree back to the very loins of Abraham, and through him to that patriarch who entered into the ark, and thence up to Adam himself. Our history is hidden in gloom and darkness; but theirs, with certainty, may be read from the first moment even down till now. And what a checkered history has been the history of the Jewish nation. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have swept them all away with the huge broom of destruction; the tenth left was again give over to the slaughter; and one would have thought we should have heard no more of Israel; but in a little time they rose phoenix-like, from their ashes. A second temple was builded and the nation became strong once more, and though often swept with desolations in the mean time, yet it did not abide, and the scepter did not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came. And, since then, how huge have

been the waves that have rushed over the Jewish race! The Roman emperor razed the city to the ground, and left not a vestige standing; another emperor changed the name of Jerusalem into that of Eliah, and forbade a Jew to go within some miles of it, so that he might not even look upon his beloved city. It was plowed and left desolate. But is the Jew conquered? Is he a subjugated man? Is his country seized? No; he is still one of earth's nobles—distressed, insulted, spit upon; still it is written, "To the Jew first, and afterward to the Gentile." He claims a high dignity above us, and he has a history to come which will be greater and more splendid than the history of any nation that has yet existed. If we read the Scriptures aright, the Jews have a great deal to do with this world's history. They shall be gathered in; Messiah shall come, the Messiah they are looking for—the same Messiah who came once shall come again—shall come as they expected him to come the first time. They then thought he would come a prince to reign over them, and so he will when he comes again. He will come to be king of the Jews, and to reign over his people most gloriously; for when he comes, Jew and Gentile will have equal privileges, though there shall yet be some distinction afforded to that royal family from whose loins Jesus came; for he shall sit upon the throne of his father David, and unto him shall be gathered all nations. O!

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
A remnant weak and small,"

ye may indeed,

"Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all;"

your church shall never die, and your race shall never become extinct. The Lord hath said it. "The race of Abraham shall endure for ever, and his seed as many generations."

But why is it that the Jewish race is preserved? We have our answer in the text: "The holy seed is the substance thereof." There is something within a tree mysterious, hidden, and unknown, which preserves life in it when every thing outward tends to kill it. So in the Jewish race there is a secret

element which keeps it alive. We know what it is: it is the "remnant according to the election of grace;" in the worst of ages there has never been a day so black but there was a Hebrew found to hold the lamp of God. There has always been found a Jew who loved Jesus; and though the race now despise the great Redeemer, yet there are not a few of the Hebrew race who still love Jesus, the Saviour of the uncircumcised, and bow before him. It is these few, this holy seed, that are the substance of the nation; and for their sake, through their prayers, because of God's love to them, he still says of Israel to all nations, "Touch not these mine anointed, do my prophets no harm. These are the descendants of Abraham, my friend. I have sworn, and will not repent; I will show kindness unto them for their father's sake, and for the sake of the remnant I have chosen."

Let us think a little more of the Jews than we have been wont; let us pray oftener for them. "Pray for the peace old Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love her." As truly as any great thing is done in this world for Christ's kingdom, the Jews will have more to do with it than any of us have dreamed. So much for the first point. the Jewish nation is like "a terebinth tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

II. And now, secondly, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, whereof the Jewish people are but a dim shadow, and an emblem.

The church has had its trials; trials from without and trials within. It has had days of blood-red persecution, and of fiery trial; it has had times of sad apostacy, when an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God has broken out, and a root of bitterness springing up has troubled many, and thereby they have been defiled. Yet, blessed be God, through all the winters of the church she still lived, and she gives signs now of a sweeter spring-tide, a fresher greenness and a healthier condition than she has shown before for many a day. Why is it that the church is still preserved, when she looks so dead? For this reason: that there is in the midst of her—though many are hypocrites and impostors—a "chosen seed," who are "the substance thereof." You might have looked back a hundred years ago upon the professing church of Christ in this land, and

what a sad spectacle it would have exhibited! In the Church of England there was mere formality; in the Independent and Baptist denominations there was truth, but it was dead, cold, lifeless truth. Ministers dreamed on in their pulpits, and hearers snored in their pews; infidelity was triumphant; the house of God was neglected and desecrated. The church was like a tree that had lost its leaves: it was in a wintry state. But did it die? No; there was a holy seed within it. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for praying, reading the Bible, and talking to poor people about Christ; and these six young men, with many others whom the Lord had hidden by fifties in the caves of the earth, secret and unknown—these young men, leaders of a glorious revival, came out, and though ridiculed and laughed at as Methodists, they brought forth a great and glorious revival, almost equaling the commencement of the gospel triumphs under Paul and the apostles, and very little inferior to the great Reformation of Luther, of Calvin, and Zwingli. And just now the church is to a great degree in a barren and lifeless state. But will she therefore die? you say that true doctrine is scarce, that zeal is rare, that there is little life and energy in the pulpit and true devotion in the pew, while formality and hypocrisy stalk over us, and we sleep in our cradles. But will the church die? No; she is like a teel tree and an oak; her substance is in her when she has lost her leaves; there is a holy seed in her still that is the substance thereof. Where these are we know not; some, I doubt not, are here in this church—some, I hope, are to be found in every church of professing Christians: and woe worth the day to the church that loses her holy seed; for she must die, like the oak blasted by the lightning, whose heart is scorched out of it—broken down, because it has no substance in it.

Let me now draw your attention, as a church connected with this place, to this point—that the holy seed is the substance of the church. A great many of you might be compared to the bark to the tree; some of you are like the big limbs; others are like pieces of the trunk. Well, we should be very sorry to lose any of you; but we could afford to do so without any serious damage to the life of the tree. Yet there are some here—God knoweth who they are—who are the substance of the tree. By the word "substance" is meant the life, the inward principle. The inward principle is in the tree, when it has lost its leaves. Now, God discerns some men in this church, I doubt not, who are toward us like the inward principle of

the oak; they are the substance of the church. I would feign hope that all the members of the church in some degree contribute to the substance; but I can not think so. I am obliged to say I doubt it; because when one hath fallen and another, it makes us remember that a church hath much in it that is not life. There be some branches on the vine that be cut off, because they do not draw sap from the heart of it, they are only branches bound on by profession, pretended graftings that have never struck root into the parent stock, and that must be cut off, and hewn down, and cast into the fire. But there is a holy seed in the church that is the substance of it.

Please to note here, that the life of a tree is not determined by the shape of the branches, nor by the way it grows, but it is the substance. The shape of a church is not its life. In one place I see a church formed in an Episcopalian shape; in another place I see one formed in a Presbyterian shape; then, again, I see one, like ours, formed on an Independent principle. Here I see one with sixteen ounces to the pound of doctrine; there I see one with eight, and some with very little clear doctrine at all. And yet I find life in all the churches, in some degree—some good men in all of them. How do I account for this? Why, just in this way—that the oak may be alive, whatever its shape, if it has got the substance. If there be but a holy seed in the church, the church will live; and it is astonishing how the church will live under a thousand errors, if there be but the vital principle in it. You will find good men among the denominations that you can not receive as being sound in faith. You say, "What! can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and you go through, and find that there are even in them some true Nazarites of the right order. The very best of men found in the worst of churches! A church lives not because of its rubrics, and its canons, and its articles; it lives because of the holy seed that is in it as the substance. No church can die while it has a holy seed in it, and no church can live that has not the holy seed, for "the holy seed is the substance thereof."

Observe, again, that the substance of the oak is a hidden thing; you can not see it. When the oak or the terebinth is standing destitute of leaves, you know that life is there somewhere. But you can not see it. And very likely you can not and do not know the men that are the holy seed, the

substance of the church. Perhaps you imagine the substance of the church lies in the pulpit. Nay, friend! Let us pray to God that such of us as are in the pulpit may be a part of that substance; but much of the substance of the church lies where you don't know any thing of it. There is a mine near Plymouth, where the men who work in it, two hundred and fifty feet below the surface, have a little shelf for their Bibles and hymn-books, and a little place where every morning, when they go down in the black darkness, they bow before God, and praise him whose tender mercies are over all his works. You never heard of these miners, perhaps, and do not know of them; but perhaps some of them are the very substance of the church. There sits Mr. Somebody in that pew; O! what a support he is to the church. Yes, in money matters, perhaps; but do you know, there is poor old Mrs. Nobody in the aisle that is most likely a greater pillar to the church than he, for she is a holier Christian, one who lives nearer to her God and serves him better, and she is "the substance thereof." Ah! that old woman in the garret who is often in prayer; that old man on his bed who spends days and nights in supplication; such people as these are the substance of the church. O! you may take away your prelates, your orators, and the best and greatest of those who stand among earth's mighty men, and their place could be supplied; but take away our intercessors; take away the men and women that breathe out prayer by night and day, and like the priests of old offer the morning and evening lamb as a perpetual sacrifice, and you kill the church at once. What are the ministers? They are but the arms of the church, and the lips of it. A man may be both dumb and armless, and yet live. But these, the heavenly seed, the chosen men and women who live near their God, and serve him with sacred fervent piety—these are the heart of the church; we can not do without them. If we lose them we must die. "The holy seed is the substance thereof."

Then, my hearers, thou art a church member. Let me ask thee—art thou one of the holy seed? Has thou been begotten again to a lively hope? Has God made thee holy by the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, and by the justifying righteousness of Christ, and by the application to thy conscience of the blood of Jesus? If so, then thou art the substance of the church. They may pass by thee and not notice thee, for thou art little; but the substance is little; the life-germ within the grain of barley is too small

for us, perhaps, to detect; the life within the egg is almost an animalcula—you can scarcely see it; and so the life of the church is among the little ones, where we can scarcely find it out. Rejoice, if you are much in prayer; you are the life of the church. But you, O you proud man, pull down your grand thoughts of yourself; you may give to the church, you may speak for the church, and act for the church, but unless you are a holy seed you are not the substance thereof, and it is the substance which is in reality of the greatest value.

But here let me say one thing before I leave this point. Some of you will say, "How is it that good men are the means of preserving the visible church?" I answer, the holy seed doth this, because it derives its life from Christ. If the holy seed had to preserve the church by its own purity and its own strength, the church would go to ruin to-morrow; but it is because these holy ones draw fresh life from Christ continually that they are able to be, as it were, the salvation of the body, and by their influence, direct and indirect, shed life over the whole visible church. The prayers of those living ones in Zion bring down many a blessing upon us; the groans and cries of these earnest intercessors prevail with heaven, and bring down very argosies of mercy from the gates of paradise. And besides, their holy example tends to check us and preserve us in purity; they walk among us like God's own favored ones, wrapped in white, reflecting his image wherever they go, and tending, under God, to the sanctifying of believers, not through their vaunting any self-righteousness, but by stirring up believers to do more for Christ, and to be more like him. "The holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

III. And now I come to the third point. this is true of EVERY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER: his substance is in him when he has lost his leaves.

The Arminian says that when a Christian loses his leaves he is dead. "No," say God's Word, "he is not; he may look as if he were dead, and not have so much as here and there a leaf upon the topmost bough; but he is not dead. Their substance is in them even when they lose their leaves."

By losing their leaves allow me to understand two things. Christian men

lose their leaves when they lose their comforts, when they lose the sensible enjoyment of their Master's presence, and when their full assurance is turned into doubting. You have had many such a time as that, have you not? Ah! you were one day in such a state of joy, that you said you could

"Sit and sing yourself away
To everlasting bliss."

But a wintry state came, and your joy all departed, and you stood like a bare tree, after the wind had swept it in the time of winter, with just perhaps one sere leaf hanging by a thread on the topmost bough. But you were not dead then; no, your substance was in you, when you had lost your leaves. You could not see that substance, and good reason why, because your life was hid with Christ in God; you saw not your signs, but you had your substance still, though you could not discover it. There were no heavings of faith, but faith was there; there were no lookings out of hope, but though hope's eyelids were shut, the eyes were there, to be opened afterwards; there was no lifting, perhaps, of the hand of ardent prayer, but the hands and arms were there, though they hung powerless by the side. God said, afterwards, "Strengthen the feeble knees, and lift up the hands that hang down." Your substance was in you when you had lost your leaves. Good Baxter says—"We do not see graces, except when they are in exercise; and yet they are as much there when they are not in exercise as when they are." Saith he, "Let a man take a walk into a wood; there lieth a hare or a rabbit asleep under the leaves; but he can not see the creature until it is frightened, and it runneth out, and then he seeth it to be there." So if faith be in exercise you will perceive your evidence, but if faith be slumbering and still, you will be led to doubt its existence; and yet it is there all the while.

"Mountains when in darkness hidden,
Are as real as in day,"

said one; and truly the faith of the Christian, when shrouded by doubts and fears, is just as much there as when he rejoiceth devoutly in the display of it.

It is a common error of young converts that they attempt to live by their experience, instead of tracing their life up to its precious source. I have known persons rejoicing in the fullest assurance one day, and sinking into the deepest despondency the next. The Lord will sometimes strip you of the leaves of evidence to teach you to live by faith, as John Kent says -

"If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin;
He to-morrow may distress us
Make us feel the plague within;
All to make us
Sick of self and fond of him."

But, ah! there is a worse phase to the subject than this. Some Christians lose their leaves not by doubts, but by sin. This is a tender topic—one which needs a tender hand to touch. O! there are some in our churches that have lost their leaves by lust and sin. Fair professors once they were; they stood green among the church, like the very leaves of paradise; but in an evil hour they fell, the slaves of temptation. They were God's own people by many infallible marks and signs; and if they were so, though it is grievous that they should have lost their leaves, yet there is the sweet consolation, their substance is in them still: they are still the Lord's, still his living children, though they have fallen into the coma of sin, and are now in a fainting fit, having gone astray from him, and having their animation suspended, while life is still there. Some, as soon as they see a Christian do any thing inconsistent with his profession, say, "That man is no child of God; he can not be; it is impossible." Ay, but, sir, remember what he thought who once said—"If a brother err, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." It is a fact, deny it who will, and abuse it, if you please, to your own wicked purposes; I can not help it—it is a fact that some living children of God have been allowed—and an awful allowance it is—to go into the very blackest sins. Do you think David was not a child of God, even when he sinned? It is a hard subject to touch; but it is not to be denied. He had the life of God within him before; and though he sinned—O! horrid and awful was the crime!—yet his substance was in him when

he lost his leaves. And many a child of God has gone far away from his Master; but his substance is in him. And how know we this? Because a dead tree never lives again; if the substance be really gone, it never lives; and God's holy Word assures us, that if the real life of grace could die out in any one, it could never come again; for saith the apostle, "it is impossible, if they have been once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost"—if these fall away—"it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Their tree is "dead, plucked up by the roots." And the apostle Peter says—"For if, after they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, they are again turned back, their last end shall be worse than the first." But now take David, or take Peter, which you please. Peter we will have. O! how foully did he curse his Master! With many an oath he denied him. But had not Peter the life of God in him then? Yes; and how do we know? Because when his Master looked upon him, he "went out and wept bitterly." Ah! if he had been a dead man, hardened and without the substance in him, his Master might have looked to all eternity, and he would not have wept bitterly. How know I that David was yet alive? Why, by this—that although there was a long, long winter, and there were many prickings of conscience, like the workings of the sap within a tree, abortive attempts to thrust forward here and there a shoot before its time, yet when the hour was come, and Nathan came to him and said, "Thou art the man," had David been dead, without the life of God, he would have spurned Nathan from him, and might have done what Manasseh did with Isaiah, cut him in pieces in his anger; but instead of that he bowed his head and wept before God; and still it is written, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." His substance was in him, when he lost his leaves. O! have pity upon poor fallen brethren. O! burn them not; they are not dead logs; though their leaves are gone their substance is in them. God can see grace in their hearts when you can not see it; he has put a life there that can never expire, for he has said, "I give unto my sheep *eternal* life," and that means a life that live for ever; "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting* life." You may choke the well up with big stones, but the water will find its way out yet, and well up notwithstanding. And so the heir of heaven may, to the grief of the church and to the injury of himself, most grievously transgress—and weep, my eyes, O weep for any that have done so, and O

bleed, my heart, and thou hast bled, for any that have so sinned—but yet their "substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed"—that is, Christ within them, the Holy Ghost within them, the new creature within them—"the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Poor backslider! here is a word of comfort for you. I would not comfort you in your sins; God forbid! But if you know your sins and hate them, let me comfort you. Thou art not dead! As Jesus said of the damsel, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," so let me say of thee, "Thou art not dead; thou shalt yet live." Dost thou repent? Dost thou grieve over thy sin? That is thee bud that shows that there is life within. When a common sinner sins he repents not, or if he doth repent it is with a legal repentance. His conscience pricks him, but he hushes it. He does not leave his sin and turn from it.

But did you ever see a child of God after he had been washed from a foul sin? He was a changed man. I know such an one, who used to carry a merry countenance, and many were the jokes he made in company; but when I met him after an awful sin, there was a solemnity about his countenance that was unusual to him. He looked, I should say, something like Dante, the poet, of whom the boys said, "There is the man that has been in hell;" because he had written of hell, and looked like it—he looked so terrible. And when we spoke of sin there was such a solemnity about him; and when we spoke of going astray the tears ran down his cheeks, as much to say, "I have been astray too." He seemed like good Christian, after he had been in Giant Despair's castle. Do you not remember, beloved, the guide who took the pilgrims up to the top of a hill called Clear, and he showed them from the top of the hill a lot of men with their eyes put out, groping among the tombs, and Christian asked what it meant. Said the guide, "These are pilgrims that were caught in Giant Despair's castle; the giant had their eyes put out, and they are left to wander among the tombs to die, and their bones are to be left in the court-yard." Whereupon John Bunyan very naively says, "I looked, and saw their eyes full of water, for they remembered they might have been there too." Just as the man talked and spoke that I once knew. He seemed to wonder why God had not left him to be an apostate for ever, as the lot of Judas or Demas. He seemed to think it such a startling thing that while many had gone aside altogether from God's way, he should still have had

his substance in him, when he had lost his leaves, and that God should still have loved him. Perhaps, beloved, God allows some such men to live, and sin, and afterward repent, for this reason. You know there are some voices needed in music that are very rare, and when, now and then, such a voice is to be heard, every one will go to hear it. I have thought that perhaps some of these men in heaven will sing soprano notes before the throne—choice, wondrous notes of grace, because they have gone into the depths of sin after profession; and yet he had loved them when their feet made hast to perdition, and fetched them up, because he "loved them well." There are but few such; for most men will go foully into sin; they will go out from us because they are not of us, for if they had been of us they would doubtless have continued with us. But there have been a few such—great saints, then great backsliding sinners, and then great saints again. Their substance was in them when they had lost their leaves. O! you that have gone far astray, sit and weep. You can not weep too much, though you should cry with Herbert -

"O, who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the water things
That nature hath produced."

You might well say -

"Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

But yet remember, "He hath not forsaken his people, neither hath he cut them off;" for still he says -

"Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek an injured father's heart."

Return! return! return! Thy Father's bowels still move for thee. He speaks

through the written oracles at this moment, saying, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, O Israel? How can I make thee as Adimah? How can I set thee as Zeboim?" My bowels are moved; my repentings are kindled together; for I will heal their backslidings, I will receive them graciously, I will love them freely, for they are mine still. As the terebinth and as the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, even so the holy seed within the elect and called vessels of mercy, is still the substance thereof.

And now, what have I to say to some of you that live in black sin, and yet excuse yourselves on account of the recorded falls of God's people? Sir, know this! Inasmuch as you do this, you wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction. If one man has taken poison, and there has been a physician by his side so skillful that he has saved his life by a heavenly antidote, is that any reason why thou, who hast no physician and no antidote, should yet think that the poison will not kill thee? Why, man, the sin that does not damn a Christian, because Christ washes him in his blood, will damn you. Said Brookes—and I will repeat his words and have done—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, said the apostle, be his sins never so many; but he that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few. Truly your sins may be little; but you are lost for them without Christ. Your sins may be great; but if Christ shall pardon them, then you shall be saved. The one question, then, I have to ask of thee, is—Hast thou Christ? For if thou hast not, then thou hast not the holy seed; thou art a dead tree, and in due time thou shalt be tinder for hell. Thou art a rotten-hearted tree, all touch-wood, ready to be broken in pieces; eaten by the worms of lust; and ah! when the fire shall take hold of thee, what a blazing and a burning! O! that thou hadst life! O! that God would give it to thee! O! that thou wouldst now repent! O! that thou wouldst cast thyself on Jesus! O! that thou wouldst turn to him with full purpose of heart! For then, remember, thou wouldst be saved—saved now, and saved for ever; for "the holy seed" would be "the substance thereof."

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A Leap Year Sermon

One born out of due time. - 1 Corinthians 15:8

Paul thus describes himself. It was necessary that Paul, as an apostle, should have seen the Lord. He was not converted at the time of Christ's ascension; yet he was made an apostle, for the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the way, as he was going to Damascus, to persecute the saints of God. When he looked upon himself as thus put in, as it were, at the end of the apostles, he spoke of himself in the most depreciating terms, calling himself "one born out of due time."

Those who are acquainted with the Greek tongue know what a despicable term Paul here applied to himself,—as though he was scarcely a man at all,—at any rate, as the very last of the family, "born out of due time;" and not only the last, but also the very least, for he says, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Scholars will know why I cannot exactly explain the word which Paul uses, but rather keep to the rendering of our translation, which, although it may not have the force and full meaning of the Greek expression, is perhaps none the less useful for public reading: "One born out of due time."

Paul thought very humbly of himself; he reckoned himself less than nothing, put himself down at the very lowest estimate, and mentioned that he was brought to Christ, and made an apostle, when the time for such a work was apparently over. Out of date altogether, beyond the period, when it might have been thought that another apostle would, be called of God, there was he found as "one born out of due time."

My subject to-night is, first, the singular time of Paul's spiritual birth. There are many of God's true: children who, like the apostle, were "born

out; of due time." When It have expatiated upon that fact, I shall speak of the sure evidences of his spiritual birth, and show you that, although "born out, of due, time," he was born, and there were sure evidences of his spiritual birth, which evidences, I trust, may be seen in many of us also.

I. First, then, let us think of THE SINGULAR TIME OF PAUL'S SPIRITUAL BIRTH.

There are still some wney like the apostle, are born to God "out of due time." They are truly born again, regenerated, converted, at a most unlikely season. There have been multitudes brought to Christ, under earnest sermons, when the appeals of faithful men have thrilled the congregation, and the truth has been effectually carried home to the hearts of many of the hearers. But there have also been times when God's ministers have waxed faint, when the sermon has appeared to be destitute of all force, when nobody has seemed to have felt, the power of the discourse, and, apparently, the truth has fallen quite flat; yet, on many such occasions, there have been some sinners converted to God when we should hardly have thought it to be possible. Mr. Tennant, a famous American minister of Whitefield's time, one of the most earnest and seraphic men who ever proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, had a hearer, who remained unmoved under many a score of his most faithful sermons. Others were saved, but not this man; he seemed unmoved and immovable; but it came to pass, on a certain Sabbath, that a very unusual thing happened. Mr. Tennant had prepared his sermon with great, care, it was what we are wont to call a laborious discourse, into which he had put all the thought and all the pains possible; but he had not been preaching long before his memory completely failed him, his mind refused to work, and, after floundering about for a while, he was obliged to sit down in great confusion, and say that, he could not preach to the people that day. The man I have mentioned, who had never before been impressed under Mr. Tennant's ministry, was that day called by sovereign grace, as "one born out of due time," for he was led to see that there was a spiritual and supernatural force which had usually helped the pastor to preach, and that, when this divine influence was withdrawn, he was as weak as other men, and could not speak with power: as he had been accustomed to do.

This truth, somehow or other,—for human minds are strangely constituted, and things, which have no effect upon certain people, very greatly affect others who are present, at the same time;—this truth, I say, induced the man to think; thinking, he was led to believe in God, and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. He was, without doubt, one "born out of due time."

I would like to break down, as Mr. Tennant did, if some of you would be born to God by that means; I would rather be dumb, and win a soul for Jesus, than speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet, men's hearts should not be impressed by the truth I proclaimed. How often I have found that, when I have gone, home, and sighed, and cried, and groaned over a discourse in which I felt no liberty, but thought it was an utter failure, it has afterwards been proved that, here one, and there another, have, come forward blessing and praising God for that very testimony, which seemed to me so faulty and feeble, but which the Spirit of the Lord has savingly impressed upon them. So, still, there are some who, in this way, are "born out of due time," through the, Holy Spirit's use even of the preacher's weaknees and apparent failure.

Another illustration may be taken from the opposite side of the same truth. Some are converted when they seem themselves to be in a state of mind in which they are the most unlikely to be impressible. I remember being in Dr. John Campbell's house, one day, when he told me that a minister was preaching at Whitefield's old Tabernacle in Moorfields, one evening, when there were present, under very strange circumstances, two young men who had fallen into dissipated habits, and who had made an appointment with each other for the commission of some gross sin that very night, had they committed what they had planned, it may be that they would have plunged themselves into a career of vice from which they might never have been extricated. They were passing by the Moorfields Tabernacle, which some of you remember, and as they wanted to know the time at which they were to meet for this unholy purpose, one of them said to the other, "Go in, and see the time; there is sure to be a clock in there." But the clock was not fixed as it is here, at the back of the preacher, but the other way; so the young man had to go some little distance further in than he intended, in order to see the clock. If I

remember rightly, the preacher that night was Matthew Wilks, and he was just uttering some quaint remark, something that arrested the young man's attention, and held him fast in the aisle. His companion waited, outside for a time, but it was cold, so he thought he had better go in, and look at the clock himself, and fetch his friend out. He went in; the arrows of the Lord pierced the heart of both of them, and the second of those young men was John Williams, the famous missionary, and at last the martyr of Erromanga. Thus, they also were "born out of due time." You would not have thought it possible that those men should become, as they did, preachers of the gospel, when they were, at that very time, desperately set on the commission of a great sin against God, and their hearts were wholly given up to the pleasures and follies of this world; but so it happened, and our Lord still knows how to stop men as he stopped Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. He, is the man who says that he was "born out of due time;" and he is a wonderful instance of this method of divine interposition. He has in his possession, the letters from the high priest which will enable him to bind the saints, the carry them off to Jerusalem; he is riding towards Damascus, the is within sight of the, city when, in the very midst of his high-handed course of persecution, the Lord Jesus Christ himself intervenes, and smites him down to the ground. Presently, he rises to pray, and, in his three days' blindness and fasting, to seek the Lord, and then to find him, to the salvation of his soul and the joy of his spirit, and thus to become an apostle of that very Savior whom, in his ignorance, he had been persecuting. After such a triumph of divine grace, let us never despair of any sinner, however far he may have gone, into, sin. You know how Paul, writing to Timothy, said of himself, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." The God who blessed the broken sermon of Mr. Tennant can bless our imperfect work in the pulpit, the Sunday-school, or anywhere else; and the God who saved such men as John Williams and his companion, when they least thought of such a thing happening, can also save some who have strayed in here to-night, little dreaming what designs of love God has toward them in bringing them at this time under the sound of the Word.

I consider, next, that a convert may be described as one "born out of due

time" when he is brought to Christ after some great revival or notable religious movement has come to an end. There are some of you who attended the recent special services conducted here by Messrs. Fullerton and Smith. What power there was in those hallowed gatherings! Some of your neighbors wept under conviction of sin; but you did not. Some of them came to Christ, and are now rejoicing in him; but you did not come to him. You were not even impressed during the meetings, though, possibly, you wished to be; or it may be that you began with a desire after better things, but you ended in indifference. And now the special services are all over, and the good men who came amongst us to preach and sing the gospel are gone, and you have been saying to yourselves, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Ah! but our Lord has a blessed way of picking up the stragglers behind the army. When the main body has marched on, with sound of trumpet, praising God, there are a few left behind; and the Lord Jesus sometimes comes, and picks them up. I do earnestly pray that some of you may be thus picked up by him just now, so that you may be able to say, "We were not born for God when many others were; like Saul of Tarsus, we were 'born out of due time;' but, blessed be God, we were born again by the effectual working of his Spirit, we were brought to Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, and now we also have become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Pray that it may be, so dear friends. O you Christian people, bow your hearts before God, and ask that it may be so] Perhaps the very fact that those services are over, and that a gracious opportunity has gone, may be impressed upon the minds of some who were present during the meetings, but who were; not converted, and they may now seek the Savior, and find him to their everlasting salvation and happiness.

The Lord can bless strange methods to the awakening of the, ungodly. When Puritanism seemed to be trodden under foot, in the reign of James I., and the king issued the Book of Sports, and gave commandment that every clergyman was to read from the pulpit, on Sunday, that, it was the royal will and pleasure that the young people should play at football, cricket, and other games and pastimes on the Lord's-day afternoon, godly ministers, who really loved the Lord, did not know what to do. One of them thought, perhaps, it would be well to do as the king ordered, and to say something beside, so, when the Sunday came for reading the Book of

Sports to the people, he said, "I am commanded by the king and the authorities to read to you the following document; but it grieves my heart and conscience to have to read it. I know it is wicked, and wrong, and shameful, and abominable to desecrate the Sabbath as you are invited to do, and I wonder what will become of my country when even from the church itself Sabbath-breaking is recommended." So, the good man spoke, to the relief of his own conscience, and in hope of arousing the consciences of others. It happened that there was in the congregation, that day, a young man who had always been a ringleader in the Sabbath sports; he was no sooner out of church, in the morning, than he was on the village green, fast and furious in all the amusements of the time; but, when he heard that Book of Sports read, he said to himself, "well, I acted in that way on my own account, and it, was wrong enough for me to do so; but now I say with the minister, "What is to become of all the country if everybody is to be as bad as I have been? What will happen to the nation if this kind of thing is to go on?" The thought struck him so forcibly that he became first a serious character, and then a true seeker after God, and afterwards a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. So it came: to pass that, when the devil thought he was going to have everything his own way, that very day, this young man was born to God,—truly, "born out of due time."

I recollect reading a very striking saying of Mr. Bunyan's. He said he had good reason to believe that, in the generation after him, there would be many more saints than in the one of which he formed a part, and his belief was based upon the fact that, wherever he went, he found that there were so many great sinners that he hoped they would be converted, and become eminent servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, there was a blessed truth at the back of that hope of his; for, very often, where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound; and when the Word of God seems to grow scarce, and the candle of the gospel burns but dimly, we may pray and expect that even then, some may be "born out of due time" to the praise of the glory of that grace which saves as it wills, and often selects the very chief of sinners to be the subjects of it's almighty power.

There have been some dear friends, who may be said to have been "born out of due time," for they have been converted to God after it seemed

impossible that they ever should be. I recollect, well reading of one who imbibed sceptical notions, and became exceedingly furious against the preaching of the Word. One day, in Edinburgh, he heard it said that, a certain eminent minister of the gospel intended, if he met, him, to speak with him about his soul; whereupon the man uttered some very strong expressions, and, amongst other wicked things, he said, "I shall never be converted unless I lose my senses:" All who were acquainted with him, and who knew how desperately he was set against the gospel, thought that his was indeed a hopeless case; but, in the infinite mercy of God, it turned out to be quite the opposite. He began to suffer from great incoherence of thought, his mind gradually wandered, when he was trying to speak, he often spoke utter nonsense. He became unfit for business, and had to be put into the custody of someone who watched him as his keeper. Reason was not actually gone, but it was reeling upon its throne; and while he was in that sad state, the case of Nebuchadnezzar came to his mind, and he wondered whether God had given him up, altogether, on account of what he had said,—that he would never be converted while he was in his senses. He turned his mind, all shipwrecked and battered as it, was, towards God and out of the depths of his half-bewildered spirit, he cried unto the Lord as Nebuchadnezzar did, and his mind returned to him, and he became a humble, gentle, holy believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you not think, dear friends, that he also was "one born out of due time"? The time of salvation seemed utterly past so far as he was concerned. He had made a covenant with death, and a league with hell; he had cast off those ordinary beliefs which many men hold even though they do not obey them; yet, notwithstanding all that, the surprising grace of God dealt with him after its own sovereign manner, and laid him low, that it might bring him up again. I do not pray that such a thing may happen to anybody here; but I do pray that God may bring you to Christ somehow, and anyhow; and if, in order to attain that end, you have to be driven to the very gates of hell,—so long as you do not actually pass through them,—I will rejoice if, afterwards, you are led to flee to Christ for refuge.

Another instance of "one born out of due time" occurs in the case of one converted after the spiritual father is dead. We sometimes see posthumous children, that is, those who are born after the father is

deceased; and there is generally much sorrow mingled with the thought of such births, for the poor widow's heart is doubly troubled by the extra care needed for the little stranger who arrives after the bread-winner of the family is taken away. But if a man is the means of bringing another to Christ after he himself is dead, there need be no sorrow about that matter. There have been many, many instances in which earnest Christian people have sought the conversion of their relatives or friends; they have prayed for them, and wept over them, and pleaded with them, but all their efforts have been unsuccessful; yet, after their death, the memory of their holy zeal has touched the conscience, of the one who would not yield before, and brought him to Christ. I wish, dear friends, that your godly mother, who is in heaven, and who died leaving her son unsaved, might seem to come to you just now. I ask for no apparition, but that she may be consciously present to your mind, and that her dying words may ring in your ear, for perhaps the remembrance of what she said may be blessed to you even now. When I am taken away, I can but wish that any true and faithful word that I have spoken may still continue to speak to, you from my grave. When good Mr. Payson died, he begged that his people might come and see him, if they wished, before he was interred; and those who did so read these words on his bosom, "Remember the word which I have spoken unto you being yet present with you." It was thus his desire, you see, that he should have posthumous spiritual children, that they should be born to God even though they should seem to be "born out of due time." Ah! you wives, who have been praying for your husbands these many years, never give them up, because they may be brought to Christ when you yourselves will be in heaven. Mothers and fathers, never cease pleading for your children, for they, too, may be brought to Jesus when you are among the angels. Up in one of the northern counties of England, there was a woman, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose prayer went up continually for her husband; but he never entered the house of God, and despised her for doing so. She was accustomed to go to her usual place of worship alone, so far as any human companions were concerned, yet she was not quite alone, for there was a dog that always went with her. This dog curled himself up under the seat, and lay quite still during the service, and then walked home with his mistress. The first Sunday after she was dead, the poor dog went off to the meeting-house as usual, and curled himself up in his old

place. He did the, same the next Sunday, and the husband, noticing the dog start out so regularly, was struck by its action, and wondered where the dog went now that his mistress was gone; so he thought he would go and see. The dog went before him to his, mistress's old seat, and curled himself up; the man went in after the dog, and sat down in his wife's place, and God helped the minister, that day, to show him that his good works and self-righteousness in which he had always trusted, would not be sufficient for his salvation, and he preached to him the full salvation of Christ Jesus, and the man believed and lived. Was not he also "born out of due time," for his wife's prayers for him were a all over, and she was gone? Yet was he brought to Christ.

The subject is one upon which I might enlarge indefinitely, but I would rather have you to supply further instances of similar blessing, by urging you to persevere in prayer, you who are seeking the salvation of others.

Some have been "born out of due time" because they have been converted to God in extreme old age. I should like to encourage any very aged person who is here, and still unsaved, and to drive away altogether the notion that it is too late to seek the Lord. It never is too late so long as life lasts, and there is the power to repent of sin and to turn to the Lord.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

I will not quote cases, but I have a vivid recollection of a good many persons who have been saved at the age of seventy or eighty. We have had persons, past both of those periods, baptized upon profession of their newly-found faith. The world's proverb says, "It is never too late to mend:" "but Christ would tell you, if he were here in bodily presence, that it is never too late for him to mend you, or rather, for him to make you anew, for that is the work he undertakes to do. It is never too late for him to stretch out his pierced hand, and help the man, who is tottering on his staff, to become a babe in Christ. Yet, surely when very old men are born again, they seem to be "born out of due time."

Many of you have not yet come of old age, yet, if God should save you to-

night, you would be as those who are "born out of due time," because you are on the very brink of the grave. Consumption has laid its cruel hand upon you, and pulled down all your strength. In all probability, you will not be long in this world. You have come out to-night, but you are half-afraid that you have done wrong in coming in the state you are in, with that terrible cough that you have; yet you have not found the Savior. O my dear young friend, wherever you may be, it is a sad, sad thing to be carrying about with you your death-warrant, as you certainly are doing, and yet to have no warrant to believe that, when you die, it will be well with you! Oh, I pray you, do not let Satan tempt you with the idea that, now, when sickness is upon you, there is no hope for you! Come to Jesus, however consumptive you look. Come to Jesus, young man, with that chest that scarcely allows you to breathe. Come unto him, for he will not cast you away. I remember one, whom I met at Mentone, who had gone there in the hope of lengthening his life; but that was quite out of the question, for he was too far gone when he came. He, had two sisters, who were sent for to come to him, for it was certain that he could not live long. He himself was under deep concern of soul, earnestly seeking the Lord, but he could not find him. Day after day, week after week, he had been getting worse and worse, and showing all the signs of his approaching departure; but he could not find peace with God. At last, his sisters came from England. They arrived just in time. They found him very anxious about his soul; that night, they spoke with him of Jesus, and in the morning, early, when they woke, they went to him and he was sitting up in bed, all pale and ghostlike, he said, "Sisters, Christ has forgiven me;" and he fell back on his pillow, and he was gone home. There was an end of his suffering and weakness here below; but the consolation of that last word to them, and of the joy that, beamed from his poor eyes, was enough to make them gladly commit his body to the tomb. "Sisters, Christ has forgiven me." Ah! he was indeed "born out of due time," "born between the very jaws of death; but death's jaws could not close upon him till he had received forgiveness from his Savior. I beseech any of you, who are in a similar condition to his, do not put off seeking the Lord, but, hasten to find him even now.

Once more, there are some who are "born out of due time" because they are born all of a sudden. They suddenly come to Christ; they suddenly

find peace; they are suddenly saved. I wish that might happen to some here tonight. There is no need of any set period for this all-important matter; time, is no element in the case. God can work conviction and conversion in a single instant. You know that, sometimes, you see a flash of lightning, and then you wait severed seconds before you hear the thunder; but when a storm is right, overhead, the flash and the slap are simultaneous, and down comes the pouring rain at the same time. And, in like manner, the Lord knows how to send flash of conviction, and, at the same instant, to make his deep voice of mercy to be heard, in the soul, and to send the waterfloods of grace upon the spirit there and then. Why should, he not, do so to-night for any of you who need these blessings.

Now I will tell you the special reason why I chose this text; that is because this is the 29th of February, and it is a Sunday. There is a large number of you who never saw a 29th of February on Sunday before, and there is a larger number still who will never see the 29th of February on a Sunday again. I suppose it will be eight-and-twenty years before that will occur again. So, this is a Sunday thrown in, as it were; it is an odd kind of day, an extra day in the calendar. If you ask our friends of the Greek Church, the Russians, they will tell you that there is not such a day at all, for they keep to the old system of reckoning time. This plan of putting in an odd day, every four years, to make our days square with the sun, is a very good and proper one; still, it is a kind of a day thrown in; and it seemed to me that, if the Lord would convert some souls on this odd day in this leap year, it would make the, 29th of February, that came on a Sunday, to be specially memorable. You will not forget it if it is the day of your conversion; you will say to your children, it may be, eight-and-twenty years hence, if you are alive, "Ah! I recollect when the 29th of February last came on a Sunday, and that was the day when I sought and found the Lord. Mr. Spurgeon said that I was like the apostle Paul, 'one born out of due time,' and so I was; yet I was born in due time, I know, according to the covenant of grace." Oh that the Lord, of his infinite mercy, having given us this special day, would now give us a special blessing, and bring many to himself this leap year! Oh, that all of you, who are still unsaved, would make a leap right, out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, his Holy Spirit enabling you so to do by a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ! And you Christian people, pray for a special

and unusual blessing, a 29th of February blessing. Ask God to give it to us, in his infinite mercy, that many and many a soul may be "born out of due time" this very night.

Who shall it be? And where shall the work of repentance begin? Does not somebody over there say, "Lord, let it be me"? There is said to, be a special opportunity of making proposals in leap year; but I can tell you, if you make a proposal to come to Christ, that he has long ago set his heart on you. You would never have thought of proposing to him if he had not first of all ordained to bring you to himself. If you come to him, he will receive you; and oh! in his great mercy, may the Holy Spirit incline you to come to him this 29th of February float falls upon a Sunday.

II. Now I have only two or three minutes left for the second part of my subject,—THE SURE EVIDENCES OF PAUL'S SPIRITUAL BIRTH.

Though Paul was in spiritual sense, "born out of due time," he was truly born again; and those persons, who have been converted at singular times, and; under strange circumstances, have been really converted. How do we know that Paul was born again, and that he was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

I answer, first, because he had seen the Lord. After mentioning those who saw the risen Christ, he says, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." The first, evidence that he was an apostle was that he had actually beheld the Lord. Now, in a spiritual sense, one of the marks of a true believer is that he has seen the Lord. My dear friend, if you have looked to Christ for forgiveness, oven though you have only looked to him to-night, and this is an odd night—the 29th of February, yet, if you have by faith seen Jesus on the cross, and truly trusted him, you are as much saved as the man is who believed in Christ fifty years ago. Looking to Jesus is the evidence that we are born again; and happy is everyone who can truthfully say, concerning Christ." He was seen of me also."

"I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood."

I looked to him; he looked on me; and we were one for ever. I trusted to him, and therefore I am saved. If you can say that from your heart and the Holy Spirit bears witness that what you say is true,, you. need, not raise any question about your new birth. If thou art trusting in Jesus, it is well with thy soul in time and to eternity.

The next evidence of his spiritual birth, which Paul gave, was that he confessed his sin. Read the verse following our text: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." See how he confessed his sin and forsook it. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Are you, dear friend; willing now to confess your sin? Do you turn from it with loathing. Do you desire, henceforth, to be delivered entirely from it? Well, then, your repentance is another sure evidence that you are born again. If you have seen Jesus taking your sin upon himself, and suffering its dread penalty; if you have confessed your sin, and by faith laid it upon him as your Sacrifice and Substitute, you are born again, though you may, have been, in a certain sense, "born out of due time."

Next, we are sure that Paul was really born again because he was thoroughly converted. Never was there a greater change in any man than there was in him; he never went back to his former life, and he had no hankering to return to it. With him, old things had passed away, and all things had become new; he was, indeed, a new creature in Christ Jesus.

I am sure he was converted, also, because he praised the grace of God. Read the 10th verse: "By the grace of God I am what I am." Even when he truthfully says, "I labored more abundantly than they all;" he humbly adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." It its a sure sign of conversion when a man knows that he is saved by grace alone, and does not, attribute it to his own merit, or his own work, but praises and adores the sovereign mercy and grace of God. Have you that evidence, dear friend? Then are you born aright, even though "born out of due time."

And, lastly, Paul proved that he was a true citizen of the New Jerusalem because he became, of all men, most zealous for Christ, zealous for the gospel, zealous for the winning of souls, he seemed to try to, do all he could to undo the mischief he had wrought in the days of his unregeneracy, and to, work with both his hands and all his heart to establish and extend the kingdom which once he tried to overthrow. O God, by thy great mercy, cause another Paul to be born in this house of prayer to-night! Thou canst do it; wilt thou not bring to thyself, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, some wild, threatening, blustering, blaspheming hater of Christ, lay him at the dear feet of the Crucified, and cause him to look up and live? Pray for this, dear Christian people. Pray for it to-night, when you reach your homes as well as now; and then we shall have special reason to recollect this 29th of February. Possibly, someone, who will in days to come stand on this very spot preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, will say to you, "Do you remember the 29th of February, 1880? Do you recollect the text, 'One born out of due time'?" I trust that some of you will be here to hear him say, "I recollect it better than any of you do, for that was the night when I was born to God, glory be to his holy name!" Now pray for it with all your hearts, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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A Lecture For Little-Faith

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth - 2 Thessalonians 1:3

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet."

Whether we shall praise God or not, is not left to our opinion. Although the commandment saith not, "Thou shalt praise the Lord," yet praise is God's most righteous due, and every man, as a partaker of God's bounty, and especially every Christian, is bound to praise God, as it is meet. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment left on record specially prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving; but still the law written upon the heart, teacheth us with divine authority that it is right to praise God; and this unwritten mandate hath as much power and authority about it, as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. The Christian's duty is to praise God. Think not ye who are always mourning that ye are guiltless in that respect; imagine not that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. It is your duty to praise him. You are bound by the bonds of his love as long as you live to bless his name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God. This is taught us in the text,— "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Let not your harps then hang upon the willows, ye mourning children of the Lord. It is your duty to strike them and bring forth their loudest music. It is sinful if you to cease from praising God; you are blessed in order that you may bless him; and if you do not praise God you are not bringing forth the fruit, which he as the divine husbandman, may well expect at your hands. Go forth then, ye sons of God, and chant his praise. With every morning's dawn lift up your notes of thanksgiving, and every evening let the setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, so shall God himself look down from heaven and accept your praises as like in kind, though not equal in degree, to the praises of cherubim and seraphim. It seems, however, that the apostle Paul in this instance exercised praise not for himself but for others, for the church at Thessalonica. If any of you should in ignorance ask the question why it was that Paul should take so deep an interest in the salvation of these saints, and in their growth in faith, I would remind you, that this is a secret known only to the men who have brought forth and nourished children, and therefore love them. The apostle Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica, most of these people were his spiritual offspring, by the words of his mouth, attended by the power of

the Spirit, they had been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; and they who have had spiritual children who have brought many sons unto God, can tell you that there is an interest felt by a spiritual father, that is not to be equalled even by the tender affection of a mother towards her babe. "Ay," said the apostle, "I have been tender over you as a nursing father," and in another place he says he had "travailed in birth," for their souls. This is a secret not known to the hireling minister. Only he whom God hath himself ordained and thrust forth into the work, only he who has had his tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar, can tell you what it is to agonize for men's souls before they are converted, and what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the travail of their souls is seen in the salvation of God's elect.

And now, beloved, having thus given you two thoughts which seemed to me to arise naturally from the text, I shall repair at once to the object of this morning's discourse. The apostle thanks God that the faith of the Thessalonians had grown exceedingly. Leaving out the rest of the text, I shall direct your attention this morning to the subject of growth in faith. Faith hath degrees.

In the first place, I shall endeavor to notice *the inconveniences of little faith*; secondly, *the means of promoting its growth*; and thirdly, *a certain high attainment, unto which faith will assuredly grow, if we diligently water and cultivate it*.

I. In the first place, THE INCONVENIENCES OF LITTLE FAITH. When faith first commences in the soul, it is like a grain of mustard seed of which the Saviour said it was the least of all seeds, but as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bedew it with the sacred moisture of his grace, it germinates and grows and begins to spread, until at last it becomes a great tree. To use another figure: when faith commences in the soul it is simply *looking* unto Jesus, and perhaps even then there are so many clouds of doubts and so much dimness of the eye, that we have need for the light of the Spirit to shine upon the cross before we are able even so much as to see it. When faith grows a little, it rises from looking to Christ to *coming* to Christ. He who stood afar off and looked to the cross by-and-bye plucks up courage, and getting heart to himself, he runneth up to

the cross. or perhaps he doth not run. but hath to be drawn before he can so much as creep thither, and even then it is with a limping gait that he draweth nigh to Christ the Saviour. But that done, faith goeth a little farther: it *layeth hold* on Christ; it begins to see him in his excellency, and appropriates him in some degree, conceives him to be a real Christ and a real Saviour, and is convinced of his suitability. And when it hath done as much as that, it goeth further; it leaneth on Christ. it leaneth on its Beloved; casteth all the burden of its cares, sorrows, and griefs upon that blessed shoulder, and permitteth all its sins to be swallowed up in the great red sea of the Saviour's blood. And faith can then go further still; for having seen and ran towards him and laid hold upon him, and having leaned upon him, faith in the next place puts in a humble, but a sure and *certain claim* to all that Christ is and all that he has wrought; and then, trusting alone in this, appropriating all this to itself, faith mounteth to full assurance; and out of heaven there is no state more rapturous and blessed. But, as I have observed at the beginning, faith is but very small, and there are some Christians who never get out of little faith all the while they are here. You notice in John Bunyan's "*Pilgrim's Progress*," how many Little-faith's he mentions There is our old friend Ready-to-halt, who went all the way to the celestial city on crutches but left them when he went into the river Jordan. Then there is little Feeblemind, who carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the banks of the river and then left it, and ordered it to be buried in a dunghill that none might inherit it. Then there is Mr. Fearing, too, who used to stumble over a straw, and was always frightened if he saw a drop of rain, because he thought the floods of heaven were let loose upon him. And you remember Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-afraid, who were so long locked up in the dungeon of Giant Despair, that they were almost starved to death, and there was little left of them but skin and bone; and poor Mr. Feeblemind, who had been taken into the cave of Giant Slay-good who was about to eat him, when Great-heart came to his deliverance. John Bunyan was a very wise man He has put a great many of those characters in his book, because there are a great many of them. He has not left us with one Mr. Ready-to-halt, but he has given us seven or eight graphic characters because he himself in his own time has been one of them, and he had known many others who had walked in the same path. I doubt not I have a very large congregation this morning of this very class of persons. Now

let me notice the inconveniences of little faith.

The first inconvenience of little faith is that *while it is always sure of heaven it very seldom thinks so*. Little-faith is quite as sure of heaven as Great-faith. When Jesus Christ counts up his jewels at the last day he will take to himself the little pearls as well as the great ones. If a diamond be never so small yet it is precious because it is a diamond. So will faith, be it never so little, if it be true faith, Christ will never lose even the smallest jewel of his crown. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, because the name of Little-faith is in the book of eternal life. Little-faith was chosen of God before the foundation of the world. Little-faith was bought with the blood of Christ; ay, and he cost as much as Great-faith. "For every man a shekel" was of redemption. Every man, whether great or small, prince or peasant, had to redeem himself with a shekel. Christ has bought all, both little and great, with the same most precious blood. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, for God has begun the good work in him and he will carry it on. God loves him and he will love him unto the end. God has provided a crown for him, and he will not allow the crown to hang there without a head; he has erected for him a mansion in heaven, and he will not allow the mansion to stand untenanted for ever. Little-faith is always safe, but he very seldom knows it. If you meet him he is sometimes afraid of hell; very often afraid that the wrath of God abideth on him. He will tell you that the country on the other side the flood can never belong to a worm so base as he. Sometimes it is because he feels himself so unworthy, another time it is because the things of God are too good to be true, he says, or he cannot think they can be true to such an one as he is. Sometimes he is afraid he is not elect; another time he fears that he has not been called aright. that he has not come to Christ aright. Another time his fears are that he will not hold on to the end, that he shall not be able to persevere, and if you kill a thousand of his fears he is sure to have another host by to-morrow; for unbelief is one of those things that you cannot destroy. "It hath," saith Bunyan, "as many lives as a cat;" you may kill it over and over again, but still it lives. It is one of those ill weeds that sleep in the soil even after it has been burned, and it only needs a little encouragement to grow again. Now Great-faith is sure of heaven, and he knows it. He climbs Pisgah's top, and views the landscape o'er; he drinks in the mysteries of paradise even before he enters within the pearly gates. He sees the streets

that are paved with gold; he beholds the walls of the city, the foundations whereof are of precious stones; he hears the mystic music of the glorified, and begins to smell on earth the perfumes of heaven. But poor Little-faith can scarcely look at the sun; he very seldom sees the light. he gropes in the valley, and while all is safe he always thinks himself unsafe. That is one of the disadvantages of Little-faith.

Another disadvantage is that *Little-faith, while always having grace enough* (for that is Little-faith's promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee") *yet never thinks he has grace enough*. He will have quite enough grace to carry him to heaven; and Great-heart won't have any more. The greatest saint, when he entered heaven, found that he went in with an empty wallet: he had eaten his last crust of bread when he got there. The manna ceased when the children of Israel entered into Canaan. they had none to carry with them there: they began to eat the corn of the land when the manna of the wilderness had ceased But Little-faith is always afraid that he has not grace enough. You see him in trouble. "Oh!" says he, "I shall never be able to hold my head above water." Blessed be God he never can sink. If you see him in prosperity, he is afraid he shall be intoxicated with pride; that he shall turn aside like Balaam. If you meet him attacked by an enemy, he is scarcely able to say three words for himself; and he lets the enemy exact upon him. If you find him fighting the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ he holds his sword tight enough, good man, but he has not much strength in his arm to bring his sword down with might. He can do but little, for he is afraid that God's grace will not be sufficient for him. Great-faith, on the other hand, can shake the world. What cares he about trouble, trial, or duty?

He that helped him bears him through,
And makes him more than conqueror too."

He would face an army single-handed, if God commanded him; and "with the jaw-bone of an ass, he would slay heaps upon heaps, and thousands of men." There is no fear of his lacking strength. He can do all things, or can bear all sufferings, for his Lord is there. Come what may, his arm is always sufficient for him; he treads down his enemy, and his cry every day is like the shout of Deborah, "Oh my soul, thou hast trodden down

strength." Little-faith treads down strength too, but he does not know it. He kills his enemies, but has not eye-sight enough to see the slain. He often hits so hard that his foemen retreat, but he thinks they are there still. He conjures up a thousand phantoms, and when he has routed his real enemies he makes others, and trembles at the phantoms which he has himself made. Little-faith will assuredly find that his garments will not wax old, that his shoes shall be iron and brass, and that as his day is so shall his strength be; but all the way he will be murmuring, because he thinks his garments will grow old, that his feet will be blistered and sore; and he is terrified lest the day should be too heavy for him and that the evil of the day shall more than counterbalance his grace. Ay, it is an inconvenient thing to have little faith, for little faith perverts everything into sorrow and grief.

Again, there is a sad inconvenience about Little-faith, namely, that *if Little-faith be sorely tempted to sin, he is apt to fall*. Strong-faith can well contest with the enemy. Satan comes along, and says, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Nay," we say, "thou canst not give us all these things, for they are ours already." "Nay," says he, "but ye are poor, naked and miserable." "Ay," say we to him, "but still these things are ours, and it is good for us to be poor, good for us to be without earthly goods, or else our Father would give them to us." "Oh," says Satan, "you deceive yourselves; you have no portion in these things; but if you will serve me, then I will make you rich and happy here." Strong-faith says, "Serve thee, thou fiend! Avaunt! Dost thou offer me silver?—behold God giveth me gold. Dost thou say to me, "I will give thee this if thou disobey?—fool that thou art! I have a thousand times as great wages for my obedience as thou canst offer for my disobedience." But when Satan meets Little-faith, he says to him, "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down;" and poor Little faith is so afraid that he is not a son of God that he is very apt to cast himself down upon the supposition. "There," says Satan, "I will give thee all this if thou wilt disobey." Little-faith says, "I am not quite sure that I am a child of God, that I have a portion among them that are sanctified;" and he is very apt to fall into sin by reason of the littleness of his faith. Yet at the same time I must observe that I have seen some Little-faiths who are far less apt to fall into sin than others. They have been so cautious that they dared not put one foot

before the other, because they were afraid they should put it awry: they scarcely even dared to open their lips, but they prayed, "O Lord, open thou my lips;" afraid that they should let a wrong word out, if they were to speak; always alarmed lest they should be falling into sin unconsciously, having a very tender conscience. Well, I like people of this sort. I have sometimes thought that Little-faith holds tighter by Christ than any other. For a man who is very near drowning is sure to clutch the plank all the tighter with the grasp of a drowning man, which tightens and becomes more clenched the more his hope is decreased. Well, beloved, Little-faith may be kept from falling, but this is the fruit of tender conscience and not of little faith. Careful walking is not the result of little faith; it may go with it, and so may keep Little-faith from perishing, but little faith is in itself a dangerous thing, laying us open to innumerable temptations, and taking away very much of our strength to resist them. "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" and if that joy ceases you become weak and very apt to turn aside. Beloved, you who are Little-faiths, I tell you it is inconvenient for you always to remain so; for you have many nights and few days. Your years are like Norwegian years—very long winters and very short summers. You have many howlings, but very little of shouting; you are often playing upon the pipe of mourning, but very seldom sounding the trump of exultation. I would to God you could change your notes a little. Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days? It is not the Lord's will that you should be always sorrowful. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Oh, ye that have been fasting, anoint your heads and wash your faces, that ye appear not unto men to fast. Oh, ye that are sad in heart, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Therefore rejoice for ye shall praise him. Say unto yourselves, "Why art thou cast down, Oh, soul and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance and my God."

II. Having thus noticed the inconveniences and disadvantages of little faith, let me give you A FEW RULES WITH REGARD TO THE WAY OF STRENGTHENING IT. If you would have your little faith grow into great faith, you must *feed* it well. Faith is a feeding grace. It does not ask you to give it the things that are seen, but it does ask you to give it the promise

of the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Thou tellest me thou hast little faith. I ask thee whether thou art given to the meditation of God's Word, whether thou hast studied the promises whether thou art wont to carry one of those sacred things about with thee every day? Dost thou reply, "No?" Then, I tell thee, I do not wonder at thine unbelief He who deals largely with the promises, will, under grace, very soon find that there is great room for believing them. Get a promise, beloved, every day, and take it with you wherever you go; mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it. Don't do as some men do—who think it a Christian duty to read a chapter every morning, and they read one as long as your arm without understanding it at all; but take out some choice text and pray the Lord during the day to break it up to your mind. Do as Luther says: "When I get hold of a promise," says he, "I look upon it as I would a fruit tree. I think—there hang the fruits above my head, and if I would get them I must shake the tree to and fro." So I take a promise and meditate upon it; I shake it to and fro, and sometimes the mellow fruit falls into my hand, at other times the fruit is less ready to fall, but I never leave off till I get it. I shake, shake all the day long; I turn the text over and over again, and at last the pomegranate droppeth down, and my soul is comforted with apples, for it was sick of love. Do that, Christian. Deal much with the promises; have much commerce with these powders of the merchant: there is a rich perfume in every promise of God; taken; it is an alabaster box, break it by meditation, and the sweet scent of faith shall be shed abroad in your house.

Again, *prove the promise*, and in that way you will get your faith strengthened. When you are at any time placed in distress, take a promise and see whether it is true. Suppose you are very near lacking bread; take this promise, "Thy bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure." Rise up in the morning when nothing is in the cupboard, and say, "I will see whether God will keep this promise;" and if he does, do not forget it; set it down in your book; make a mark in your Bible against it. Do as the old woman did, who put T and P against the promise, and told her minister that it means "tried and proved;" so that when she was again in distress, she could not help believing. Have you been exercised by Satan? There is a promise that says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Take that and prove it, and when you have proved it, make a mark against it,

and say, "This I know is true, for I have proved it to be so." There is nothing in the world that can confirm faith like proof. "What I want," said one, "is facts." And so it is with the Christian. What he wants is a fact to make him believe. The older you grow the stronger your faith ought to become, for you have so many more facts with which to buttress your faith, and compel you to believe in God. Only think of a man who has come to be seventy years of age what a pile of evidence could he accumulate if he kept a note of all God's providential goodness and all his lovingkindness. You do not wonder when you hear a man, the hairs of whose head are white with the sunlight of heaven, get up and say, "These fifty years have I served God, and he has never forsaken me I can bear willing testimony to his faithfulness, not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath promised, all hath come to pass." Now we, who are young beginners, must not expect that our faith will be so strong as it will be in years to come. Every instance of God's love should make us believe him more; and as each promise passes by, and we can see the fulfillment of it at the heels thereof, we must be compelled and constrained to say, that God has kept so many of these promises and will keep them unto the end. But the worst of it is that we forget them all, and so we begin to have grey hairs sprinkled on our heads, and we have no more faith than when we began, because we have forgotten God's repeated answers, and though he has fulfilled the promise we have suffered it to lie buried in forgetfulness.

Another plan I would recommend for the strengthening of your faith, though not so excellent as the last, is to *associate yourselves with Godly and much-tried men*. It is astonishing how young believers will get their faith refreshed by talking with old and advanced Christians. Perhaps you are in great doubt and distress. you run off to an old brother, and you say, "Oh my dear friend, I am afraid I am not a child of God at all, I am in such deep distress, I have had blasphemous thoughts cast into my heart; if I were a child of God I should never feel like that." The old man smiles, and says, "Ah! you have not gone very far on the road to heaven, or else you would know better. Why I am the subject of these thoughts very often. Old as I am, and though I hope I have enjoyed the full assurance for a long time, yet there are seasons when if I could have heaven for a grain of faith, I could not think heaven was mine, for I could not find so

much as a grain in me, though it is there." And he will tell you what dangers he has passed, and of the sovereign love that kept him; of the temptations that threatened to ensnare him, and of the wisdom that guided his feet; and he will tell you of his own weakness and God's omnipotence; of his own emptiness, and God's fullness; of his own changeableness, and God's immutability, and if after talking with such a man you don't believe surely you are sinful indeed; for "out of the mouth of two witnesses, the whole shall be established," but when there are many such who can bear testimony to God, it would be foul sin indeed if we were to doubt him.

Another way whereby you may obtain increase of faith is to *labor to get as much as possible free from self*. I have striven with all my might to attain the position of perfect indifference of all men. I have found at times, if I have been much praised in company, and if my heart has given way a little, and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased, that the very next time I was censured and abused. I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I took the praise rendered me liable to lay hold upon the censure. So that I have always tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man's praise than of his censure, but to fix my heart simply upon this—I know that I have a right motive in what I attempt to do, I am conscious that I endeavor to serve God with a single eye to his glory, and therefore it is not for me to take praise from man nor censure, but to stand independently upon the one rock of right doing. Now the same thing will apply to you. Perhaps you find yourself full of virtue and grace one day, and the devil flatters you: "Ah! you are a bright Christian; you might join the church now, you would be quite an honor to it; see how well you are prospering." And unconsciously to yourself you believe the sound of that syren music, and you half believe that really you are growing rich in grace. Well, the next day you find yourself very low indeed in godly matters. Perhaps you fall into some sin, and now the devil says, "Ah! now you are no child of God; look at your sins." Beloved, the only way in which you can maintain your faith is to live above the praise of self and the censure of self; to live simply upon the blood and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who can say in the midst of all his virtues, "These are but dross and dung; my hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus Christ's finished sacrifice"—such a man, when sins prevail, will find

his faith remain constant, for he will say "I once was full of virtue and then I did not trust in myself, and now I have none still do I trust in my Saviour, for change as I may, he changeth not. If I had to depend on myself in the least degree then it would be up and down, up and down, but since I rely on what Christ has done, since he is the unbuttressed pillar of my hope, then come what may my soul doth rest secure, confident in faith. Faith will never be weak if self be weak, but when self is strong, faith cannot be strong, for self is very much like what the gardener calls the sucker at the bottom of the tree, which never bears fruit but only sucks away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which sucks away the nourishment from faith, and you must cut it up or else your faith will always be little faith, and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

But, perhaps, the only way in which most men get their faith increased is by *great trouble*. We don't grow strong in faith on sunshiny days. It is only in strong weather that a man gets faith. Faith is not an attainment that droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven; it generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks: how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March winds and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but it was March's rough wind, the blustering month of old Boreas shaking the tree to and fro and causing its roots to bind themselves around the rocks. So must it be with us. We don't make great soldiers in the barracks at home; they must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We cannot expect to make good sailors on the Serpentine; they must be made far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl, and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. So with Christians. Great-faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-heart would never have been Mr. Great-heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-trouble. Valiant-for-truth would never have put to fight those foes, and have been so valiant, if the foes had not first attacked him. So with us: we must expect great troubles before we shall attain to much faith.

Then he who would have great faith, must *exercise what he has*. I should

not like to-morrow to go and shoe horses, or to make horse shoes on an anvil. I am sure my arm would ache in the first hour with lifting the heavy hammer and banging it down so many times. Whatever the time might be, I should not be able to keep time. The reason why the blacksmith's arm does not tire is, because he is used to it. He has kept at it all day long these many years, till there's an arm for you! He turns up his sleeve and shows you the strong sinew that never tires, so strong has it become by use. Do you want to get your faith strong? Use it. You lazy lie-a-bed Christians, that go up to your churches and chapels, and take your seats, and hear our sermons, and talk about getting good, but never think about doing good; ye that are letting hell fill beneath you, and yet are too idle to stretch out your hands to pluck brands from the eternal burning; ye that see sin running down your streets, yet can never put so much as your foot to turn or stem the current, I wonder not that you have to complain of the littleness of your faith. It ought to be little; you do but little. and why should God give you more strength than you mean to use. Strong faith must always be an exercised faith, and he that dares not exercise the faith he has shall not have more "Take away from him the one talent and give it to him that hath, because he did not put it out to usury." In Mr. Whitfield's life, you do not often find him complaining of want of faith, or if he did, it was when he only preached nine times a week; he never complained when he preached sixteen times. Read Grimshaw's life: you do not often find him troubled with despondency when he preached twenty-four times in seven days; it was only when he was growing a little idle and only preached twelve times. Keep always at it, and all at it, and there is not much fear of your faith becoming weak. It is with our faith as with boys in the winter time There they go round the fire, rubbing and chafing their hands to keep the blood in circulation, and almost fighting each other to see which shall sit on the fire and get warm. At last the father comes, and says, "Boys, this won't do, you will never get warm by these artificial means run out and do some work." Then they all go out, and they come in again with a ruddy hue in their cheeks their hands no longer tingle and they say, "Well, father, we didn't think it half so warm as it is." So must it be with you: you must set to work if you would have your faith grow strong and warm. True, your works won't save you; but faith without works is dead, frozen to death; but faith with works groweth to a red heat of fervency and to the strength of stability. Go and teach in

the Sunday school, or go and catch seven or eight poor ragged children; go and visit the poor old woman in her hovel; go and see some poor dying creatures in the back streets of our great city, and you will say, "Dear me, how wonderfully my faith is refreshed just by doing something." You have been watering yourself whilst you were watering others.

Now my last advice shall be this—the best way to get your faith strengthened is to have *communion with Christ*. If you commune with Christ, you cannot be unbelieving. When his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me, I cannot doubt. When my Beloved sits at his table, and he brings me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is his love, then indeed I do believe. When I feast with him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, ye that have been led in the green pastures, and have been made to lie down by the still waters; ye who have seen his rod and his stay, and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death; speak, ye that have sat at his feet with Mary, or laid your head upon his bosom with the well-beloved John; have you not found when you have been near to Christ your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away, then your faith has become weak? It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt him. When you cannot see him then you doubt him; but if you live in fellowship with him, you are like the ewe lambs of Nathan's parable, for you lie in his bosom, and eat from his table, and drink from his cup. You must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." There is no hesitation then; you must arise from the lowlands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

III. And now, in conclusion, there is A CERTAIN HIGH ATTAINMENT TO WHICH FAITH MAY, IF DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED, CERTAINLY ATTAIN. Can a man's faith grow so strong that he will never afterwards doubt at all? I reply, no. He who has the strongest faith will have sorrowful intervals of despondency. I suppose there has scarcely ever been a Christian who has not, at some time or other, had the most painful doubts concerning his acceptance in the Beloved. All God's children will have paroxysms of doubt even though they be usually strong in faith. Again, may a man so cultivate his faith that he may be infallibly sure that

he is a child of God—so sure that he has made no mistake—so sure that all the doubts and fears which may be thrust upon him may not be able at that time to get an advantage over him? I answer, yes, decidedly he may. A man may, in this life, be as sure of his acceptance in the Beloved as he is of his own existence. Nay, he not only may, but there are some of us who have enjoyed this precious state and privilege for years; we do not mean for years together—our peace has been interrupted, we have now and then been subjected to doubts; but I have known some—I knew one especially, who said that for thirty years he had enjoyed almost invariably a full sense of his acceptance in Christ. "I have had," he said "very often a sense of sin, but I have had with that a sense of the power of the blood of Christ; I have now and then for a little time had great despondency, but still I may say, taking it as a general rule, that for thirty years I have enjoyed the fullest assurance of my acceptance in the Beloved." I trust a large portion of God's people can say that for months and years they have not had to sing,

"Tis a point I long to know."

But they can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." I will try to depict the state of the Christian, he may be as poor as poverty can make him, but he is rich; he has no thought with regard to the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. He casts himself upon the providence of God; he believes that he who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, will not allow his children to go starving or barefooted. He has but little concern as to his temporal estate; he folds his arms and floats down the stream of providence singing all the way whether he float by mud bank, dark, dreary, and noxious, or by palace fair and valley pleasant, he alters not his position; he neither moves nor struggles; he has no will nor wish which way to swim, his only desire being to "lie passive in God's hand, and know no will but his." When the storm flies over his head he finds Christ to be a shelter from the tempest; when the heat is hot he finds Christ to be the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He just casts his anchor down deep into the sea, and when the wind blows, he sleeps; hurricanes may come about his ears, the masts creak, and every timber seems to be strained and every nail to start from its

place, but there he sleeps. Christ is at the helm. he says, "My anchor is within the vail, I know it will keep its hold." The earth shakes beneath his feet; but he says, "Though the earth be removed and mountains be cast into the sea, yet will not we fear, for God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in time of trouble." Ask him about his eternal interests, and he tells you that his only confidence is in Christ, and that die when he may, he knows he shall stand boldly at the last great day clothed in his Saviour's righteousness. He speaks very confidently though never boastingly; though he has no time to dance the giddy dance of presumption, he stands firmly on the rock of confidence. Perhaps you think he is proud—ah! he is a humble man; he lies low before the cross, but not before you, he can look you boldly in the face, and tell you that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to him. He knows that

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"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."

And die when he may he can lay his head upon the pillow of the promise, and breathe his life out on the Saviour's breast without a struggle or a murmur, crying—"Victory," in the arms of death; challenging Death to produce his sting, and demanding of the grave its victory. Such is the effect of strong faith; I repeat, the weakest in the world, by diligent cultivation may attain to it. Only seek the refreshing influence of the Divine Spirit, and walk in Christ's commandments, and live near to him; and ye that are dwarfs, like Zaccheus, shall become as giants; the hyssop on the wall shall start up into the dignity of the cedar in Lebanon, and ye that fly before your enemies shall yet be able to chase a thousand, and two of you shall put ten thousand to flight. May the Lord enable his poor little ones so to grow!

As for those of you who have no faith in Christ, let me remind you of one sad thing—namely, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." If thou hast not put thy trust in Christ, then God is angry with thee every day. "If thou turn not he will whet his sword, for he hath bent his bow and

made it ready." I beseech thee, cast thyself on Christ; he is worthy of thy trust; there is none other to trust to, he is willing to receive thee; he invites thee; he shed his blood for thee; he intercedes for thee. Believe on him, for thus his promise runs, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do both of these things. Believe on him, and then profess thy faith in baptism; and the Lord bless thee, and hold thee to the end, and make thee to increase exceedingly in faith, to the glory of God. May the Lord add his blessing!

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Lessons From Nature

Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies. - Psalm 104:17-18

This psalm is all through a song of nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to observe nature; and I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world, closed his eyes, lest the picturesque beauties of the scene should divert his mind from scriptural topics. This may be regarded by some as profound spirituality; to me it seems to savor of absurdity. There may be persons who think they have grown in grace when they have attained to this; it seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. To despise the creating work of God, what is it but, in a measure, to despise God himself? "Whoso mocketh the poor despiseth his Maker." To despise the Maker, then, is evidently a sin; to think little of God under the aspect of the Creator is a

crime. We should none of us think it a great honor to ourselves if our friends considered our productions to be unworthy of admiration, and rather injurious to their minds than improving. If when they passed our workmanship they turned their eyes away, lest they should suffer injury by looking at it, we should not regard them as very respectful to ourselves; surely the despising of that which is made is somewhat akin to the despising of the Maker himself. David tells us that "The Lord shall rejoice in his works." If he rejoices in what he has made, shall not those who have communion with him rejoice in his works also? "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein." Despise not the work, lest thou despise the worker.

This prejudice against the beauties of the material universe reminds me of the lingering love to Judaism, which acted like a spell upon Peter of old. When the sheet knit at the four corners descended before him, and the voice said, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat," he replied that he had not eaten anything that was common or unclean. He needed that the voice should speak to him from heaven again and again before he would fully learn the lesson, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." The Jew thinks this and that unclean, though Christ has cleansed it; and certain Christians appear to regard nature as unclean. The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, the glorious sunrise and sunset, the snow-clad Alps, the ancient forests, the mysterious glaciers, the boundless ocean, God hath cleansed them: call them not common. Here on this earth is Calvary where the Savior died, and by his sacrifice, offered not within walls and roofs, he made this outer world a temple wherein everything doth speak of God's glory. If thou be unclean, all things will be unclean to thee; but if thou hast washed thy robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, and if the Holy Spirit hath overshadowed thee, then this world is but a nether heaven; it is but the lower chamber of which the upper story glows with the full splendor of God, where angels see him face to face, and this lower story is not without glory, for in the person of Christ Jesus we have seen God, and have communion and fellowship with him even now.

It appears to me that those who would forbear the study of nature, or shun the observation of its beauties, are conscious of the weakness of their own spirituality. When the hermits and monks shut themselves out

from the temptations of life, foolish persons said, "These are strong in grace." Not so, they were so weak in grace that they were afraid to have their graces tried. They ran away from the battle like the cowards they were, and shut themselves up because they knew their swords were not of the true Jerusalem metal, and they were not men who could resist valiantly. Monasticism was the confession of a weakness which they endeavored to cover with the vain show of humility, and the presence of superior sanctity. If my graces are strong, I can look upon the outward world, and draw forth its good without feeling its evil, if evil there be; but if my religion is mainly fictitious, then hypocrisy dictates to me the affectation of unusual spirituality, or at any rate I have not grace enough to rise from a contemplation of the works of God to a nearer fellowship with God himself. It cannot be that nature of itself debases me, or diverts me from God; I ought to suspect a deficiency in my self when I find that the Creator's handiworks have not a good effect upon my soul.

Moreover, rest assured brethren, that he who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest revelation of his divine mind, wrote also the first book, the book of nature; and who are we that we should derogate from the worth of the first because we esteem the second. Milton's "Paradise Regained" is certainly inferior to his "Paradise Lost," but the Eternal God has no inferior productions, all his works are master-pieces. There is no quarrel between nature and revelation, fools only think so: to wise men the one illustrates and establishes the other. Walking in the fields at eventide, as Isaac did, I see in the ripening harvest the same God of whom I read in the word that he covenanted that seed-time and harvest should not cease. Surveying the midnight skies, I remember him who, while he calls the stars by their names, also bindeth up the broken in heart. Who will may neglect the volume of creation, or the volume of revelation, I shall delight in them both as long as I live.

Let us, then, follow David this morning, for when he wrote our text, he evidently traveled amongst the works of God, admiring and adoring. Let us go with him, and see if there be not something to be learned among the birds and storks, the wild goats and the conies.

I. Our first observation from our text shall be this: FOR EACH PLACE

GOD HAS PREPARED A SUITABLE FORM OF LIFE. For the fir trees, the stork; for the high hills, the wild goat, or steinbock; for the rocks, the conies, or rabbits. Almost every part of God's world was meant to be the abode of some creature or another. On earth, a countless company wait upon the Lord for meat; and as for the sea, it contains "creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts." Among the trees which shade the brooks, the birds are singing; in the tall sombre pine, the silent storks are building their nests; on the lofty crags, virgin as yet to human foot, the chamois leaps from ledge to ledge; and away, where human voice was never heard, the marmot, the mouse, and the rabbit (whichever creature the Hebrew may mean) find their dwelling-place among the rocks. The teaching of this fact is clear. We shall find that for all parts of the spiritual universe God has provided suitable forms of divine life. Think out that thought a moment. Each age has its saints. The first age had its holy men, who walked with God: and when the golden age had gone, and men everywhere had polluted themselves, God had his Noah. In after days, when men had again multiplied upon the face of the earth, and sin abounded, there was Job in the land of Uz, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob dwelling in tents in the land which had been given to them by promise. On whatever period of the world's history you choose to place your finger you may rest assured that as God is there, so is there also some form of the divine life extant; some of God's twice born creatures are to be found even in the most barren ages. If you come to a period like that of Ahab, when a lonely Elijah bitterly complains, "I, only I am left, and they seek my life to destroy it," you shall hear a still small voice that saith, "Yet have I reserved unto myself seven thousand men that have not bowed the knee to Baal." God has still his elect remnant in the most wicked times to whom he has given a banner, because of the truth. When the light was almost gone from Israel, and formalism had eclipsed the sun of Judaism, there were still a Simeon and an Anna waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Times of fearful persecution, when to mention the name of Christ was to sentence yourself to death, have not been devoid of saints, but rather in the hottest times of oppression God has brought forth heroes equal to the emergency. The fiercer the trial the stronger the men. The church of God, like the fabled Salamander, has lived and flourished amid the flames, and has seemed to feed upon the flames that threatened to devour her. As on the crags where it appears impossible for

life to exist God places wild goats, so on the high crags of persecution he upholds men whose feet are like hind's feet, and who glory as they tread upon their high places. Oppression brings out the heavenly manhood of the saints and lets the devil see what strength God can put into the weakness of man. There have been times of heresy too—such as the age of rampant Arianism, but saints have outlived it. God has provided for such an emergency brave defenders of the faith. What a man was Athanasius, when standing upright and alone he said, "I know that Jesus Christ is very God, and if all the world believe the contrary, I, Athanasius, stand against the world." Sardis may have a name to live and be dead, but the Lord saith, "thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Is not this an encouraging truth, for as it has been in the past it is in the present, and it will be in the future. Do not give way to gloomy forebodings as to the church's future welfare. Whine not with those who deplore these evil days, and prognosticate overwhelming ills. We are told that we are passing through a crisis, but I recollect that it was a crisis twenty years ago, and our grandsires could tell us of a crisis every year of the last fifty. The fact is there is no such crisis as is talked of. The crisis is past, for Christ said, "Now; is the crisis of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When Jesus went to Golgotha and bled and died, the crisis of the church and of the world was over; the victory of truth and of Christ was secured beyond all hazard. Even if times should darken and the night should grow thicker and thicker, rest assured that he who has the conies for the rocks, and goats for the high hills, and finds for the forests the stork, will find for every age a suitable form of Christian life that shall bring glory to his name.

As it has been in every age, so is it in every position in which men are found. Go into all classes of society, and you shall find that the Christian religion, if received in truth, is equally well adapted for all conditions. Here and there upon the throne have been found those that have feared God, and have gone from a crown on earth to a crown in heaven. There can be no better qualification for swaying a kingdom than obedience to the King of kings. Go straight down from the palace to the poor-house, little enough of comfort there, but the richest consolation which can be found for the meanest pauper, will be brought by that hand which was

nailed to the tree. He it is that can console the sorrows of poverty as well as sanctify the risks of wealth. Go ye where ye will amongst the busy, whose cares buzz around them, and you shall find no relief for aching heads like a contemplation of the love of Christ: or go amongst those who have leisure, and spend it in solitude, no meditation can be so sweet to while away their hours as the meditation which springs out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Glory be to God, no man need say, "My trade does not permit me to be a Christian;" if it be so, you have no business to follow that trade, for no lawful calling is without its saint. Up there among the precipices the wild goat finds safe footing, and so amid dignity and honor saints can survive, and in the dark rock-rifts of this sin-smitten city, as conies live among the rocks, so Christian men are useful and happy. Where the believer is persecuted on every side, he shall not be forsaken, and where, through the example of the wicked, his heart is grieved, he shall be preserved like righteous Lot. As God maintains life in every region, so doth he maintain spiritual life in every position and every calling. Have comfort in this you who are placed in circumstances unfavourable to grace.

Again, you shall find spiritual life in every church. I know it is the notion of the bigot, that all the truly godly people belong to the denomination which he adorns. Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is anybody else's doxy who does not agree with me. All the good people go to little Bethel, and nowhere else: they all worship at Zoar, and they sing out of such-and-such a selection, and as for those who cannot say Shibboleth, and lay a pretty good stress on the "h," but who pronounce it "Sibboleth;" let the fords of the Jordan be taken, and let them be put to death. True, it is not fashionable to roast them alive, but we will condemn their souls to everlasting perdition, which is the next best thing, and may not appear to be quite so uncharitable. Many suppose that because there is grievous error in a church, concerning an ordinance or a doctrine, therefore no living children of God are there. Ah, dear brethren, this severe opinion arises from want of knowing better. A mouse had lived in a box all its life, and one day crawled up to the edge of it, and looked round on what it could see. Now the box only stood in a lumber room, but the mouse was surprised at its vastness, and exclaimed: "How big the world is!" If some bigots would get out of their box, and only look a little way round them,

they would find the realm of grace to be far wider than they dream. It is true that these pastures are a most proper place for sheep, but yet upon yonder hill-tops wild goats are pastured by the Great Shepherd. It is true that yonder plains covered with verdure are best fitted for cattle, but the Lord of all has his beasts in the forest, and his conies among the rocks. You may have to look a long while before you find these living things, but he sees them when you do not, and it is a deal more important to a cony for God to see it, than it is for a man to see it; and so it is an infinitely more weighty matter for a child of God for his Father to know that he is his child, than for his brother to know it. If my brother will not believe me to be a Christian, he cannot help being my brother; he may do what he will in his unkindness, but if I am one of God's children, and he also is one, the tie of brotherhood cannot be broken between us. I love to think that the Lord has his hidden ones—even in churches that have sadly degenerated from the faith; and, although it is yours and mine to denounce error unsparingly, and with the iconoclastic hammer to go through the land and break the idols of all the churches in pieces as far as God gives us strength, yet there is not a lamb amongst Christ's flock that we would disdain to feed—there is not the least of all his people, however mistaken in judgment, whom our soul would not embrace an ardent love. God, in nature, has placed life in singular spots, and so has he put spiritual life into strange out-of-the-way places, and has his own chosen where least we should look for them.

Once more, there are to be found God's people in every city. Some of you are going away, it may be, to the ends of the earth, and this word may be comfortable to you. The Lord has an elect people everywhere. The wild goats are on the rocks, and the conies amongst the stones, and the storks in the trees. Go you where you will, you shall find that God has a living people; or if you should be sent to a country where as yet there are no converted men or women, let not that discourage you, but rather say, "I am sent with the purpose of finding out God's elect, who as yet are hidden in sin. I am to be the instrument of finding out the Lord's own blood-bought but hidden ones here." When thou goest into a city that is given to idolatry, thou shalt hear it said to thee, "I have much people in this city;" go, therefore, and labor to find out the much people. Introduce the gospel, tell of the love of Jesus, and you shall soon find that your efforts

are rewarded by the discovery of those who shall love your Savior, and delight in the same truth which now charms your heart. Do not believe that there is a rock without its wild goat; do not think that there is a fir-forest without its stork; or that there are to be found trees by the brook without their birds. Expect to find where God dwells that there are some who are sojourners with him, as all their fathers were.

I shall leave the first point, repeating the sentence, for each place there a form of life.

II. Secondly, the text teaches us plainly that EACH CREATURE HAS ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE. Birds with their nests for the cedars of Lebanon, storks for the fir trees, wild goats for the high hills, and conies for the rocks. Each of these creatures looks most beautiful at home. Go into the Zoological Gardens, and see the poor animals there under artificial conditions, and you can little guess what they are at home. A lion in a cage is a very different creature from a lion in the wilderness. The stork looks wretched in his wire pen, and you would hardly know him as the same creature if you saw him on the housetops or on the fir trees. Each creature looks best in its own place. Take that truth, now, and use it for yourself. Each man has by God a providential position appointed to him, and the position ordained for each Christian is that in which he looks best; it is the best for him and he is the best for that; and if you could change his position, and shift him to another, he would not be half as happy, nor half as useful, nor half so much himself. Put the stork on the high hills, put the wild goat on the fir trees—what monstrosities! Take my dear brother who has been a working-man this last twenty years, and always been a spiritually-minded man, and make him Lord Mayor of London, and you would spoil him altogether. Take a good hearer and set him preaching, and he would make a sorry appearance. A man out of place is not seen to advantage, you see the wrong side of him, the gracious side is hidden. The position in which God has placed me is the best for me. Let me remember this when I am grumbling and complaining. It may be I have got past that foolish discontent which is altogether selfish, but perhaps I repine because I think, if I were in a different position, I could glorify God more. This species of discontent is very insinuating, but let us beware of it. It is foolish to cry, "if I were

placed in a different position, I could do so much more for God!" You could not do so much as you can do now. I am sure the goat would not show the wisdom of God so well in a fir tree, as he would up on a high hill; and you would not display the grace of God so well anywhere else as you can do where you are. Ah, says the young Christian, "I am only an apprentice; if I were a master man, I think I could then glorify God." Sir, if you cannot magnify him in your apprenticeship, you will not do so when you become a journeyman. "Oh, but my shop is so little, my trade brings me in such a small amount, I can give but little, and I have such few opportunities of doing good." Be slow to leave your calling till you have plain indications from providence that you ought to do so, for many a man in moving from his place has been as a bird that has wandered from her nest. God knows better than you what is best for you; bow your soul to his sovereign will. God appoints our position infinitely better than we could appoint it, even if we could have the choosing of it.

My beloved friends, it is not only that each form of life has its own best position as to providence, but it is so as to experience. God has not made two creatures precisely alike. You shall gather leaves from a tree, and you shall not find two veined in precisely the same way. In Christian experience it is the same. Wherever there is living Christian experience, it is different from everybody else's experience in some respect. In a family of children each child may be like its father, and yet each child shall be different from each other child; and amongst the children of God, though they all have the likeness of Christ in a measure, yet are they not all exactly the one like the other. You read the other day the life of John Bunyan, and you said, "Oh, if I had experience like John Bunyan, then I should know I was a child of God." This was foolish. The biographies that are published in our magazines in many cases do some good, but more mischief; for there are Christian people who begin at once to say, "Have I felt precisely thus? Have I felt exactly that?—If not, I am lost." Hast thou felt thyself a sinner and Christ a Savior? Art thou emptied of self and dost thou look to Christ alone? Well, if no other soul hath trod the same path as thou hast done, thou art in a right path; and though thy experience may have eccentricities in it that differ from all others, it is right it should be so. God has not made the wild goat like the cony, nor has he made the stork like any other bird, but he has made each to fit the place it is to

occupy, and he makes your experience to be suitable to the bringing out some point of his glory, which could not be brought out otherwise. Some are full of rejoicing, others are often depressed; a few keep the happy medium; many soar aloft, and then dive into the deeps again; let these varied experiences, as they are all equally clear phases of the same divine lovingkindness, be accepted, and let them be rejoiced in.

The same holds good as to individuality of character. Each creature has its appropriate place, and I believe that each constitution is meant, under the power of grace, to be suitable for a man's position. I might wish to be of a different temperament from what I am—I sometimes think so, but in wiser moments, I would not wish to alter anything in myself but that which is sinful. Martin Luther might have wished that he had been as gentle as Melancthon, but then we might have had no reformation: Melancthon might certainly sometimes have wished that he had been as energetic as Martin Luther, but then Luther might have lacked his most tender comforter, if Melancthon had been as rough as he. Peter might have been improved if he had not been so rough, and John might possibly have been improved if he had been somewhat more firm; but after all, when God makes Peter he is best as Peter, and when he makes John he is best as John, and it is very foolish when Peter wants to be John, and when John pines to be Peter. Dear brethren, the practical matter is, be yourselves in your religion. Never attempt to counterfeit another's virtues, nor try to square your experience according to another man's feelings, nor endeavor to mould your character so that you may look as if you were like a certain good man whom you admire. No, ask the Lord, who made a new man of you, to let your manhood come out as he meant it, and whichever grace he meant to be prominent, let it be prominent. If you are meant to play the hero and rush into the thick of the battle, then let courage be developed; or if he designed you to lie in the hospital and suffer, then let patience have its perfect work; but ask the Lord to mould you after his own mind, that as he finds a stork for a fir tree and a fir tree for a stork; a hill for a wild goat, and a wild goat for a hill; he will find a place for you, the man, and find for you, the man, the place that he has created for you, There his name shall be most glorified, and you shall be safest. Kick not against the pricks, but take kindly to the yoke, and serve your day and generation till your Master calls you home.

III. Now, briefly, a third point. It appears from the text that EVERY CREATURE THAT GOD HAS MADE IS PROVIDED WITH SHELTER. Birds fly to the trees, and the stork to the fir, the wild goat to the high hills, and the cony to the rocks. There is a shelter for every one of these creatures, great and small. Think a moment, then, if God has made each creature happy, and given a place of refuge to each creature, then, depend upon it, he has not left man's soul without a shelter. And here is an important truth, for every man is certainly in danger, and every thinking man knows it. My God, dost thou shield and shelter the cony in the rock, and is there no rock for me to shelter in? Assuredly thou hast not made man and left him without a refuge; when thou givest to the rock-rabbit the cleft in which he may hide himself, there must be a shelter for man. This must certainly be true, because you and I, if we have observed our inner life, must have felt conscious that nothing here below can fill an immortal soul. You have prospered in business, and have enjoyed good health; but for all that, in quiet moments of reflection, you feel a craving for something not to be found beneath the sun. Have you not felt yearnings after the Infinite,—hungerings which bread cannot satisfy; thirstings which a river could not quench? And are you never conscious—I know I am as a man, I speak not as a Christian now—of cold shiverings of fear, which make the entire manhood to tremble? The mind looks forward and considers, "And shall I live for ever? When my body moulders, shall I continue? Am I a vessel launched upon the river of existence, and shall I be borne onward to a shoreless and mysterious sea? And what will be that sea, and will it be a calm, or tossed with storms?" Or, to change the figure, "I shall sleep, but in that sleep of death, what dreams may come?" Have you never felt all that, and said within yourself, "O that there were a place where I could hide myself, never to tremble more! O that I could grasp something that would satisfy my insatiable lodgings! O that I could get my foot upon a rock, and no longer feel that a quicksand is beneath me! O that I knew of truth sure and indisputable, and possessed a treasure that would enrich me for ever." Well, then, if you have such longings as these, surely there must be a provision to meet them. The stork has an instinct for building a nest of a certain sort; it is too large a nest to be placed on a bush, she needs a tree; there is a tree somewhere then, for God never made a stork for a tree but he made also a

tree for the stork. Here is a wild goat: you put it down on a flat meadow, and it is not happy. Give it the greenest pasture, it looks up and pines. Rest assured that since those little feet are meant to traverse rocks and crags, there are rocks and crags that are meant for those feet to leap upon. A chamois argues an Alps, and the conclusion is verified by fact. Yonder little cony cannot live anywhere but among the stones; it delights to conceal itself in the fissures of the rock; then be assured there are rocks meant for conies. So for me, with my thirstings, my longings, my pipings, my mysterious instincts—there is a God somewhere, there is a heaven somewhere, there is an atonement somewhere, there is a fullness somewhere to meet my emptiness. Man wants a shelter, there must be a shelter; let us show you what it is.

Beloved, there is a shelter for man from the sense of past guilt. It is because we are guilty that we are fearful: we have broken our Maker's law, and therefore we are afraid. But our Maker came from heaven to earth; Jesus, the Christ of God, came here, and was made man, and bore that we might never bear his Father's righteous wrath, and whosoever believeth in Jesus shall find perfect rest in those dear wounds of his. Since Christ suffered for me, my guilt is gone, my punishment was endured by my Substitute, therefore do I hear the voice that saith, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people! Say unto them, that their warfare is accomplished; for they have received at the Lord's hand double for all their sins." And as for future fears, he who believes in Jesus finds a refuge from them in the Fatherhood of God. He who trusts Christ, says: "Now I have no fear about the present, nor about the future. Let catastrophe follow catastrophe, let the world crash, and all the universe go to ruin; beneath the wings of the Eternal God I must be safe. All things must work together for my good, for I love God, and have been called according to his purpose." What a blessed shelter this is! The little conies in their rock-clefts are perfectly at ease, and so we, when we enter fully into the truth of our adoption of God, are filled with unutterable peace. And as for the present, with its cares, and griefs, and heart-throbs, there is the Holy Ghost abiding in us, the Comforter, and we fly to him, and receive consolations so rich and powerful, that this day we feel at peace in the midst of discomforts, and if perplexed we are not in despair. Brethren, there is a shelter in the atonement of Christ, in the Fatherhood of God, in

the abiding presence of the Comforter—there is a shelter for man—would God that all of us had found it!

IV. And now just a moment of your attention will be wanted for the fourth observation, that FOR EACH CREATURE THE SHELTER IS APPROPRIATE. The tree for the bird; the fir tree, a particular and special tree, for the stork; a high hill for the steinbock or ibex, and the rocks for the hyrax or rabbit. Whatever creature it may be, each shall have his own suitable shelter. But you will reply to me, is there a shelter, then, for each individual man? Did you not say that there was only one shelter for manhood? If I did not say it, I certainly will say it now. There is only one shelter under heaven or in heaven for any man of woman born, but yet there is a shelter suitable for each. Christ Jesus suits all sorts of sinners, all sorts of sufferers. He is a Savior as suitable for me as if he came to save me and no one else; but he is a Redeemer as remarkably suitable to every other of his redeemed ones. Note, then, that there is a refuge in Christ Jesus for those simple trustful natures that take the gospel at once and believe it. These are like the little birds that fly to the trees and build their nests and begin to sing. These are the commonest sort of Christians, but in some respects they are the best. They hear the gospel, believe it to be God's word, accept it, and begin to sing. Jesus Christ exactly suits them, he is a shelter for those chosen birds of the air, whom your heavenly Father daily feed. But there are others of larger intellect, who require unusual support ere they can build their nest and be at ease. These, like the stork, need a special support, and they find it in the gospel. Since they are more weighty with doubt and perplexity, they need substantial verities to rest on; these find great fir-tree doctrines and cedar-like principles in the Bible, and they rest in them. Many of us this day are resting on the immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie. We rest upon the substitution of Christ, and repose in the completeness of the atonement. Some get hold of one great principle and some another in connection with the grace of God; and God has been pleased to reveal strong, immovable, eternal, immutable principles in his Word which are suitable for thoughtful and troubled minds to rest on. Moreover, we have in the church of God persons of great reasoning powers: these love the craggy paths of thought, but when they come to Christ and trust in him, though they are like the wild goat and love the high places, they find in

the Scriptures good ground for them. The doctrine of election, and all the mysteries of predestination, the deep and wonderful doctrines that are spoken of by the apostle Paul; where is the man of thought who will not be at home among these if he loves sublimity? If you have that turn of mind which delights to deal with the high things of God, which have been the perplexity of men and angels, you shall find yourself at home, and what is better, safe with the gospel. If you are in Christ, you shall have good, solid, safe material for the profoundest meditations. Perhaps, instead of being bold and daring and thoughtful, you are not comparable to the wild goat but you are "a very timid trembling little creature like the cony. If anyone claps his hands, away runs the cony; he fears always. But there is a shelter for conies; and so in the grace of God for very timid trembling people, there is a suitable refuge. Here is a delightful shelter for some of you to run into. "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." Here is another—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Many a poor trembler has hidden under that condescending word. If I cannot find shelter in one text, what a blessing it is the Bible is full of promises, and there are promises in the Bible which seem made for a certain form of mind, as if the Holy Ghost cast his thoughts and his words into all sorts of moulds to suit the habits of thought and mind of all whom he would bless. O trembling soul, though thou art half afraid to say that thou belongest to Jesus, yet come and rest in him, hide in the rift of his side, and thou art safe.

V. Now we must close, and we do so with this observation, that EACH CREATURE USES ITS SHELTER, for the storks have made their nests in the fir trees, and the wild goats climb the high hills, and the conies hide among the rocks. I never heard of one of these creatures that neglected its shelter—they love their natural abodes; but I have heard of men who have neglected their God, I know women who have forgotten Christ. We say, "silly sheep." Ah, if the sheep knew all about us, they would wonder we should call them silly. The cony in danger which does not seek its rock is foolish; but the soul in danger which does not seek its Savior is insane—insane, nay, if there can be a madness which is as much beyond madness, as madness is beyond sanity, then such is the raving lunacy of a man who neglects the Savior. I have never heard of any of these creatures that they despise the shelter provided. The birds are satisfied with the trees, and

the stork with the firs, and even the cony with its rock-hole; but, alas! there are men who despise Christ. God himself becomes the shelter of sinners, and yet sinners despise their God. The Son of God opens his side and lays bare his heart that a soul may come and shelter there in the crimson cleft, and yet that soul for many a day refuses to accept the shelter. Oh, where are tears? Who shall give us fit expressions for our sorrow that men should be such monsters to themselves, and to their God? The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but men know not God. The stork knows its fir tree, the wild goat its crag, and the cony knows its cleft, but the sinner knows not his Christ. Ah, manhood, what has befallen thee? What strange wine of Gomorrah hast thou drank which has thus intoxicated thee!

One other thing, I never heard of a stork that when it met with a fir tree demurred as to its right to build its nest there, and I never heard of a cony yet that questioned whether it had a permit to run into the rock. Why these creatures would soon perish if they were always doubting and fearing as to whether they had a right to use providential provisions. The stork says to himself, "ah, here is a fir tree;" he consults with his mate—"Will this do for the nest in which we may rear our young?" "Ay" says she, and they gather the materials, and arrange them. There is never any deliberation, "May we build here?" but they bring their sticks and make their nest. So the wild goat on the crag does not say, "Have I a right to be here?" No! he must be somewhere, and there is a crag which exactly suits him; and he springs upon it. Yet though these dumb creatures know the provision of their God, the sinner does not recognize the provisions of his Savior. He quibbles and questions, "May I?" and "I am afraid it is not for me," and "I think it cannot be meant for me; and I am afraid it is too good to be true." And yet nobody ever said to the stork, "Whosoever buildeth on this fir tree shall never have his nest pulled down." No inspired word has ever said to the cony, "Whosoever runs into this rock-cleft shall never be driven out of it;" if it had been so, it would make assurance doubly sure. And yet here is Christ provided for sinners, just the sort of a Savior sinners need, and the encouragement is added, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" "Whosoever will let him come, and take the water of life freely." O dear brothers and sisters, do not be standing out against the generosity of a sin-pardoning God, who bids the sinner come

and welcome. Come, believe in Jesus, and find salvation now. O that you would come, it is what God has provided for your wants. Come, take it, for he bids you come. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." To believe is to trust Jesus, to trust his suffering, to trust his atonement, and rely upon him alone for salvation. May God enable you to do it for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Let Him Deliver Him Now

He trusted in God; let him deliver him now; if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. - Matthew 27:43

These words are a fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the twenty-second Psalm. Read from the seventh verse—"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Thus to the letter doth our Lord answer to the ancient prophecy.

It is very painful to the heart to picture our blessed Master in his death-agonies, surrounded by a ribald multitude, who watched him and mocked him, made sport of his prayer and insulted his faith. Nothing was sacred to them: they invaded the Holy of holies of his confidence in God, and taunted him concerning that faith in Jehovah which they were compelled to admit. See, dear friends, what an evil thing is sin, since the Sin-bearer suffers so bitterly to make atonement for it! See, also, the shame of sin, since even the Prince of Glory, when bearing the consequences of it, is covered with contempt! Behold, also, how he loved us! For our sake he "endured the cross, despising the shame." He loved us so much that even scorn of the most cruel sort he deigned to bear, that he might take away our shame and enable us to look up unto God.

Beloved, the treatment of our Lord Jesus Christ by men is the clearest proof of total depravity which can possibly be required or discovered. Those must be stony hearts indeed which can laugh at a dying Saviour, and mock even at his faith in God! Compassion would seem to have deserted humanity, while malice sat supreme on the throne. Painful as the picture is, it will do you good to paint it. You will need neither canvas, nor brush, nor palette, nor colours. Let your thoughts draw the outline, and your love fill in the detail; I shall not complain if imagination heightens the colouring. The Son of God, whom angels adore with veiled faces, is pointed at with scornful fingers by men who thrust out the tongue and mockingly exclaim, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

While thus we see our Lord in his sorrow and his shame as our substitute, we must not forget that he also is there as our representative. That which appears in many a psalm to relate to David is found in the Gospels to refer to Jesus, our Lord. Often and often the student of the Psalm will say to himself, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" He will have to disentangle the threads sometimes, and mark off that which belongs to David and that which relates to the Son of God; and frequently he will not be able to disentangle the threads at all, because they are one, and may relate both to David, and to David's Lord. This is meant to show us that the life of Christ is an epitome of the life of his people. He not only suffers for us as our substitute, but he suffers before us as our pattern. In him we see what we have in our measure to endure. "As he is, so are we also in this world." We also must be crucified to the world, and we may look for somewhat of those tests of faith and taunts of derision which go with such a crucifixion. "Marvel not if the world hate you." You, too, must suffer without the gate. Not for the world's redemption, but for the accomplishment of divine purposes in you, and through you to the sons of men, you must be made to know the cross and its shame. Christ is the mirror of the church. What the head endured every member of the body will also have to endure in its measure. Let us read the text in this light, and come to it saying to ourselves, "Here we see what Jesus suffered in our stead, and we learn hereby to love him with all our souls. Here, too, we see, as in a prophecy, how great things we are to suffer for his sake at the hands of men." May the Holy Spirit help us in our meditation, so that

at the close of it we may more ardently love our Lord, who suffered for us, and may the more carefully arm ourselves with the same mind which enabled him to endure such contradiction of sinners against himself.

Coming at once to the text, first, *observe the acknowledgment* with which the text begins: "He trusted in God." The enemies of Christ admitted his faith in God. Secondly, consider *the test which is the essence of the taunt*: "Let him deliver him, if he will have him." When we have taken those two things into our minds, then let us for a while consider *the answer* to that test and taunt: God does assuredly deliver his people: those who trust in him have no reason to be ashamed of their faith.

I. First, then, my beloved brethren, you who know the Lord by faith and live by trusting in him, let me invite you to OBSERVE THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT which these mockers made of our Lord's faith: "He trusted in God." Yet the Saviour did not wear any peculiar garb or token by which he let men know that he trusted in God. He was not a recluse, neither did he join some little knot of separatists, who boasted their peculiar trust in Jehovah. Although our Saviour was separate from sinners, yet he was eminently a man among men, and he went in and out among the multitude as one of themselves. His one peculiarity was that "he trusted in God." He was so perfectly a man that, although he was undoubtedly a Jew, there were no Jewish peculiarities about him. Any nation might claim him; but no nation could monopolize him. The characteristics of our humanity are so palpably about him that he belongs to all mankind. I admire the Welch sister who was of opinion that the Lord Jesus must be Welch. When they asked her how she proved it, she said that he always spoke to her heart in Welch. Doubtless it was so, and I can, with equal warmth, declare that he always speaks to me in English. Brethren from Germany, France, Sweden, Italy—you all claim that he speaks to you in your own tongue. This was the one thing which distinguished him among men—"he trusted in God," and he lived such a life as naturally grows out of faith in the Eternal Lord. This peculiarity had been visible even to that ungodly multitude who least of all cared to perceive a spiritual point of character. Was ever any other upon a cross thus saluted by the mob who watched his execution? Had these scorers ever mocked anyone before for such a matter as this? I trow not. Yet faith

had been so manifest in our Lord's daily life that the crowd cried out aloud, "He trusted in God."

How did they know? I suppose they could not help seeing that *he made much of God* in his teaching, in his life, and in his miracles. Whenever Jesus spoke it was always godly talk; and if it was not always distinctly about God, it was always about things that related to God, that came from God, that led to God, that magnified God. A man may be fairly judged by that which he makes most of. The ruling passion is a fair gauge of the heart. What a soul-ruler faith is! It sways the man as the rudder guides the ship. When a man once gets to live by faith in God, it tinctures his thoughts, it masters his purposes, it flavours his words, it puts a tone into his actions, and it comes out in everything by ways and means most natural and unconstrained, till men perceive that they have to do with a man who makes much of God. The unbelieving world says outright that there is no God, and the less impudent, who admit his existence, put him down at a very low figure, so low that it does not affect their calculations; but to the true Christian, God is not only much, but all. To our Lord Jesus, God was all in all; and when you come to estimate God as he did, then the most careless onlooker will soon begin to say of you, "He trusted in God."

In addition to observing that Jesus made much of God, men came to note that he was *a trusting man, and not self-confident*. Certain persons are very proud because they are self-made men. I will do them the credit to admit that they heartily worship their maker. Self made them, and they worship self. We have among us individuals who are self-confident, and almost all-sufficient; they sneer at those who do not succeed, for *they* can succeed anywhere at anything. The world to them is a football which they can kick where they like. If they do not rise to the very highest eminence it is simply out of pity to the rest of us, who ought to have a chance. A vat of sufficiency ferments within their ribs! There was nothing of that sort of thing in our Lord. Those who watched him did not say that he had great self-reliance and a noble spirit of self-confidence. No, no! They said, "He trusted in God." Indeed it was so. The words that he spake he spake not of himself, and the great deeds that he did he never boasted of, but said "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." He was a truster in God,

not a boaster in self. Brethren and sisters, I desire that you and I may be just of that order. Selfconfidence is the death of confidence in God; reliance upon talent, tact, experience, and things of that kind, kills faith. Oh that we may know what faith means, and so look out of ourselves and quit the evil confidence which looks within!

On the other hand, we may wisely remember that, while our Lord Jesus was not self-reliant, *he trusted, and was by no means despondent*: he was never discouraged. He neither questioned his commission, nor despaired of fulfilling it. He never said, "I must give it up: I can never succeed." No; "He trusted in God." And this is a grand point in the working of faith, that while it keeps us from self-conceit, it equally preserves us from enfeebling fear. When our blessed Lord set his face like a flint; when, being baffled, he returned to the conflict; when, being betrayed, he still persevered in his love, then men could not help seeing that he trusted in God. His faith was not mere repetition of a creed, or profession of belief, but it was childlike reliance upon the Most High. May ours be of the same order!

It is evident that the Lord Jesus *trusted in God openly* since even yonder gibing crowd proclaimed it. Some good people try to exercise faith on the sly: they practise it in snug corners, and in lonely hours, but they are afraid to say much before others, for fear their faith should not see the promise fulfilled. They dare not say, with David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." This secrecy robs God of his honour. Brethren, we do not glorify our God as he ought to be glorified. Let us trust in him, and own it. Wherefore should we be ashamed? Let us throw down the gauge of battle to earth and hell. God, the true and faithful, deserves to be trusted without limit. Trust your all with him, and be not ashamed of having done so. Our Saviour was not ashamed of trusting in his God. On the cross he cried, "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast." Jesus lived by faith. We are sure that he did, for in the Epistle to the Hebrews he is quoted as saying, "I will put my trust in him." If so glorious a personage as the only begotten Son of God lived here by faith in God, how are you and I to live except by trust in God? If we live unto God, this is the absolute necessity of our spiritual life "the just shall live by faith." Shall we be ashamed of

that which brings life to us? The cruel ones who saw Jesus die did not say, "He now and then trusted in God"; nor "he trusted in the Lord years ago"; but they admitted that faith in God was the constant tenor of his life: they could not deny it. Even though, with malicious cruelty, they turned it into a taunt, yet they did not cast a question upon the fact that "he trusted in God" Oh, I want you so to live that those who dislike you most may, nevertheless, know that you do trust in God! When you come to die, may your dear children say of you, "Our dear mother did trust in the Lord"! May that boy, who has gone furthest away from Christ, and grieved your heart the most, nevertheless say in his heart, "There may be hypocrites in the world, but my dear father does truly trust in God"! Oh, that our faith may be known unmistakably! We do not wish it to be advertised to our own honour. That be far from our minds. But yet we would have it known that others may be encouraged, and that God may be glorified. If nobody else trusts in God, let us do so; and thus may we uplift a testimony to the honour of his faithfulness. When we die, may this be our epitaph—"He trusted in God."

David, in the twenty-second Psalm, represents the enemies as saying of our Lord—"He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." This *practical faith* is sure to be known wherever it is in operation, because it is exceedingly rare. Multitudes of people have a kind of faith in God, but it does not come to the practical point of trusting that God will deliver them. I see upon the newspaper placards, "*Startling New! People in the Planets!*" Not a very practical discovery. For many a day there has been a tendency to refer God's promises and our faith to the planets, or somewhere beyond this present every-day life. We say to ourselves, "Oh yes, God delivers his people." We mean that he did so in the days of Moses, and possibly he may be doing so now in some obscure island of the sea. Ah me! The glory of faith lies in its being fit for every-day wear. Can it be said of you, "He trusted in God, that he would deliver him"? Have you faith of the kind which will make you lean upon the Lord in poverty, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in slander, in contempt? Have you a trust in God to bear you up in holy living at all costs, and in active service even beyond your strength? Can you trust in God definitely about this and that? Can you trust about food, and raiment, and home? Can you trust God even about your shoes, that they

shall be iron and brass, and about the hairs of your head that they are all numbered? What we need is less theory and more actual trust in God.

The faith of the text was personal: "that he would deliver him." Blessed is that faith which can reach its arm of compassion around the world, but that faith must begin at home. Of what use were the longest arm if it were not fixed to the man himself at the shoulder? If you have no faith about yourself, what faith can you have about others? "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him." Come, beloved, have you such a faith in the living God? Do you trust in God through Christ Jesus that he will save you? Yes, you poor, unworthy one, the Lord will deliver you if you trust him. Yes, poor woman, or unknown man, the Lord can help you in your present trouble, and in every other, and he will do so if you trust him to that end. May the Holy Spirit lead you to first trust the Lord Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then to trust in God for all things.

Let us pause a minute. Let a man trust in God; not in fiction but in fact, and he will find that he has solid rock under his feet. Let him trust about his own daily needs and trials, and rest assured that the Lord will actually appear for him, and he will not be disappointed. Such a trust in God is a very *reasonable* thing; its absence is most unreasonable. If there be a God, he knows all about my case. If he made my ear he can hear me; if he made my eye he can see me; and therefore he perceives my condition. If he be my Father, as he says he is, he will certainly care for me, and will help me in my hour of need if he can. We are sure that he can, for he is omnipotent. Is there anything unreasonable, then, in trusting in God that he will deliver us? I venture to say that if all the forces in the universe were put together, and all the kindly intents of all who are our friends were put together, and we were then to rely upon those united forces and intents, we should not have a thousandth part so much justification for our confidence as when we depend upon God, whose intents and forces are infinitely greater than those of all the world beside. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." If you view things in the white light of pure reason, it is infinitely more reasonable to trust in the living God than in all his creatures put together.

Certainly, dear friends, it is extremely *comfortable* to trust in God. I find it so, and therefore speak. To roll your burden upon the Lord, since he will sustain you, is a blessed way of being quit of care. We know him to be faithful, and as powerful as he is faithful; and our dependence upon him is the solid foundation of a profound peace.

While it is comfortable, it is also *uplifting*. If you trust in men, the best of men, you are likely to be lowered by your trust. We are apt to cringe before these who patronize us. If your prosperity depends upon a person's smile, you are tempted to pay homage even when it is undeserved. The old saying mentions a certain person as "knowing on which side his bread is buttered." Thousands are practically degraded by their trusting in men. But when our reliance is upon the living God we are raised by it, and elevated both morally and spiritually. You may bow in deepest reverence before God, and yet there will be no fawning. You may lie in the dust before the Majesty of heaven, and yet not be dishonoured by your humility; in fact, it is our greatness to be nothing in the presence of the Most High.

This confidence in God makes men *strong*. I should advise the enemy not to oppose the man who trusts in God. In the long run he will be beaten, as Haman found it with Mordecai. He had been warned of this by Zeresh, his wife, and his wise men, who said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Contend not with a man who has God at his back. Years ago the Mentonese desired to break away from the dominion of the Prince of Monaco. They therefore drove out his agent. The prince came with his army, not a very great one, it is true, but still formidable to the Mentonese. I know not what the high and mighty princeling was not going to do; but the news came that the King of Sardinia was coming up in the rear to help the Mentonese and therefore his lordship of Monaco very prudently retired to his own rock. When a believer stands out against evil he may be sure that the Lord of hosts will not be far away. The enemy shall hear the dash of his horse-hoof and the blast of his trumpet, and shall flee before him. Wherefore be of good courage, and compel the world to say of you, "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him."

II. Secondly, I want you to follow me briefly in considering THE Test WHICH IS THE ESSENCE OF THE TAUNT which was hurled by the mockers against our Lord—"Let him deliver him now, if he will have him."

Such a test will come to all believers. It may come as a taunt from enemies; it will certainly come as a trial of your faith. The arch-enemy will assuredly hiss out, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

This taunt has about it *the appearance of being very logical*, and indeed in a measure so it is. If God has promised to deliver us, and we have openly professed to believe the promise, it is only natural that others should say, "Let us see whether he does deliver him. This man believes that the Lord will help him; and he must help him, or else the man's faith is a delusion." This is the sort of test to which we ourselves would have put others before our conversion, and we cannot object to be proved in the same manner ourselves. Perhaps we incline to run away from the ordeal, but this very shrinking should be a solemn call to us to question the genuineness of that faith which we are afraid to test. "He trusted on the Lord," says the enemy, "that he would deliver him: let him deliver him"; and surely, however malicious the design, there is no escaping from the logic of the challenge.

It is peculiarly painful to have this stern inference driven home to you in the hour of sorrow. Because one cannot deny the fairness of the appeal, it is all the more trying. In the time of depression of spirit it is hard to have one's faith questioned, or the ground on which it stands made a matter of dispute. Either to be mistaken in one's belief, or to have no real faith, or to find the ground of one's faith fail is an exceedingly grievous thing. Yet as our Lord was not spared this painful ordeal, we must not expect to be kept clear of it, and Satan knows well how to work these questions, till the poison of them sets the blood on fire. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him;" he hurls this fiery dart into the soul, till the man is sorely wounded, and can scarcely hold his ground.

The taunt is specially *pointed and personal*. It is put thus: "*He trusted on*

the Lord that he would deliver *him*: let him deliver *him*"; "Do not come to us with your fiddle-faddle about God's helping all his chosen. Here is a man who is one of his people, will he help *him*? Do not talk to us big things about Jehovah at the Red Sea, or in the Desert of Sinai, or God helping his people in ages past. Here is a living man before us who trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver *him* now." You know how Satan will pick out one of the most afflicted, and pointing his fingers at him will cry, "Let him deliver HIM." Brethren, the test is fair. God will be true to every believer. If any one child of God could be lost, it would be quite enough to enable the devil to spoil all the glory of God for ever. If one promise of God to one of his people should fail, that one failure would suffice to mar the veracity of the Lord to all eternity; they would publish it in the "Diabolical Gazette," and in every street of Tophet they would howl it out, "God has failed. God has broken his promise. God has ceased to be faithful to his people." It would then be a horrible reproach—"He trusted in God to deliver him, but he did not deliver him."

Much emphasis lies in its being *in the present tense*: "He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him *now*." I see Thee, O Lord Jesus, thou art now in the wilderness, where the fiend is saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." No. Thou art nailed to the tree; thine enemies have hemmed thee in. The legionaries of Rome are at the foot of the cross, the scribes and Pharisees and raging Jews compass thee about. There is no escape from death for thee! Hence their cry—"Let him deliver him *now*." Ah, brothers and sisters! this is how Satan assails us, using our present and pressing tribulations as the barbs of his arrows. Yet here also there is reason and logic in the challenge.

If God does not deliver his servants at one time as well as another he has not kept his promise. For a man of truth is always true, and a promise once given always stands. A promise cannot be broken now and then, and yet the honour of the person giving it be maintained by his keeping it at other times. The word of a true man stands always good: it is good *now*. This is logic, bitter logic, cold steel logic, logic which seems to cut right down your backbone and cleave your chine. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him *now*." Yet this hard logic can be

turned to comfort. I told you a story the other day of the brother in Guy's Hospital to whom the doctors said that he must undergo an operation which was extremely dangerous. They gave him a week to consider whether he would submit to it. He was troubled for his young wife and children, and for his work for the Lord. A friend left a bunch of flowers for him, with this verse as its motto, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now." "Yes," he thought, "*now*". In prayer he cast himself upon the Lord, and felt in his heart, "Come on, doctors, I am ready for you." When the next morning came, he refused to take chloroform, for he desired to go to heaven in his senses. He bore the operation manfully, and he is yet alive. "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him" then and there, and the Lord did so. In this lies the brunt of the battle.

A Christian man may be beaten in business, he may fail to meet all demands, and then Satan yells, "Let him deliver him *now*." The poor man has been out of work for two or three months, tramping the streets of London until he has worn out his boots; he has been brought to his last penny. I think I hear the laugh of the Prince of Darkness as he cries, "Let him deliver him *now*." Or else the believer is very ill in body, and low in spirit, and then Satan howls, "Let him deliver him *now*." Some of us have been in very trying positions. We were moved with indignation because of deadly error, and we spoke plainly, but men refused to hear. Those we relied upon deserted us; good men sought their own ease and would not march with us, and we had to bear testimony for despised truth alone, until we were ourselves despised. Then the adversary shouted, "Let him deliver him *now*." Be it so! We do not refuse the test. Our God whom we serve will deliver us. We will not bow down to modern thought nor worship the image which human wisdom has set up. Our God is God both of hills and of valleys. He will not fail his servants, albeit that for a while he forbears that he may try their faith. We dare accept the test, and say, "Let him deliver us *now*."

Beloved friends, we need not be afraid of this taunt if it is brought by adversaries; for, after all, no test will come to us apart from any malice, for *it is inevitable*. All the faith you have will be tried. I can see you heaping it up. How rich you are! What a pile of faith! Friend, you are almost perfect! Open the furnace door and put the heap in. Do you

shrink? See how it shrivels! Is there anything left? Bring hither a magnifying glass. Is this all that is left? Yes, this is all that remains of the heap. You say, "I trusted in God." Yes, but you had reason to cry, "Lord, help my unbelief." Brethren, we have not a tithe of the faith we think we have. But whether or not, all our faith must be tested. God builds no ships but what he sends to sea. In living, in losing, in working, in weeping, in suffering, or in striving, God will find a fitting crucible for every single grain of the precious faith which he has given us. Then he will come to us and say—You trusted in God that he would deliver you, and you shall be delivered now. How you will open your eyes as you see the Lord's hand of deliverance! What a man of wonders you will be when you tell in your riper years to the younger people how the Lord delivered you! Why, there are some Christians I know of who, like the ancient mariner, could detain even a wedding guest with their stories of God's wonders on the deep.

Yes, the test will come again and again. May the gibes of adversaries only make us ready for the sterner ordeals of the judgment to come. O my dear friends, examine your religion. You have a great deal of it, some of you; but what of its quality? Can your religion stand the test of poverty, and scandal, and scorn? Can it stand the test of scientific sarcasm and learned contempt? Will your religion stand the test of long sickness of body and depression of spirit caused by weakness? What are you doing amid the common trials of life? What will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Examine well your faith, since all hangs there. Some of us who have lain for weeks together, peering through the thin veil which parts us from the unseen, have been made to feel that nothing will suffice us but a promise which will answer the taunt, "Let him deliver us *now*."

III. I shall finish, in the third place, dear friends, by noticing The Answer to the test. God does deliver those who trust in him. God's interposition for the faithful is not a dream, but a substantial reality. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." All history proves the faithfulness of God. Those who trust God have been in all sorts of troubles; but they have always been delivered. They have been bereaved. What a horrible bereavement was that which fell to the lot of Aaron, when his two sons were struck dead for their profanity in the presence of God! "And Aaron held his peace"! What grace was there!

Thus will the Lord sustain you also should he take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Grave after grave has the good man visited till it seemed that his whole race was buried, and yet his heart has not been broken; but he has bowed his soul before the will of the ever-blessed One. Thus has the Lord delivered his afflicted one by sustaining him. In other ways the bush has burned, and yet has not been consumed. Remember the multiplied and multiform trials of Job. Yet God sustained him to the end so that he did not charge God foolishly, but held fast his faith in the Most High. If ever you are called to the afflictions of Job you will also be called to the sustaining grace of Job. Some of God's servants have been defeated in their testimony. They have borne faithful witness for God, but they have been rejected of men. It has been their lot, like Cassandra, to prophesy the truth, but not to be believed. Such was Jeremiah, who was born to a heritage of scorn from those whose benefit he sought. Yet he was delivered. He shrank not from being faithful. His courage could not be silenced. By integrity he was delivered.

Godly men have been despised and misrepresented, and yet have been delivered. Remember David and his envious brethren, David and the malignant Saul, David when his men spake of stoning him. Yet he took off the giant's head; yet he came to the throne; yet the Lord built him a house.

Some of God's servants have been bitterly persecuted, but God has delivered them. Daniel came forth from the lions' den, and the three holy children from the midst of the burning fiery furnace. These are only one or two out of millions who trusted God and he delivered them. Out of all manner of ill the Lord delivered them. God brought this crowd of witnesses through all their trials unto his throne, where they rest with Jesus, and share the triumph of their Master at this very day. O my timid brother, nothing has happened to you but what is common to men. Your battle is not different from the warfare of the rest of the saints; and as God has delivered them he will deliver you also, seeing you put your trust in him.

But *God's ways of deliverance are his own*. He does not deliver according to the translation put upon "deliverance" by the ribald throng.

He does not deliver according to the interpretation put upon "deliverance" by our shrinking flesh and blood. He delivers, but it is in his own way. Let me remark that, *if God delivers you and me in the same way as he delivered his own Son, we can have no cause of complaint.* If the deliverance which he vouchsafed to us is of the same kind as that which he vouchsafed to the Only Begotten, we may well be content. Well, what kind of a deliverance was that? Did the Father tear up the cross from the earth? Did he proceed to draw out the nails from the sacred hands and feet of his dear Son? Did he set him down upon that "green hill far away, beyond the city wall," and place in his hand a sword of fire with which to smite his adversaries? Did he bid the earth open and swallow up all his foes? No; nothing of the kind. Jehovah did not interpose to spare his Son a single pang; but he let him die. He let him be taken as a dead man down from the cross and laid in a tomb. Jesus went through with his suffering to the bitter end. O brothers and sisters, this may be God's way of delivering us. We have trusted in God that he would deliver us; and his rendering of his promise is, that he will enable us to go through with it; we shall suffer to the last, and triumph in so doing.

Yet God's way of delivering those who trust in him is *always the best way.* If the Father had taken his Son down from the cross, what would have been the result? Redemption unaccomplished, salvation work undone, and Jesus returning with his life-work unfinished. This would not have been deliverance, but defeat. It was much better for our Lord Jesus to die. Now he has paid the ransom for his elect, and having accomplished the great purpose of atonement, he has slept a while in the heart of the earth, and now has ascended to his throne in the endless glories of heaven. It was deliverance of the fullest kind; for from the pangs of his death has come the joy of life to his redeemed. It is not God's will that every mountain should be levelled, but that we should be the stronger for climbing the Hill Difficulty. God will deliver; he must deliver, but he will do it in our cases, as in the case of our Lord, in the best possible manner.

Anyhow, he will deliver his chosen: the taunt of the adversary shall not cause our God to forget or forego his people. I know that the Lord will no more fail me than any other of his servants. He will not leave a faithful

witness to his adversaries. "I know that my Avenger liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Is this also your confidence? Then do not sit down in sorrow, and act as though you despaired. Quit yourselves like men. Be strong, fear not. Cast yourselves on the love that never changeth and never fainteth, and the Lord will answer all the revilings of Rabshakeh, and the blusterings of Sennacherib.

There are times when we may use this text to our comfort. "Let him deliver him now," saith the text, "if he will have him." You, dear friends, who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ before, how I wish you could try him now! You feel this morning full of sin, and full of need. Come, then, and trust the Saviour *now*. See whether he will not save you *now*. Is there one day in the year in which Jesus cannot save a sinner? Come and see whether the 17th of June is that day. Try whether he will not deliver you *now* from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin. Why not come? You have never, perhaps, been in the Tabernacle before, and when coming here this morning you did not think of finding the Saviour. Oh, that the Saviour may find you! Jesus Christ is a Saviour every day, all the year round. Whoever cometh to him shall find eternal life *now*. "Oh," you say, "I am in such an unfit state; I am in all the deshabelle of my carelessness and godlessness." Come along, man, come along, just as you are. Tarry not for improvement or arrangement, for both of these Jesus will give you; come and put your trust in the great Sacrifice for sin, and he will deliver you—deliver you *now*. Lord, save the sinner, *now*!

Others of you are the children of God, but you are in peculiar trouble. Well, what are you going to do? You have always trusted in God before; are you going to doubt him now? "O my dear sir, you do not know my distress; I am the most afflicted person in the Tabernacle." Be it so; but you trusted in the Lord the past twenty years, and I do not believe that you have seen any just cause for denying him your confidence now. Did you say that you have known him from your youth up? What! you seventy years of age? Then you are too near home to begin distrusting your heavenly Father. That will never do. You have been to sea, and have

weathered many a storm in mid-ocean, and are you now going to be drowned in a ditch? Think not so. The Lord will deliver you even now. Do not let us suppose that we have come where boundless love and infinite wisdom cannot reach us. Do not fancy that you have leaped upon a ledge of rock so high as to be out of reach of the everlasting arm. If you had done so I would still cry—Throw yourself down into the arms of God, and trust that he will not let you be destroyed.

It may be that some of us are in trouble about the church and the faith. We have defended God's truth as well as we could, and spoken out against deadly error; but craft and numbers have been against us, and at present things seem to have gone wrong. The good are timid, and the evil are false. They say, "He trusted in God: let him deliver him now." Sirs, he will deliver us now. We will throw our soul once more into this battle, and see if the Lord does not vindicate his truth. If we have not spoken in God's name we are content to go back to the dust from whence we sprang; but if we have spoken God's truth we defy the whole confederacy to prevail against it.

Peradventure, I speak to some missionary, who is mourning over a time of great trial in a mission which is dear to his heart. Ah, dear friend! Christ intended that the gospel should repeat his own experience, and then should triumph like himself. The gospel lives by being killed, and conquers by defect. Cast it where you will, it always falls upon its feet. You need not be afraid of it under any trial. Just now, the wisdom of man is its worst foe, but the Lord will deliver it *now*. The gospel lives and reigns. Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth from the tree, and from that tree of the curse he issues his supreme commands. The self-same day in which Jesus died, he took with him into his kingdom and his inmost paradise a thief who had hung at his side. He liveth and reigneth for ever and ever, and calleth to himself whomsoever he hath chosen. Let us drown the taunts of the adversary with our shouts of Hallelujah! The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah. Amen!

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Let Us Pray

But it is good for me to draw near to God. - Psalm 73:28

There are many ways by which the true believer draws near to God. The gates of the king's palace are many; and through the love of Jesus, and the rich grace of his Spirit, it is our delight to enter and approach our heavenly Father. First and foremost among these is communion, that sweet converse which man holds with God, that state of nearness to God, in which our mutual secrets are revealed - *our* hearts being open unto him, *his* heart being manifested to us. Here it is we see the invisible, and hear the unutterable. The outward symbol of fellowship is the sacred Supper of the Lord at which, by means of simple emblems, we are divinely enabled to feed, after a spiritual sort, upon the flesh and blood of the Redeemer. This is a pearly gate of fellowship, a royal road which our feet delight to tread. Moreover, we draw near to God even in our sighs and tears, when our desolate spirits long for his sacred presence, crying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" And as often as we read the promise written in the Word, and are enabled to receive it and rest upon it as the very words of a Covenant God, we do ready "Draw near to him."

Nevertheless, *prayer* is the best used means of drawing near to God. You will excuse me, then, if in considering my text this morning, I confine myself entirely to the subject of prayer. It is in prayer mainly, that we draw near to God, and certainly it can be said emphatically of prayer, it is good for every man who knoweth how to practice that heavenly art, in it to draw near unto God. To assist your memories, that the sermon may abide with you in after days, I shall divide my discourse this morning in a somewhat singular manner; first, I shall look upon my text as being a *touchstone*, by which we may try our prayers, ay, and try ourselves too. Then I shall take the text as a *whetstone* to sharpen our desires, to make us more earnest, and more diligent in supplication, because "it is good to draw near to God" and then, I shall have the solemn task in the last place

of using it as *a tombstone*, with a direful epitaph upon it for those who do not know what it is to draw near to God; for "A prayerless soul is a Christless soul."

I. First, then, regard my text as A TOUCHSTONE by which you may test your prayers, and thus try yourselves.

That is not prayer of which it cannot be said that there was in it a drawing near unto God. Come hither then with your supplications. I see one coming forward who says, "I am in the daily habit of using a form of prayer both at morning and at evening. I could not be happy if I went abroad before I had first repeated my morning prayer, nor could I rest at night without again going over the holy sentence appointed for use at eventide. Sir, my form is the very best that could possibly be written; it was compiled by a famous bishop, one who was glorified in martyrdom, and ascended to his God in a fiery chariot of flame." My friend, I am glad to hear, if you use a form, that you use the best. If we must have forms at all, let them be of the most excellent kind. So far so good. But let me ask you a question, I am not about to condemn you for any form you may have used, but tell me now, and tell me honestly from your inmost soul, have you drawn near to God while you have been repeating those words? for if not, O solemn thought! all the prayers you have ever uttered have been an idle mockery. You have *said* prayers, but you have never prayed in your life. Imagine not that there is any enchantment in any particular set of words. You might as well repeat the alphabet backwards, or the "Abracadabra" of a wizard, as go over the best form in the world, unless there is something more than form in it. Have you drawn near to God? Suppose that one of us should be desirous of presenting a petition to the House of Commons. We wisely ask in what manner the petition should be worded: we procure the exact phrases; and suppose that in the morning we rise and read this form, or repeat it to ourselves, and conclude with, "And your petitioners will ever pray," and the like. We do the same again at night, the same the next day, and for months we continue the practice. One day meeting some member of the House, we accost him and astonish him by saying, "Sir, I wonder I have never had an answer from the House, I have been petitioning these last six months, and the form that I used was the most accurate that could be procured." "But," says he, "how was

your petition presented?" *Presented!* I had not thought of that, I have repeated it." "Ay," he would say, "and you may repeat it many a long day before any good comes from it! it is not the repeating it, but the presenting of the petition, and having it pleaded by some able friend that will get you the boon you desire." And so it may be, my friend, that you have been repeating collects and prayers; and have you ignorantly imagined that you have prayed? Why, your prayer has never been presented. You have not laid it before the bleeding Lamb of God, and have not asked him to take it for you into the sacred place where God abideth, and there to present the petition with his own merits before his Father's throne. I will not bid thee cease from thy form; but I do beseech thee by the living God, either cease from it, or else beg the Holy Spirit to enable thee to draw near to God in it. Oh, I beseech you, take not what I may say for any censoriousness; I speak now as God's own messenger in this matter. Thy prayer has not been heard, and it neither can nor will be answered unless there be in it a true and real desire to draw near to God.

"Ah," saith another, "I am pleased to hear these remarks, for I am in the habit of offering extempore prayer every morning and evening, and at other times; besides, I like to hear you speak against the form, sir." Mark, I did not speak against the form, that is not my business upon this occasion. One class of sinners is always pleased to hear another class of sinners found fault with. You say you offer an extempore supplication. I bring your prayer to the same touchstone as the former. What is there in the form that you can extemporize, that it should be so much better than that which was composed by some holy man of God? Possibly your extempore form is not worth a farthing, and if it could be written, might be a disgrace to prayer-makers. I bring you at once to the test - have you in your prayer drawn near to God? When you have been on your knees in the morning, have you thought that you were talking to the King of heaven and earth? Have you breathed your desires, not to the empty winds, but into the ear of the Eternal? Have you desired to come to him and tell to him your wants, and have you sought at his hands the answer to your requests? Remember, you have not prayed successfully or acceptably unless you have in prayer endeavored to draw near to God. Suppose now, (to take a case) that I should desire some favor of a friend. I shut myself up alone, and I commence delivering an oration, pleading

earnestly for the boon I need. I repeat this at night, and so on month after month. At last I meet my friend and I tell him that I have been asking a favor of him, and that he has never heard my prayer. "Nay," saith he "I have never seen you, you never spoke to me." "Ah, but you should have heard what I said; if you had but heard it surely it would have moved your heart." "Ah," saith he, "but then you did not address it to me. You wrote a letter, you tell me, in moving strains, but did you post the letter? Did you see it was delivered to me?" "No, no," you say, "I kept the letter after I had written it. I never sent it to you." Now mark, it is just the same with extempore prayer. You plead; but if you are not pleading with God, to what effect is your pleading? You talk, but if you are not talking to a manifestly present God, to what effect is all your talking? If you do not seek to come near to him, what have you done? You have offered sacrifice, mayhap, but it has been upon your own high places, and the sacrifice has been an abomination. You have not brought it up to God's *one* altar; you have not come up to the mercy-seat, where is his own visible presence! You have not drawn near to God, and consequently your prayers, though they be multiplied by tens of thousands, are utterly valueless to your soul's benefit. Drawing near to God is an indispensable requisite in accepted prayer.

But, now, lest I should be misunderstood as to this drawing near to God, let me attempt to describe it in degrees, for all men cannot draw near to God with the same nearness of access. When first the life of grace begins in the soul you will draw near to God, but it will be with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast to the earth with the grandeur of that God in whose presence it stands. I remember the first time I ever sincerely prayed in my life; but the words I used I remember not. Surely there were few enough words in that petition. I had often repeated a form. I had been in the habit of continually repeating it. At last I came really to pray; and then I saw myself standing before God, in the immediate presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, and I said within myself. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." I felt like Esther when she stood before the King, faint and overcome with dread. I was full of penitence of heart, because of his majesty and my

sinfulness. I think the only words I could utter were something like these: "Oh! - Ah!" And the only complete sentence was, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" The overwhelming splendor of his majesty, the greatness of his power, the severity of his justice, the immaculate character of his holiness, and all his dreadful grandeur - these things overpowered my soul, and I fell down in utter prostration of spirit. But there was in that a true and real drawing near to God. Oh, if some of you when you are in your churches and chapels, did but realize that you are in God's presence, surely you might expect to see scenes more marvellous than any of the convulsions of the Irish revival. If you knew that God was there, that you were speaking to him, that in his ear you were uttering that oft repeated confession, "We have done the things that we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done." - ah, my friends, there would be then a deep humility and a solemn abasement of spirit. May God grant to us all, as often as we offer prayer of any sort, that we may truly and really draw near to him, even if it be only in this sense.

In after life as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and never will lose that holy awe which must overshadow a gracious man, when he is in the presence of a God, who can create or can destroy, yet that fear has all its terror taken out of it; it becomes a holy reverence, and no more a slavish abject dread. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendours of deity, and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne, and seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than his absolute Deity. He will see in God rather his goodness than his greatness, and more of his love than of his majesty. Then will the soul, bowing again as reverently as before, enjoy a sacred liberty of intercession; for while humbled in the presence of the Infinite God, it is yet sustained by the divine consciousness of being in the presence of mercy and of love in infinite degree. This is a state to which men reach after they have had their sins forgiven, after they have passed from death unto life; then they come to rejoice in God, and draw near to him with confidence.

There is yet a third and higher stage, which I fear, too few among us ever

arrive at; when the child of God, awed by the splendor, and delighting in the goodness of God, sees something which is more enchanting to him than either of these, namely, the fact of his relationship to God. He sees on the throne, not simply goodness, but his Father's goodness, not merely love, but love which has from all eternity been set upon *him*; love which has made *him* its darling, which has written his name upon its breast, love which for his sake did even deign to die. Then the child of God comes near to the throne, then he taketh hold of his Father's knees, and though conscious of the greatness of the God, yet is he still more alive to the loveliness of the Father, and he cries, "My Father, hear my prayer and grant me my request, for Jesu's sake." In this position it sometimes happens that the child of God may pray in such a way that others cannot understand him at all. If you had heard Martin Luther pray, some of you would have been shocked, and perhaps it would have been presumption if you had prayed as he did, because Martin Luther was God's own son, and you, alas, are destitute of sonship. He had a liberty to talk to God as another man had not. If you are not the son of God, if you have no realization of your adoption, the utmost you can do is to come into the King's court as a humble beggar. May God give you grace to get further; may you come there, not simply as a petitioner, but as a follower of the Son of God - a servant. But happy is the man who has received his full adoption, and knows himself to be a son. It were rudeness for any one to do that to a king which a king's son may do. A king's own child may talk familiarly to his own parent, and there are love-doings and words of high and hallowed familiarity, and of close and sacred communing, between God and his own adopted child, that I could not tell you - things that are something like what Paul heard in Paradise, it is scarce lawful for a man to utter them in public, though in private he knows their sweetness. Ah I my dear hearers, some of you, I doubt not, know more about this than I do, but this I know, it is the happiest moment in one's life when we can go up to our Father and our God in Christ Jesus, and can know and feel of a surety that his infinite love is set on us, and that our love is gone forth to him. There is a sweet embrace that is not to be excelled. No chariots of Aminadib the heavenly rapture can describe - even Solomon's Song itself, glowing though its figures be, can scarcely reach the mystery - the length, the breadth, the height of the embracing of God by the creature, and the embracing of the creature by its God. Now, I repeat, it is not essential to

the success of your prayers that you should come up to this last point. Possibly you never may attain to this eminence of grace. Nor even do I think that it is absolutely necessary that your prayer should come to the second point to be prayer. It should be so, and it will, as you grow in grace. But, mark, you must draw near to God in some one of these three grades either in a lowly sense of his majesty, or in a delightful consciousness of his goodness, or in a ravishing sense of your own relationship to him, or else your prayer is as worthless as the chaff, it is but as whispering to the wind, or the uttering of a cry to the desert air, where no ear can hear nor hand can help. Bring your prayers, then, to this touchstones and God help you to examine them, and be honest with yourselves, for your own soul's sake.

II. I have thus concluded the touchstone. I now come to the second head of the discourse, which was THE WHETSTONE, to whet your desires, to make you more anxious to be much in prayer, and to be more earnest in it. "It is good for me to draw near to God."

Now, first and foremost, let us remark that the goodness of prayer does not lie in any merit that there is in prayer itself. There is no merit whatever in prayer; and wherever the idea of the merit of prayer could come from one is at a loss to know, except that it must have come from a near relative of the Father of Lies, who resides somewhere in Italy. There is no doubt that old Rome was the birthplace of the idea, it is too absurd and wicked to have come from any less abominable place. If a beggar should be always on your door-step, or should be always meeting you in the street, or stopping you on your journeys, and asking you to give him help, I suppose the last thing you would understand would be the merit of his prayers. You would say, "I can understand their impudence, I can allow their earnestness, I can comprehend their importunity, but as for *merit*, what merit can there be in a beggar's cry?" Remember, your prayers at the best are nothing but a beggar's cry. You still stand as beggars at the gate of mercy, asking for the dole of God's charity, for the love of Jesus. And he gives freely. But he gives, not because of your prayers, but because of Christ's blood and Christ's merit. Your prayers may be the sacred vessel in which he puts the alms of his mercy; but the merit by which the mercy comes is in the veins of Christ, and nowhere

else. Remember that there can be no merit in a beggar's cry.

But, now, let us note that it nevertheless is good, practically good for us to pray and draw near to God; and the first thing which would whet our desires in prayer is this: - *Prayer explains mysteries*. I utter that first because it is in the Psalm. Poor Asaph had been greatly troubled. He had been trying to untie that Gordian knot concerning the righteousness of a providence which permits the wicked to flourish and the godly to be tried, and because he could not untie that knot, he tried to cut it, and he cut his own fingers in the act, and became greatly troubled. He could not understand how it was that God could be just and yet give riches to the wicked while his own people were in poverty. At last Asaph understood it all, for he went into the house of his God, and there he understood their end. And he says - looking back upon his discovery of a clue to this great labyrinth - "It is good for me to draw near to God." And now, my dear hearers, if you would understand the Word of God in its knotty points, if you would comprehend the mystery of the gospel of Christ, remember, Christ's scholars must study upon their knees. Depend upon it, that the best commentator upon the Word of God is its author, the Holy Ghost, and if you would know the meaning, you must go to him in prayer. Often when a psalm has staggered me in reading it, and I have not understood it, - if I have knelt down and tried to read it over in that position, and see if I could realize the meaning in my own heart, some one word in the text has glistened, and that one word has been the key to the whole. John Bunyan says that he never forgot the divinity he taught, because it was burnt into him when he was on his knees. That is the way to learn the gospel. If you learn it upon your knees you will never unlearn it. That which men teach you, men can unteach you. If I am merely convinced by reason, a better reasoner may deceive me. If I merely hold my doctrinal opinions because they seem to me to be correct, I may be led to think differently another day. But if God has taught them to me - he who is himself pure truth - I have not learned amiss, hut I have so learned that I shall never unlearn, nor shall I forget.

Behold, believer, thou art this day in a labyrinth; whenever thou comest to a turning place, where there is a road to the right or to the left, if thou wouldst know which way to go, fall on thy knees, then go on; and when

thou comest to the next turning place, on thy knees again, and so proceed again. The one clue to the whole labyrinth of providence, and of doctrinal opinion, and of sacred thought, is to be found in that one hallowed exercise - prayer. Continue much in prayer, and neither Satan nor the world shall much deceive you. Behold before you the sacred ark of truth. But where is the key? It hangs upon the silver nail of prayer; go reach it down, unlock the casket and be rich.

A second whetstone for your prayers shall be this: - *Prayer brings deliverances*. In an old author I met with the following allegory; as I found it so I tell it to you. Once upon a time, the king of Jerusalem left his city in the custody of an eminent Captain, whose name was Zeal. He gave unto Zeal many choice warriors, to assist him in the protection of the city. Zeal was a right hearted man, one who never wearied in the day of battle, but would fight all day, and all night, even though his sword did cleave to his hand as the blood ran down his arm. But it happened upon this time, that the king of Arabia, getting unto himself exceeding great hosts and armies, surrounded the city, and prevented any introduction of food for the soldiers, or of ammunition to support the war. Driven to the last extremity, Captain Zeal called a council of war, and asked of them what course they should take. Many things were proposed, but they all failed to effect the purpose, and they came to the sad conclusion that nothing was before them but the surrender of the city, although upon the hardest terms. Zeal took the resolution of the council of war, but when he read it, he could not bear it. His soul abhorred it. "Better," said he, "to be cut in pieces, than surrender. Better for us to be destroyed while we are faithful, than to give up the keys of this royal city." In his great distress, he met a friend of his, called Prayer; and Prayer said to him, "Oh! captain, I can deliver this city." Now, Prayer was not a soldier, at least he did not look as if he was a warrior, for he wore the garments of a priest. In fact he was the king's chaplain, and was the priest of the holy city of Jerusalem. But nevertheless this Prayer was a valiant man, and wore armor beneath his robes. "Oh, captain," said he, "give me three companions and I will deliver this city - their names must be Sincerity, Importunity, and faith." Now these four brave men went out of the city at the dead of night when the prospects of Jerusalem were the very blackest, they cut their way right through the hosts that surrounded the city. With many wounds and much

smuggling they made their escape, and traveled all that night long as quickly as they could across the plain, to reach the camp of the king of Jerusalem. When they flagged a little, Importunity would hasten them on; and when at any time they grew faint, Faith would give them a drink from his bottle, and they would recover. They came at last to the palace of the great king, the door was shut, but Importunity knocked long, and, at last it was opened. Faith stepped in; Sincerity threw himself on his face before the throne of the great king; and then Prayer began to speak. He told the king of the great straits in which the beloved city was now placed, the dangers that surrounded it, and the almost certainty that all the brave warriors would be cut in pieces by the morrow. Importunity repeated again and again the wants of the city. Faith pleaded hard the royal promise and covenant. At last the king said to Captain Prayer, "Take with thee soldiers and go back, lo, I am with thee to deliver this city." At the morning light, just when the day broke - for they had returned more swiftly than could have been expected, for though the journey seemed long in going there, it was very short in coming back, in fact they seemed to have gained time on the road - they arrived early in the morning, fell upon the hosts of the king of Arabia, took him prisoner, slew his army, and divided the spoil, and then entered the gates of the city of Jerusalem in triumph. Zeal put a crown of gold upon the head of Prayer, and decreed that henceforth whenever Zeal went forth to battle, Prayer should be the standard-bearer, and should lead the van. The allegory is full of truth; let him that heareth understand. If we would have deliverance in the hour, "Let us pray." Prayer shall soon bring sweet and merciful deliverances from the throne of our faithful God. This is the second sharpening of your desires upon the whetstone.

And now a third. It was said of Faith, in that mighty chapter of the Hebrews, that Faith stopped the mouth of lions and the like. But one singular thing that Faith did, which is as great a miracle as any of them, was this: Faith obtained promises. Now the like can be said of Prayer. *Prayer obtains promises*; therefore "it is good for thee to draw near to God." We read a story in the History of England, whether true or not we cannot tell, that Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex a ring, as a token of her favor. "When thou art in disgrace," she said, "send this ring to me. When I see it I will forgive thee, and accept thee again to favor."

You know the story of that ill-fated noble, how he sent the ring by a faithless messenger, and it was never delivered, and therefore he perished at the block. Ah! God has given to each one of his people the sacred ring of promise. And he saith, "As often as thou art in need, or in sorrow, show it to me, and I will deliver thee." Take heed then, believer, that thou hast a faithful messenger. And what messenger canst thou employ so excellent as true, real, earnest prayer? But, take heed it be real prayer; for if thy messenger miscarry, and the promise be not brought to God's eye, who knoweth, thou mayest never obtain the blessing. Draw near to God with living, loving prayer; present the promise, and thou shalt obtain the fulfillment. Many things might I say of prayer; our old divines are full of encomiums concerning it. The early fathers speak of it as if they were writing sonnets. Chrysostom preached of it as if he saw it incarnate in some heavenly form. And the choicest metaphors were gathered together to describe in rapturous phrase the power, nay, the omnipotence of prayer. Would to God that we loved prayer as our fathers did of old. It is said of James the Less, that he was so much in prayer that his knees had become hard like those of a camel. It was doubtless but a legend, but legends often are based on truths. And certain it is that Hugh Latimer, that blessed saint and martyr of our God, was accustomed to pray so earnestly in his old age when he was in his cell, that he would often pray until he had no strength left to use, and the prison attendants had need to lift him from his knees. Where are the men like these? Oh angel of the covenant, where canst thou find them? When the Son of Man cometh shall he find prayer on the earth? Ours are not worthy of the name of supplication. Oh that we had learned that saved art, that we could draw near to God, and plead his promise. Watts hath put several things together in one verse. Prayer clears the sky; -
"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw."

Prayer is a heaven climber; -
"Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw."

Prayer makes even Satan quake, -
"For Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees."

I have thus given you three reasons why we should be diligent in prayer. Let me add yet another, for we must not leave this part of the whetstone until we have thoroughly entered into the reasons why "it is good for us to draw near unto God. Let me remark, that *prayer has a mighty power to sustain the soul in every season of its distress and sorrow*. Whenever the soul becomes weak, use the heavenly strengthening plaster of prayer. It was in prayer the angel appeared unto the Lord and strengthened him. That angel has appeared to many of us, and we have not forgotten the strength we received when on our knees. You remember in the ancient mythology the story of him who as often as he was thrown down recovered strength because he touched his mother earth. It is so with the believer. As often as he is thrown down upon his knees he recovers himself, for he touches the great source of his strength - the mercy-seat. If thou hast a burden on thy back, remember prayer, for thou shalt carry it well if thou canst pray. Once on a time Christian had upon his back a terrible burden that crushed him to the earth, so that he could not carry it; he crept along on his hands and knees. There appeared to him a fair and comely damsel, holding in her hand a wand, and she touched the burden. It was there, it was not removed, but strange to say the burden became weightless. It was there in all its outward shape and features, but without weight. That which had crushed him to the earth, had become now so light that he could leap and carry it. Beloved, do you understand this? Have you gone to God with mountains of troubles on your shoulders, unable to carry them, and have you seen them, not removed, but still remaining in the same shape, but of a different weight? They became blessings instead of curses, what you thought was an iron cross suddenly turned out to be a wooden one, and you carried it with joy, following your Master.

I will give but one other reason, lest I should weary you, and that certainly is not my desire, but to quicken you rather than to weary you. Beloved, there is one reason why we should pray, those of us who are engaged in the Lord's work in any way, because *it is prayer that will ensure success*. Two laborers in God's harvest met each other once upon a time, and they sat down to compare notes. One was a man of sorrowful spirit, and the other joyous, for God had given him the desire of his heart.

The sad brother said, "Friend, I cannot understand how it is that everything you do is sure to prosper: You scatter seed with both your hands very diligently, and it springs up, and so rapidly too, that the reaper treads upon the heels of the sower, and the sower himself again upon the heels of the next reaper. I have sown," said he, "as you have done, and I think I can say I have been just as diligent; I think too the soil has been the same, for we have labored side by side in the same town. I hope the seed has been of the same quality, for I have found mine where you get yours - the common granary. But alas, my seed, friend, mine never springs up. I sow it. It is as if I sowed upon the waves, I never see a harvest. Here and there a sickly blade of wheat I have discovered with great and diligent search, but I can see but little reward for all my labors." They talked long together, for the brother who was successful was one of a tender heart, and therefore he sought to comfort this mourning brother. They compared notes, they looked through all the rules of husbandry, and they could not solve the mystery, why one was successful and the other labored in vain. At last one said to the other, "I must retire." "Wherefore?" said the other, "Why this is the time" said he "when I must go and steep my seed." "Steep your seed?" said the other. "Yes, my brother, I always steep my seed before I sow it. I steep it till it begins to swell, and germinate, and I can almost see a green blade springing from it, and then you know it speedily grows after it is sown." "Ah," said the other, "but I understand not what you mean. How do you steep your seed, and in what mysterious mixture?" "Brother," said he, "it is a composition made of one part of the tears of agony for the souls of men, and the other part of the tears of a holy agony which wrestles with God in prayer: - this mixture if you drop your seed in it, hath a transcendent efficacy to make every grain full of life, so that it is not lost." The other rose and went on his way, and forgot not what he had learned, but he began to steep his seed too; he spent less time in his study, more time in his closet; he was less abroad, more at home, less with man, and more with God. And he went abroad and scattered his seed, and he too, saw a harvest, and the Lord was glorified in them twain. Brethren, I do feel with regard to myself, and therefore, when I speak of others I speak not uncharitably, that the reason of the nonsuccess of the ministry in these years, (for compared with the days of Pentecost, I cannot call our success a success) lies in our want of prayer. If I were addressing students in the college, I

think I should venture to say to them, set prayer first in your labors; let your subject be well prepared; think well of your discourse, but best of all, pray it over, study on your knees. And now in speaking to this assembly, containing Sabbath-school teachers, and others who in their way are laboring for Christ, let me beseech you whatever you do, go not about your work, except you have first entreated that the dew of heaven may drop on the seed you sow. Steep your seed and it shall spring up. We are demanding in our days more laborers - it is a right prayer; we are seeking that the seed should be of the best sort, it is a right demand, but let us not forget another which is even more necessary than this, let us ask, let us plead with God, that the seed be steeped, that men may preach agonizing for souls. I like to preach with a burden on my heart - the burden of other men's sins, the burden of other men's hard-heartedness, the burden of their unbelief, the burden of their desperate estate, which must ere long end in perdition. There is no preaching, I am persuaded, like that: for then we preach as though -

"We ne'er might preach again,
As dying men to dying men."

And, oh, may each of you labor after the latter fashion in your own sphere, ever taking care to commit your work to God.

I will tell you here an incident of the revival. It is one I know to be correct, it is told by a good brother who would not add a word thereunto, I am sure. It happened, not long ago, that in a school which is sustained by the Corporation of the City of London, in the north of Ireland, one of the bigger boys had been converted to God; and one day, in the midst of school, a younger youth was greatly oppressed by a sense of sin, and so overwhelmed did he become that the master plainly perceived that he could not work, and, therefore, he said to him, "You had better go home, and plead with God in prayer in private." He said, however, to the bigger boy, who was all rejoicing in hope, "Go with him; take him home and pray with him." They started together: on the road they saw an empty house; the two boy went in and there began to pray; the plaintive cry of the young one, after a little time changed into a note of joy, when, suddenly springing up, he said, "I have found rest in Jesus, I have never felt as I do now; my sins, which are many, are all forgiven." The proposal was to go

home; but the younger lad forbade this. No, he must go and tell the master of the school that he had found Christ. So hurrying back, he rushed in and said, "Oh! I have found the Lord Jesus Christ." All the boys in the school, who had seen him sitting sad and dull upon the form, remarked the joy that flashed from his eye, when he cried "I have Christ," The effect was electric The boys suddenly and mysteriously disappeared; the master knew not where they were gone; but looking over into the playground, he saw by the wall were a number of boys, one by one, in prayer asking for mercy. He said to the elder youth, "Cannot you go and tell these boys the way of salvation - tell them what they must do to be saved?" He did so, and the silent prayer was suddenly changed into a loud piercing shriek, the boys in the school understood it, and, impelled by the Great Spirit, they all fell on their knees, and began to cry aloud for mercy through the blood of Christ. But, this was not all. There was a girls' schoolroom in the same building over head. The ear had been well tutored to understand what that cry meant, and soon interpreted it, and the girls too, affected by the same Spirit, fell down and began to cry aloud for the forgiveness of their sins. Here was an interruption of the school! Was ever such a thing known before in a school-room? Classes are all put aside, books forgotten; everything cast to the winds, while poor sinners are kneeling at the foot of the cross seeking for pardon. The cry was heard throughout the various offices attached to this large school, and it was heard also across the street, and passers by were attracted - men of God, ministers and clergymen of the neighborhood were brought in - the whole day was spent in prayer, and they continued until almost midnight; but they separated with songs of joy, for that vast mass of girls and boys, men and women, who had crowded the two school-rooms, had all found the Saviour.

Our good brother, Dr. Arthur, says, that he met with a youth while travelling in Ireland, and he said to him, "Do you love the Saviour?" And he said, "I trust I do." "How did you come to love him?" "Oh," said he, "I was converted in the big school-room that night. My mother heard that there was a revival going on there, and she sent me to fetch my little brother away; she did not want him, she said, to get convinced; and I went to fetch my brother, and he was on his knees crying, 'Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.' I stopped, and I prayed too, and the Lord saved

us both." Now to what are we to attribute this? I know many of the brethren there - the Presbyterians and others - and I do not think there is any difference or any superiority in their ministry over anything we can see or hear in London, and I think they themselves would subscribe to the truth of what I assert. The difference is this: there has been prayer there; living, hearty prayer has been offered continually, perhaps by some who did not live in Ireland. God alone knows where that revival really begun. Some woman on her bed may have been exorcised in her soul for that district, and may have been wrestling with God in prayer; and then the blessing has descended. And if God will help you and help me to lay near to heart the neighborhood in which we live, the family over which we preside, the congregation we have to address, the class we have to teach, the laborers we employ, or any of these, surely then by mighty prayer we shall bring down a great blessing from high; for prayer is never lost; preaching *may* be, but prayer *never* is. Praying breath can never be spent in vain. the Lord send to all the churches of Great Britain, first of all, the power of prayer, and then shall there come conversions of multitudes of souls through the outpoured energy of the Holy One of Israel!

III. I shall have little time to close up the third point, further than to remark that while I have been preaching I do hope there have been some here who have heard for themselves. Ah, my hearers, religion is more solemn work than some men think of. I am often shocked with the brutality of what are called the lower glasses of society, and with their coarse blasphemies; but there is one thing - and I speak honestly to you now, as fearing no man - there is one thing that is to me more shocking still, and that is the frivolous way in which the mass of our higher classes spend all their time. What are your morning calls but pretenses for wasting your time? What are your amusements but an attempt to kill the time that hangs laboriously on your hands? And what are many of your employments but an industrious idleness, spinning and knitting away of precious hours which God knows will be few enough when you come to look back upon them from a dying bed. Oh! if you did but know what you are made for, and your high destiny, you would not waste your time in the paltry things that occupy your hands and your souls. God Almighty forgive those wasted hours which if you be Christians ought to be employed for the good of others. God forgive those moments of frivolity

which ought to have been occupied in prayer. If such a congregation as this could but be solemnly alive to the interests of this land and the poverty of it, to its miseries, to its wickedness: if but such a host as I have here could solemnly feel this matter, how much good would certainly come to us! This would be the best missionary society; so many hearts of tenderness and affection, all beating high with an anxious desire to see sinners brought to Christ. Ah! we cannot approve of the doctrines of the Romish church, but still sometimes we have to be abashed at their zeal. Would God that we had sisters of mercy who were merciful indeed; not dressed in some fanciful garb, but going from house to house to comfort the sick and help the needy! Would that ye all were brothers of the heart of Jesus, and all of you sisters of him, whose mother's heart was pierced with agony, when he died that we might be saved. Oh, my dear hearers, this I speak with an earnest anxiety that the words may be prophetic of a better age.

But now, there are some of you here, perhaps, that never prayed in your lives, toying like glittering insects, wasting your little day. Ye know not that death is near ye; and oh, if ye have never sought and have never found the Saviour; however bright those eyes, if they have never seen the wounds of Christ, if they have never looked to Christ, they shall not simply be sealed in death, but they must behold sights of fearful woe eternally. Oh may God grant you grace to pray; may he lead you home to your houses, to fall on your knees, and for the first time to cry, "Lord have mercy upon me!" Remember you have sins to confess, and if you think you have not, you are in a sad state of heart, it proves that you are dead in trespasses and sins - dead in them. Go home and ask the Lord to give you a new heart and a right spirit, and may he who dictates the prayer graciously hear; and may you, and I, and all of us, when this life has passed away and time is exchanged for eternity, stand before the throne of God at last. I have to preach continually to a congregation in which I know there are many drunkards, swearers, and the like - with these men I know how to deal, and God has given me success; but I sometimes tremble for you amiable, excellent, upright daughters, who make glad your father's house, and wives that train up your children well. Remember, if you have not the root of the matter in you - "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And as we must be

honest with the poor, so must we be with the rich; and as we must lay the axe to the root of the tree with the drunkard and the swearer, so must we with you. You are as much lost as they are, and shall as surely perish as they do, unless you be born again. There is but one road to heaven for you all alike. As a minister of the gospel, I know no rich men and no poor men; I know no working classes and no gentlemen; I know simply God's sinful creatures, bidden to come to Christ and find mercy through his atonement. He will not reject you. Put the black thought away. He is able to save; doubt him not. Come to him; come and welcome: God help you to come.

God Almighty bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Life And Walk Of Faith

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. -
Colossians 2:6

Our nature is fond of change. Although man was made in the image of God at first, it is plain enough that any trace of immutability which he may once have possessed has long ago departed. Man, unrenewed, could he possess the joys of heaven, would in time grow weary of them, and crave for change. When the children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on angels' food, they murmured for variety, and groaned out, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." It is little wonder, then, that we need cautions against shifting the ground of our hope and the object of our faith. Another evil principle will co-work with this love of change in our hearts, and produce much mischief—our natural tendency to build upon our own works. For a time that pernicious habit is cured by conviction of sin. The law, with its sharp axe, cuts down the lofty cedar of fleshly confidence, and withers all its verdure; but, since the root still remains, at the very scent of water it sprouts again, and there is good need to set the axe going with all its former edge and weight. When we think legality quite dead, it revives, and, linking hands with our love of change, it tempts us to forsake our simple standing upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, and urges us to advance to a something which it decorates before our eyes with fancied colors, and makes out to our feeble understandings to be better or more honorable to ourselves. Though this will certainly be again beaten down in a Christian, for he will meet with trouble after trouble when once he goeth astray from his first path, yet again the old secret desire to be something, to do something, to have some little honor by performing the works of the law, will come in, and we shall have need to hear the voice of wisdom in our hearts saying to us, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;" persevere in the same way in which ye have begun, and, as at the first Christ Jesus was the source of your life, the principle of your action, and the joy of your spirit, so let him be the same even till life's end, the same when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter into the joy and the rest which remain for the

people of God.

In trying to teach this very useful, though simple lesson, I shall, in the plainest possible language, first of all talk a little of the text by way of exposition; then, secondly, by way of advocacy; and then, thirdly, by way of application.

I. Oh that the gracious Spirit, who alone can lead us into all truth, would aid me awhile I endeavor to open up this verse BY WAY OF EXPOSITION.

In expounding the text, we readily break it up into two parts: here is the life of faith—receiving Christ Jesus the Lord; here is, secondly, the walk of faith—so walk ye in him.

1. The Holy Spirit here reveals to us the life of faith—the way by which you and I are saved, if saved at all. Remark, carefully, that it is represented as receiving. Now the word receiving implies the very opposite of anything like merit. Merit is purchasing; merit might be called making by labor, or winning by valor; but receiving is just the accepting of a thing as a gift. The eternal life which God gives his people is in no sense whatever the fruit of their exertions; it is the gift of God. As the earth drinks in the rain, as the sea receives the streams, as night accepts light from the stars, so we, giving nothing, partake freely of the grace of God. The saints are not by nature wells, or streams, they are but cisterns into which the living water flows. They are but as the empty vessel; sovereign mercy puts them under the conduit-pipe, and they receive grace upon grace till they are filled to the brim. He that talks about winning salvation by works; he that thinks he can earn it by prayers, by tears, by penance, by mortification of the flesh, or by zealous obedience to the law, makes a mistake; for the very first principle of the divine life is not giving out, but receiving. It is that which comes from Christ into me which is my salvation; not that which springs out of my own heart, but that which comes from the divine Redeemer and changes and renews my nature. It is not what I give out, but what I receive, which must be life to me.

The idea of receiving, again, seems to imply in it a sense of realization, making the matter a reality. One cannot very well receive a shadow; we receive that which is substantial. Gold, silver, precious stones—such things we can receive; estates, riches, bread, water, food, raiment—all these are things which are substances to us, and therefore it becomes possible for us to receive them. We do not receive a dream; we do not receive, again I say, a shadow; we do not speak of receiving a spectre; we do not receive a phantom. There is something real in a thing that is received. Well now so is it also in the life of faith; we realize Christ. While we are without faith, Christ is a name to us, a person that may have lived a long while ago, so long that his life is only a history to us now! By an act of faith Christ becomes a real person in the consciousness of our heart, as real to us as our own flesh, and blood, and bones, and we speak of him and think of him as we would of our brother, our father, our friend. Our faith gives a substance to the history and idea of Christ, puts real solidity into the spirit and name of Christ, and that which to the worldly man is but a phantom, a thing to hear about, and talk about, becomes to us a thing to taste, and handle, to lay hold upon, and to receive as real and true. I know, ye that are unconverted, that ye think all these things an idle tale; but you that are saved, you who have received Christ, you know that there is substance here, and shadow everywhere else. This has become to you the one grand reality, that God is in Christ reconciling you unto himself.

But receiving means also a third thing, that is getting a grip of it, grasping it. The thing which I receive becomes my own. I may believe it to be real, but that is not receiving it. I may believe, also, that if I ever do get it, it must be given to me, and that I cannot earn it for myself, but still that is not receiving it. Receiving is the bona fide taking into my hand and appropriating to myself as my own property that which is given to me. Now this is what the soul doth when it believes on Christ. Christ becomes my Christ; his blood cleanses my sin, and it is cleansed; his righteousness covers me, and I am clothed with it; his Spirit fills me, and I am made to live by it. He becomes to me as much mine as anything that I can call my own; nay, what I call my own here on earth is not mine; it is only lent to me, and will be taken from me; but Christ is so mine, that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to rob me

of him. Oh! I hope, dear friends, you have that blessed appropriating faith which says, "Yes, he is not another man's Christ, he is my Christ," I hope you can look into his face to-day and say, "My beloved, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I hope you do not talk of these things as I might talk of my lord So-and-So's park, and admire its beauties, while I myself have no right to one acre of the many thousands within the park-fence; but I trust, on the other hand, you can say—"The blessings and promises of the Lord my God are all my own; whatever I read of in the covenant of grace that is good, that is comely, that is desirable, I have heard a voice say in my ears, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look to the north, and the south, to the east, and the west—all this have I given thee to be thy possession for ever and ever by a covenant of salt." Now put these three things together, and I think you have the idea of receiving Christ. To receive him is to have him as the result of God's free gift; to realize him; and then to appropriate him to yourselves.

The word "receive" is used in some ten or a dozen senses in holy Scripture; five of them will suffice my purpose just now. To receive is often used for taking. We read of receiving a thousand shekels of silver, and of receiving money, garments, olive-yards, sheep, and oxen. Perhaps in this sense we understand the words of the Master—"No man can receive anything unless it be given him from above," and that other sentence—"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." We take Christ into us—to return to my old simile—as the empty vessel takes in water from the stream; so we receive Christ. The love, life, merit, nature, and grace of Jesus freely flow into us, as the oil into the widow's vessels. But the word is also used in Scripture to signify holding that which we take in; indeed, a vessel without a bottom could hardly be said to receive water. I do not suppose any one would talk of a sieve receiving water except in a mock sense. But the life of faith consists in holding within us that which Christ hath put into us, so that Jesus Christ is formed in us the hope of glory. By faith it comes in; by faith it is kept in; faith gives me what I have; keeps what I have; faith makes it mine; faith keeps it mine; faith gets hold of it with one hand, and then clasps it with both hands with a grasp that neither death nor life can loose. Then, receiving sometimes means in Scripture simply believing. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." We read of

receiving false prophets, that is, believing them. Now, to receive Christ is to believe him. He says, "I can save you."—I receive that. He says, "I will save you."—I receive that. He says, "Trust me and I will make you like myself."—I receive that. Whatever Jesus says, I believe him, and receive him as true. I make his word so true to myself that I act upon it as being true, and regard it not as a word that may possibly be true, but which must be true, even if heaven and earth should pass away. This is receiving Christ—believing what he has said. Receiving, also, often signifies in Scripture entertaining. Thus the barbarous people at Melita received Paul and his companions kindly, and kindled a fire. Ah! after we have once found all in Christ to be our own, and have received him into ourselves by faith, then we entreat the Lord to enter our hearts and sup with us. We give him the best seat at the table of our souls; we would feast him on the richest dainties of our choicest love. We ask him to abide with us from morn till eve; we would commune with him every day, and every hour of the day. We entertain him; we have a reception-chamber in our hearts, and we receive Christ. And then, once again, receiving in Scripture often signifies to enjoy. We hear of receiving a crown of life which fadeth not away; that is, enjoying it, enjoying heaven, and being satisfied with all its bliss. Now, dear friends, when we receive Christ, there is intended in this an enjoying of it. I am only now talking the simplicities of our faith, but I do want to make them very personal to you. Are you thus enjoying Christ? if you had a crown you would wear it; you have a Christ—feed on him. If you were hungry and there were bread on the table, you would eat. Oh! eat and drink, beloved, of your Lord Jesus Christ. If you have a friend, you enjoy his company: you have a friend in Christ; Oh! enjoy his conversation. Do not leave him, like a bottle of cordial for the fainting, sealed up from us; let him not be as some choice dainty all untasted, while you are hungry. Oh! receive Christ, for this is the very heaven and rest of the soul. His flesh is meat indeed, his blood is drink indeed. Never did angels taste such divine fare. Come hither saints and satiate yourselves in him. To take him into one's self, to hold him there, to believe every word he says, to entertain him in our hearts, and to enjoy the luscious sweetness which he must confer upon all those who have eaten his flesh, and have been made to drink of his blood—this it is to receive Christ.

But we have not brought out the real meaning of this life of faith yet till we dwell upon another word. As ye have received. Received what? Salvation may be described as the blind receiving sight, the deaf receiving hearing, the dead receiving life; but beloved, beloved, here is a thought here—oh that you may get hold of it! We have not only received these things, but we have received CHRIST. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord." Do you catch it? It is true that He gave us life from the dead? He gave us pardon of sin; He gave us imputed righteousness. These are all precious things, but you see we are not content with them; we have received Christ himself. The Son of God has been poured out into us, and we have received him, and appropriated him. Mark, I say, not merely the blessings of the covenant, but himself; not merely the purchase of his blood, but he himself from whose veins the blood hath flowed has become ours; and every soul that hath eternal life is this day a possessor of Christ Jesus the Lord. Now we will put this, also, personally to you. Have I received Christ, that is the anointed. My soul, hast thou seen Christ as the anointed of the Father in the divine decree to execute his purposes? Hast thou seen him coming forth in the fullness of time wearing the robes of his priesthood, the anointed of the Father? Hast thou seen him standing at the altar offering himself as a victim, an anointed priest, anointed with the sacred oil by which God has made him a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec? My soul, hast thou seen Jesus going within the veil and speaking to thy Father and to his Father as one whom the Father has accepted, of whom we can speak, in the language of David, as our shield and God's anointed? Oh! it is a delight indeed to receive Christ not as an unsent prophet, not as a man who came of his own authority, not as a teacher who spoke his own word, but as one who is Christos, the anointed, the anointed of God, ordained of the Most High, and therefore most certainly acceptable, as it is written, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people. It pleased the Father to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." Delightful is the contemplation of Christ under that aspect! Soul, dost thou thus receive the Messiah of God? But the text says, "Christ Jesus." Now Jesus means a Savior. Christ is his relation to God, Jesus his relation to me. Have I received Christ in his relationship to me as a Savior? My soul, has Christ saved thee? Come, no "ifs" and "ans" about it. Hast thou received him as thy Savior? Couldst thou say in that happy day when thy faith closed

with him, "Yes, Jesus, thou hast saved me!" Oh! there are some professors of religion who do not seem to have received Christ as Jesus. They look upon him as one who may help them to save themselves, who can do a great deal for them, or may begin the work but not complete it. Oh! beloved, we must get a hold of him as one that has saved us, that has finished the work. What know ye not that ye are this day whiter than the driven snow because his blood has washed you? Ye are this day more acceptable to God than unfallen angels ever were, for ye are clothed in the perfect righteousness of a divine one. Christ has wrapped you about with his own righteousness; you are saved; you have received him as God's anointed, see that you receive him as Jesus your Savior.

Then, again, it is clear that saving faith consisteth also in receiving him as he is in himself, as the divine Son. "Ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord." Those who say they cannot believe in his Deity have not received him. Others theoretically admit him to be divine, but he is never a subject of confidence as such; they have not received him. But I trust I speak to many hundreds this morning who willingly accept his Godhead, and say, "I entertain no doubt about his Deity, and, moreover, on that I risk my soul; I do take him into my heart as being God over all, blessed for ever, Amen; I kiss his feet while I see his humanity; but I believe that, since those feet could tread the waters, he is divine. I look up to his hands, and as I see them pierced I know, that he is human; but as I know that those hands multiplied the loaves and fishes till they fed five thousand, I know that he is divine. I look upon his corpse in the tomb, and I see that he is man; I see him in the resurrection, and I know that he is God. I see him on the cross, suffering, and I know that he is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; but I hear a voice which saith, 'Let all the angels of God worship him,' 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;' and I bow before him and say, 'Oh Lord, thou Son of God and son of Mary, I receive thee as Christ Jesus the Lord.'"

Now this is all very plain talking you will say; and I remind you that souls are saved by very plain truths, and the dealings of men's souls with Christ are not carried on in learned or metaphysical terms. We do believe, and so take Christ Jesus the Lord into us, and by that act of faith, without any doing of our own, we are completely saved.

I shall only make this further remark here, that the apostle speaks of this as a matter of certainty, and goes on to argue from it. Now we do not argue from a supposition. I must have you clear, dearly beloved in the Lord, that this is a matter of certainty to you. We can hardly get to the next point unless you can say, "I have received Jesus." The verse runs, "As or since ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him." We must not alter it into, "Since I hope I have," "Since I trust I have." Ye either have or have not; if ye have not, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and cry to him for his great gift; but if you have, O, dear friends, do not let it be a question with you, but say "Yes, yes, yes, I can say, once for all, I have received him; poor, weak, and worthless though I am, I do put my humble seal to the fact that God is true, and I trust in him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This is the life of faith.

2. Now, in expounding the text, our second point was the walk of faith. "Since ye have received him, walk in him." Walk implies, first of all, action. Do not let your reception of Christ be a mere thing of thought to you, a subject only for your chamber and your closet, but act upon it all. If you have really received Christ, and are saved, act as if you were saved, with joy, with meekness, with confidence, with faith, with boldness. Walk in him; do not sit down in indolence, but rise and act in him. Walk in him; carry out into practical effect that which you believe. See a man who has received an immense fortune, his purse is bursting, and his caskets are heavy; what does he do? Why, he behaves like a rich man; he sees a luxury which pleases him, and he buys it; there is an estate he desires, and he purchases it; he acts like a rich man. Beloved brethren, you have received Christ—act upon it. Do not play the beggar now that boundless wealth is conferred upon you. Walking, again, implies perseverance not only being in Christ to-day, that would be standing in him and falling from him; but being in him to-morrow, and the next day, and the next, and the next, and the next; walking in him all your walk of life. I remember Matthew Henry, speaking about Enoch walking with God, says he did not only take a turn or two up and down with God, and then leave him, but he walked with God four hundred years. This implies perseverance. You have received Christ—persevere in receiving him; you

have com to trust him—keep on trusting him; you hang about his neck as a poor, helpless sinner—remain hanging there; in other words abide in him. Walking implies habit. When we speak of a man's walk and conversation, we mean his habits, the constant tenor of his life. Now, dear friends, if you and I sometimes enjoy Christ, and then forget him; sometimes say he is ours, and anon loose our hold, that is not a habit; we do not walk in him. But if you have received him, let it be your habit to live upon him, keep to him; cling to him, never let him go, but live and have your being in Him. This walking implies a continuance. There is no notice given in the text of the suspension of this walking, but there must be a continual abiding in Christ. How many Christians there are who think that in the morning and evening they ought to come into the company of Christ, and then they may be in the world all the day. Ah! but we ought always to be in Christ, that is to say, all the day long, every minute of the day; though worldly things may take up some of my thoughts, yet my soul is to be in a constant state of being in Christ, so that if I am caught at any moment, I am in him; at any hour if any one should say to me, "Now, are you saved?" I may be able still to say, "Yes." And if they ask me for an evidence of it, I may, without saying so, prove it to them by the fact that I am acting like a man who is in Christ, who has Christ in him, has had his nature changed by receiving Christ's nature, and has Christ to be his one end and aim. I suppose, also, that walking signifies progress. So walk ye in him; proceed from grace to grace, run forward until you reach the uttermost limit of knowledge that man can have concerning our Beloved. "As ye have received him walk in him."

But now I want you to notice just this; it says, "Walk ye in him." Oh! I cannot attempt to enter into the mystery of this text—"Walk in him!" You know if a man has to cross a river, he fords it quickly and is out of it again at once, but you are to suppose a person walking in a certain element always, in Christ. Just as we walk in the air, so am I to walk in Christ; not sometimes, now and then coming to him and going away from him, but walking in him as my element. Can you comprehend that? Not a soul here can make anything out of that but the most silly jargon, except the man who having received the inner spiritual life, understandeth what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Dear friends, in trying to open up that point just for a moment, let us notice

what this walking in Christ must mean. As Christ was at first when we received him the only ground of our faith; so as long as we live, we are to stand to the same point. Did you not sing the other day when you first came to him—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all?"

Well, that is how you are to continue to the end. We commence our faith with—

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

When thou art hoary with honors, when thou art covered with fame,
when thou hast served thy Master well, still come in just the same way
with—

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

Let not your experience, your sanctification, your graces, your attainments, come in between you and Christ, but just as you took him to be the only pillar of your hope at first, so let him be even to the last. You received Christ, again, as the substance of your faith. The infidel laughed at you, and said you had nothing to trust to; but your faith made Christ real to you. Well, now, just as the first day when you came to Jesus you no more doubted the reality of Christ than you did your own existence, so walk ye in him. Well can I recollect that first moment when these eyes looked to Christ! Ah! there was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that thorn-crowned head. I wish it were always so, and indeed it ought to be. As ye have received Christ really, so keep on realising and finding substance in him. And that day, beloved, Christ became to us the joy of our souls. Home, friends, health, wealth, comforts

—all lost their lustre that day when He appeared, just as stars are hidden by the light of the sun. He was the only Lord and giver of life's best bliss, the one well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. I know that the first day it mattered not to me whether the day itself was gloomy or bright. I had found Christ; that was enough for me. He was my Savior; he was my all. I do think that that day I could have stood upon the faggots of Smithfield to burn for him readily enough. Well now, just as you received him at first as your only joy, so receive him still, walking in him, making him the source, the center, ay, and the circumference too of all your souls' range of delight, having your all in him. So, beloved, that day when we received him, we received him as the object of our love. Oh! how we loved Christ then! Had we met him that day, we would have broken the alabaster box of precious ointment, and poured it upon his head; we would have washed his feet without tears, and wiped them with the hairs of our head. Ah! Jesus, when I first received thee, I thought I should have behaved far better than I have, I thought I would spend and be spent for thee, and should never dishonor thee or turn aside from my faith, and devotedness, and zeal; but ah! brethren, we have not come up to the standard of our text—walking in him as we have received him. He has not been by us so well beloved as we dreamed he would have been.

I take it then to be the meaning of our text, as Christ Jesus the Lord was at the first All-in-All to you, so let him be while life shall last.

II. I shall be very brief upon THE ADVOCACY OF THIS PRINCIPLE, for surely you need no urgent persuasion to cleave unto such a Lord as yours.

In advocating this principle, I would say, first of all, suppose, my brethren, you and I having been saved by Christ, should now begin to walk in some one else, what then? Why, what dishonor to our Lord. Here is a man who came to Christ and says he found salvation in him, but after relying upon the Lord some half-a-dozen years, he came to find it was not a proper principle, and so now he has begun to walk by feelings, to walk by sight, to walk by philosophy, to walk by carnal wisdom. If such a case could be found, what discredit would it bring upon our Holy Leader and Captain. But I am certain no such instance will be found in you, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Have you not up till now found your

Lord to be a compassionate and generous friend to you, and has not simple faith in him given you all the peace your spirit could desire? I pray you, then, unless you would stain his glory in the dust, as you have received Christ, so walk in him.

Besides, what reason have you to make a change? Has there been any argument in the past? Has not Christ proved himself all-sufficient! He appeals to you to-day—"Have I been a wilderness unto you?" When your soul has simply trusted Christ, have you ever been confounded? When you have dared to come as a guilty sinner and believed in him, have you ever been ashamed? Very well, then, let the past urge you to walk in him. And as for the present, can that compel you to leave Christ? Oh! when we are hard beset with this world or with the severer trials within the Church, we find it such a sweet thing to come back; and pillow our head upon the bosom of our Savior. This is the joy we have to-day, that we are in trial, that we are saved in him, and if we find this to-day to be enough, wherefore should we think of changing! I will not forswear the sunlight till I find a better, nor leave my Lord until a brighter Lover shall appear; and, since this can never be, I will hold him with a grasp immortal, and bind his name as a seal upon my arm. As for the future, can you suggest anything which can arise that shall render it necessary for you to tack about, or strike sail, or go with another captain in another ship? I think not. Suppose life to be long—He changes not. Suppose you die; is it not written that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" You are poor; what better than to have Christ who can make you rich in faith? Suppose you are sick; what more do you want than Christ to make your bed in your sickness? Suppose you should be maltreated, and mocked at, and slandered for his sake—what better do you want then to have him as a friend who sticketh closer than a brother? In life, in death, in judgment, you cannot conceive anything that can arise in which you would require more than Christ bestows.

But, dear friends, it may be that you are tempted by something else to change your course for a time. Now what is it? Is it the wisdom of this world, the cunning devices and discoveries of man? Is it that which our apostle mentions as philosophy? The wise men of the world have

persuaded you to begin questioning; they have urged you to put the mysteries of God to the test of common-sense, reason, and so forth, as they call it, and not lean on the inspiration of God's Word. Ah! well, beloved, it is wisdom, I suppose, which philosophy offers you. Well, but have you not that in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? You received Christ at first, I thought, as being made of God unto you wisdom, and sanctification, and righteousness, and so on; well, will you cast him off when you have already more than all the wisdom which this philosophy offers?

Is it ceremonies that tempt you? Has the priest told you that you ought to attend to these, and then you would have another ground of confidence? Well, but you have that in Christ. If there is anything in the circumcision of the Jews, you have that, for you are circumcised in him. If there be anything, in baptism, as some think that to be a saving ordinance, you have been buried with him in baptism; you have that. Do you want life? your life is hid with him. Do you want death? You are dead with Christ, and buried with him. Do you want resurrection? he hath raised you up with him. Do you want heaven? he hath made you sit together in heavenly places in him. Getting Christ, you have all that everything else can offer you; therefore be not tempted from this hope of your calling, but as ye have received Christ, so walk in him.

And then, further, do you not know this? that your Jesus is the Lord from heaven? What can your heart desire beyond God? God is infinite; you cannot want more than the infinite. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Having Christ you have God, and having God you have everything. Well might the apostle add to that sentence, "And ye are complete in him!" Well, then, if you are complete in Christ, why should you be beguiled by the bewitcheries of this world to want something besides Christ? If resting upon him, God is absolutely yours, and you are, therefore, full to the brim with all that your largest capacity can desire, oh! wherefore should you thus be led astray, like foolish children, to seek after another confidence and another trust? Oh! come back, thou wanderer; come thou back to this solid foundation, and sing once again with us—

"On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

III. And now, last of all, a few words BY WAY OF APPLICATION.

"So walk ye in him." One of the first applications shall be made with regard to some who complain of a want of communion, or rather, of those of whom we ought to complain, since they injure us all by their distance from Christ. There are some of you who never have much communion with Christ. You are members of the Church, and very decent people, I dare say, in your way; but you do not have communion with Christ. Ask some professors—"Do you ever have communion with Christ?" They would be obliged to say—"Well, I do not know that my life is inconsistent; I do not think anybody could blame me for any wrong act towards my fellow-man; but if you come to that, whether I have ever had communion with Christ, I am compelled to say that I have had it now and then, but it is very seldom, it is like the angels' visits, few and far between." Now, brethren, you have received Christ, have you not? Then the application of the principle is, as you have received him, so walk in him. If it were worth while for you to come to him at first, then it is worth while for you always to keep to him. If it were really a safe thing for you to come to him and say, "Jesus, thou art the way," then it is a safe thing for thee to do now; and if that was the foundation of blessedness to thee, to come simply to Christ, then it will be the fountain of blessedness to thee to do the same now. Come, then, to him now. If thou wert foolish in trusting him at the first, then thou art wise in leaving off doing so now. If thou wert wise, however, in approaching to Christ years gone by, thou art foolish in not standing by Christ now. Come, then, let the remembrance of thy marriage unto the Lord Jesus rebuke thee; and if thou hast lost thy fellowship with Jesus, come again to his dear body wounded for thy sake, and say, "Lord Jesus, help me from this time forth as I have received thee, day by day to walk in thee."

There are many of you who complain of a want of comfort. You are not so comfortable as you would like to be, and why? Why you have sinned. Yes, yes, but how did you receive Christ. As a saint? "No, no," say you, "I came

to Christ as a sinner." Come to him as a sinner now, then. "Oh! but I feel so guilty." Just so, but what was your hope at first? Why, that guilty though you were, he had made an atonement, and you trusted in him. Well, you are guilty still; do the same as you did at first; walk in him, and I cannot imagine a person without comfort who continually makes this the strain of his life, to rest on Christ as a poor sinner, just as he did at first. Why, Lord, thou knowest the devil often says to me, "Thou art no saint." Well then if I be not a saint, yet I am a sinner, and it is written "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Then

"Just as I am, and waiting not,
To rid my soul of one foul spot,
To him whose blood can cleanse each blot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Why, you cannot help having comfort if you walk with your Surety and Substitute as you did at the first, resting on Him, and not in feelings, nor experience, nor graces, nor anything of your own; living and resting alone on him who is made of God unto you all that your soul requires.

There is yet another thing. There are many Christians whose lives really are not consistent. I cannot understand this if they are walking in Christ; in fact, if a man could completely walk in Christ he would walk in perfect holiness. We hear an instance, perhaps, of a little shopkeeper who puffs and exaggerates as other shopkeepers do—he does not exactly tell a lie, but something very near it. Now I want to know whether that man was walking in Christ when he did that. If he had said to himself, "Now I am in Christ," do you think he would have done it? We hear of another who is constantly impatient, always troubled, fretting, mournful. I want to know whether that man is really walking in Christ as he walked at first, when he is doubting the goodness, the providence, the tenderness of God. Surely he is not. I have heard of hard-hearted professors who take a Christian brother by the throat with, "Pay me what thou owest." Do you think they are walking in Christ when they do that? We hear of others, when their brothers have need, shut up the bowels of their compassion; are mean and stingy; are they walking in Christ when they do that? Why, if a man walks in Christ, then he so acteth as Christ would act; for Christ being in

him, his hope, his love, his joy, his life, he is the reflex of the image of Christ; he is the glass into which Christ looks; and then the image of Christ is reflected, and men say of that man, "He is like his Master; he lives in Christ." Oh! I know, dear brethren, if we lived now as we did the first day we came to Christ, we should live very differently from what we do. How we felt towards him that day! We would have given all we had for him! How we felt towards sinners that day! Lad that I was, I wanted to preach, and

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I had found."

How we felt towards God that day! When we were on our knees what pleading there was with him, what a nearness of access to him in prayer! Oh! how different; how different with some now! This world has with rude hand brushed the bloom from the young fruit. Is it true that flowers of grace, like the flowers of nature, die in the autumn of our piety? As we all get older, ought we to be more worldly? Should it be that our early love, which was the love of our espousals, dies away? Forgive, O Lord, this evil, and turn us anew unto thee.

"Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
We hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from our breast.

The dearest idol we have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help us to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

So shall our walk be close with God,
Calm and serene our frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads us to the Lamb."

"As ye have received him walk in him," and if ye have not received him,

oh! poor sinner, remember he is free and full, full to give thee all thou needest, and free to give it even to thee. Let the verse we sung be an invitation to thee:

"This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear;
The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here:
Come, needy and guilty; come, loathsome and bare;
Though leprous and filthy, come just as you are."

Trust in God's anointed—that is receive him—and then, having trusted him, continue still to trust him. May his Spirit enable you to do it, and to his name shall be glory for ever and ever.

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Life In Christ

Because I live, ye shall live also. - John 14:19

This world saw our Lord Jesus for a very little time, but now it seeth him no more. It only saw him with the outward eye and after a carnal sort, so that when the clouds received him and concealed him from bodily vision, this spiritually blind world lost sight of him altogether. Here and there, however, among the crowds of the sightless there were a few chosen men who had received spiritual sight; Christ had been light to them, he had opened their blind eyes, and they had seen him as the world had not seen him. In a high and full sense they could say, "We have seen the Lord," for they had in some degree perceived his Godhead, discerned his mission, and learned his spiritual presence of its object, those persons who had seen Jesus spiritually, saw him after he had gone out of the world unto the Father. We who have the same sight still see him. Read carefully the words of the verse before us: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me." It is a distinguishing mark of a true follower of Jesus that he sees his Lord and Master when he is not to be seen by the

bodily eye; he sees him intelligently and spiritually; he knows his Lord, discerns his character, apprehends him by faith, gazes upon him with admiration as our first sight of Christ brought us into spiritual life, for we looked unto him and were saved, so it is by the continuance of this spiritual sight of Christ that our spiritual life is consciously maintained. We lived by looking, we live still by looking. Faith is still the medium by which life comes to us from the life-giving Lord. It is not only upon the first day of the Christian's life that he must needs look to Jesus only, but every day of that life, even until the last, his motto must be, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The world sees him no more, for it never saw him aright; but ye have seen him and lived, and now, through continuing still to see him, you remain in life. Let us ever remember the intimate connection between faith and spiritual life. Faith is the life-look. we must never think that we live by works, by feelings, or by ceremonies. "The just shall live by faith." We dare not preach to the ungodly sinner a way of obtaining life by the works of the law, neither dare we hold up to the most advanced believer a way of sustaining life by legal means. We should in such a case expect to hear the apostle's expostulation, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Our glorifying is that our life is not dependent on ourselves, but is safe in our Lord, as saith the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Because he lives, we live, and shall live for ever. God grant that our eye may ever be clear towards Jesus, our life. May we have no confidence but in our Redeemer; may our eyes be fixed upon him, that no other object may in any measure or degree shut out our view of him as our all in all.

The text contains in it very much of weighty truth, far more than we shall be able to bring forth from it this morning. First, we see in it a life; secondly, that life preserved; and thirdly, the reason for the preservation of that life: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

I. First, we have LIFE here spoken of.

We must not confound this with existence. It were indeed to reduce a

very rich text to a poverty-stricken sentence if we read it, "Because I exist, ye shall exist also." We could not say of such a use of words that the water of ordinary speech was turned to wine, but rather that the wine was turned to water. Before the disciples believed in Jesus they existed, and altogether apart from him as their spiritual life their existence would have been continued; it was something far other and higher than immortal existence which our Lord was here dealing with.

Life, what is it? We know practically, but we cannot tell in words. We know it, however, to be a mystery of different degrees. As all flesh is not the same flesh, so all life is not the same life. There is the life of the vegetable, the cedar of Lebanon, the hyssop on the wall. There is a considerable advance when we come to animal life—the eagle or the ox. Animal life moves in quite a different world from that in which the plant vegetates—sensation, appetite, instinct, are things to which plants are dead, though they may possess some imitation of them, for one life mimics another. Animal life rises far above the experience and apprehension of the flower of the field. Then there is mental life, which we all of us possess, which introduces us into quite another realm from that which is inhabited by the mere beast. To judge, to foresee, to imagine, to invent, to perform moral acts, are not these new functions which the ox hath not? Now, let it be clear to you, that far above mental life there is another form of life of which the mere carnal man can form no more idea than the plant of the animal, or the animal of the poet. The carnal mind knoweth not spiritual things, because it has no spiritual capacities. As the beast cannot comprehend the pursuits of the philosopher, so the man who is but a natural man cannot comprehend the experience of the spiritually minded. Thus saith the Scripture: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." There is in believers a life which is not to be found in other men—nobler, diviner for education cannot raise the natural man into it, neither can refinement reach it; for at its best, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and to all must the humbling truth be spoken, "Ye must be born again."

It is to be remarked concerning our life in Christ, that it is the removal of the penalty which fell upon our race for Adam's sin. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the Lord's threatening to our first parent, who was the representative of the race. He did eat of the fruit, and since God is true, and his word never fails, we may be sure of this, that in that selfsame day Adam died. It is true that he did not cease to exist, but that is quite another thing from dying. The threatening was not that he should ultimately die, but "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and it is beyond all doubt that the Lord kept his word to the letter. If the first threatening was not carried out we might take liberty to trifle with all others. Rest assured, then, that the threat was on the spot fulfilled. The spiritual life departed from Adam; he was no longer at one with God, no more able to live and breathe in the same sphere as the Lord. He fell from his first estate; he had need if he should enter into spiritual life to be born again, even as you and I must be. As he hides himself from his Maker, and utters vain excuses before his God, you see that he is dead to the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins. We also, being heirs of wrath even as others, are through the fall dead, dead in trespasses and sins; and if ever we are to possess spiritual life, it must be said of us, "And you hath he quickened." We must be as "those that are alive from the dead." The world is the valley of dry bones, and grace raises the chosen into newness of life. The fall brought universal death, in the deep spiritual sense of that word, over all mankind; and Jesus delivers us from the consequences of the fall by implanting in us a spiritual life. By no other means can this death be removed: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The work of regeneration, in which the new life is implanted, effectually restores the ruin of the fall, for we are born again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." But you remind me that still sin remains in us after we have received the divine life. I know it does, and it is called "the body of this death;" and this it is which rages within, between the power of the death in the first Adam, and the power of the life in the second Adam; but the heavenly life will ultimately overcome the deadly energy of sin. Even to-day our inner life groans after deliverance, but with its groan of "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" it mingles the

thankful song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This life is of a purely spiritual kind. We find analogies and resemblances of it in the common mental life, but they are only analogies, the spiritual life is far and high above the carnal life, and altogether out of sight of the fleshly mind. Scarce are there words in which it can be described. To know this life you must have it; it must pulsate within your own bosom, for no explanations of others can tell you what this life is; it is one of the secrets of the Lord. It would not be possible for us with the greatest skill to communicate to a horse any conception of what imagination is; neither could we by the most diligent use of words, communicate to carnal minds what it is to be joined unto the Lord so as to be one spirit. One thing we know of it, namely, that the spiritual life is intimately connected with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul. When he comes we are "born again from above," "born of the Spirit." While he works in us mightily our life is active and powerful if he withdraws his active operations our new life becomes faint and sickly. Christ is our life, but he works in us through his Holy Spirit, who dwelleth in us evermore.

Further, we know that this life very much consists in union with God. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither again can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Death as to the body consists in the body being separated from the soul; the death of the soul lies mainly in the soul's being separated from its God. For the soul to be in union with God is the soul's highest life; in his presence it unfolds itself like an opening flower; away from him it pines, and loses all its beauty and excellence, till it is as a thing destroyed. Let the soul obey God, let it be holy, pure, gracious, then is it happy, an truly living; but a soul saundered from God is a soul blasted, killed, destroyed; it exists in a dreadful death; all its true peace, dignity, and glory, are gone; it is a hideous ruin, the mere corpse of manhood. The new life brings us near to God, makes us think of him, makes us love him, and ultimately makes us like him. My brethren, it is in proportion as you get near to God that you enter into the full enjoyment of life—that life which Jesus Christ gives you, and which Jesus Christ preserves in you. "In his favour is life." Psalm 30:5. "The fear of the Lord

is a fountain of life." Prov. 14:27. To turn to God is "repentance unto life." To forget God is for a man to be "dead whilst he liveth." To believe the witness of God is to possess the faith which overcometh the world. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

This life within the soul bears fruit on earth in righteousness and true holiness. It blooms with sweetest of flowers of fellowship with God below, and it is made perfect in the presence of God in heaven. The life of glorified spirits above is but the life of justified men here below; it is the same life, only it is delivered from encumbrances, and has come to the fullness of its strength. The life of heaven is in every believer even now. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus he receives from God that selfsame life which shall look down serenely upon the conflagration of earth, and the passing away of those lower skies. Blessed is that man who hath everlasting life, who is made a partaker of the divine nature, who is born again from above, who is born of God by a seed which remaineth in him, for he is the man upon whom the second death hath no power, who shall enjoy life eternal when the wicked go away into everlasting punishment.

Thus much concerning this life. We have now to ask each of you whether you have received it. Have you been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God? Was there a time with you when you passed from death unto life, or are you abiding in death? Have you the witness in yourself that you have been operated upon by a divinely spiritual power? Is there something in you which was not once there, not a faculty developed by education, but a life implanted by God himself? Do you feel an inward craving unknown to carnal minds, a longing desire which this world could neither excite nor gratify? Is there a strange sighing for a land as yet unseen, of which it is a native, and for which it yearns? Do you walk among the sons of men as a being of another race, not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world? Can you say, with the favoured apostle, "We know that the Son of God is

come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Oh! then, thank God for this, and thank God yet more that you have an infallible guarantee for this, and thank God yet more that you have an infallible guarantee that your life shall be continued and perfected, for so saith the text, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

II. Our second head treats of LIFE PRESERVED. "Because I live, ye shall live also." There stands the promise, "Ye shall live also. This heavenly life of yours which ye have received shall be preserved to you.

Concerning this sentence, let me draw your attention, first of all, to its fullness: "Ye shall live." I think I see in that much more than lies upon the surface. Whatever is meant by living shall be ours. All the degree of life which is secured in the covenant of grace, believers shall have. Moreover, all your new nature shall live, shall thoroughly live, shall eternally live. By this word it is secured that the eternal life implanted at regeneration shall never die out. As our Lord said so shall it be. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." We may not view this precious word as referring to all the essential spiritual graces which make up the new man? Not even, in part, shall the new man die. "Ye shall live," applies to all the parts of our new-born nature. If there be any believer here who has not lived to the full extent he might have done, let him lay hold upon this promise; and seeing that it secures the preservation of all his new nature, let him have courage to seek a higher degree of health. "I am come," saith Christ, "that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." There is no reason, Christian, why your love to Jesus should not become flaming, ardent, conquering; for it lives, and ever must live. As to your faith, it also has immortal vitality in it, and even though it be just now weak, and staggering, lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees, for your faith shall not die out. Here in your Lord's promise the abiding nature of the vital faculties of your spirit is guaranteed. There is no stint in the fullness of Christian life. Beneath the skies I would labour to attain it, but herein is my joy, that it shall be most surely mine, for this word is faithful and

true. As surely as I have this day eternal life by reason of faith in Christ Jesus, so surely shall I reach its fullness when Christ who is my life shall appear. Even here on earth I have the permit to seek for the fullest development of this life; nay I have a precept in this promise bidding me to seek after it. "Ye shall live," means that the new life shall not be destroyed—no, not as to any of its essentials. All the members of the spiritual man shall be safe; we may say of it as of the Lord himself, "Not a bone of him shall be broken." The shield of Christ's own life covers all the faculties of our spiritual nature. We shall not enter into life halt or maimed; but he will present us faultless before the presence of his glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, much less nay dead limbs or decayed faculties. It is a grand promise, and covers the spiritual nature as with the wings of God, so that we may apply to it the words of David, in the ninety-first Psalm: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."

The text secures that the death-penalty of the law shall never fall upon believers. The quickened man shall never fall back into the old death from which he has escaped; He shall not be numbered with the dead, and condemned either in this life or the next. Never shall the spiritually living become dead again in sin. As Jesus being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him; even so sin shall not have dominion over us again. Once, through the offense of one, death reigned in us; but now having received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus. Rom. 5:17. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. 5:10.

We are united to Christ this day by bands of spiritual life which neither things present nor things to come can separate. Our union to Jesus is

eternal. It may be assailed; but it shall never be destroyed. The old body of this death may for awhile prevail, and like Herod it may seek the young child's life, but it cannot die. Who shall condemn to death that which is not under the law? Who shall slay that which abides under the shadow of the Almighty? Even as sin reigned unto death, even so must grace reign unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remark carefully the continuance insisted upon in this verse. Continuance is indeed the main element of this promise—"Ye shall live." It means certainly that during our abode in this body we shall live. We shall not be again reduced to our death-state during our sojourn here. Ten thousand attempts will be made to bring us under dominion to the law of sin and death, but this one word baffles all. Your soul may be so assailed that it shall seem as if you could not keep your hold on Christ, but Christ shall keep his hold on you. The incorruptible seed may be crushed, bruised, buried, but the life within it shall not be extinguished, it shall yet arise. "Ye shall live." When ye see all around you ten thousand elements of death, think ye believers, how grand is this word, "Ye shall live." No falling from grace for you, no being cast out of the covenant, no being driven from the Father's house and left to perish. "Ye shall live."

Nor is this all, for when the natural death comes, which indeed to us is no longer death, our inner life shall suffer no hurt whatsoever; it will not even be suspended for a moment. It is not a thing which can be touched by death. The shafts of the last enemy can have no more effect upon the spiritual, than a javelin upon a cloud. Even in the very crisis, when the soul is separated from the body, no damage shall be done to the spiritual nature. And in the awful future, when the judgment comes, when the thrones are set, and the multitudes are gathered, and to the right the righteous, and to the left the wicked, let what may of terror and of horror come frothy, the begotten of God shall live. Onward through eternity, whatever may be the changes which yet are to be disclosed, nothing shall affect our God-given life. Like the life of God himself—eternal, and ever-blessed, it shall continue. Should all things else be swept away, the righteous must live on; I mean not merely that they shall exist, but they shall live in all the fullness of that far-reaching, much-comprehending word "life." Bearing the nature of God as far as the creature can

participate in it, the begotten from the dead shall prove the sureness of the promise, "Ye shall live."

Let me further call to your notice that the fact here stated is univereal, in application to all spiritual life. The promise is, "Ye shall live," that is to say, every child of God shall live. Every one who sees Christ, as the world sees him not, is living and shall live. I can understand such a promised given to eminent saints who live near to God, but my soul would prostrate herself before the throne in reverent loving wonder when she hears this word spoken to the very least and meanest of the saints, "Ye shall live." Thou art not exempted, thou whose faith is but as a smoking flax, thou shalt live. The Lord bestows security upon the least of his people as well as upon the greatest. It is plain that the reason given for the preservation of the new life is as applicable to one saint as another. If it had been said, "Because your faith is strong, ye shall live" then weak faith would have perished; but when it is written, "Because I live," the argument is as powerful in the one case as in the other. Take it home to thyself, my brother, however heavy thy heart, or dim thy bone, Jesus lives, and you shall live.

Remark yet again that this text is exceeding broad. Mark its breadth and see how it meets everything to the contrary, and overturns all the hopes of the adversary. "Ye shall live." Then the inbred corruption which rides within us shall not stifle the new creature. Chained as the spirit seem to be to the loathsome and corrupt body of this death, it shall live in spite of its hideous companionship. Though besetting sins may be as arrows, and fleshly lusts like drawn swords, yet grace shall not be slain. Neither the fever of hasty passion, nor the palsy of timorousness, nor the leprosy of covetousness, nor any other disease of sin, shall so break forth in the old nature as to destroy the new. Nor shall outward circumstances overthrow the inner life. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. If providence should cast you into a godless family, where you dwell as in a sepulcher, and the air you breathe is laden with the miasma of death, yet shall you live. Evil example shall not poison your spirit, you shall drink this deadly thing and it shall not hurt you, you shall be kept from giving way to evil. You shall not be decoyed by fair

temptation, you shall not be cowed by fierce persecution: mightier is he that is in you than he which is in the world. Satan will attack you, and his weapons are deadly, but you shall foil him at all points. To you is it given to tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under foot. If God should allow you for awhile to be sorely tried, as he did his servant Job, and if the devil should have all the world to help him in his attempt to destroy your spiritual life, yet even on the dunghill of poverty, and in the wretchedness of sickness, your spirit shall still maintain its holy life, and you shall prove it so by blessing and magnifying God, notwithstanding all. We little dream what may be reserved for us; we may have to climb steeps of prosperity, slippery and dangerous, but we shall live; we may be called to sink into the dark waters of adversity, all God's waves and billows may go over us, but we shall live. WE may traverse persilent swamps of error, or burning dewerts of unbelief, but the divine life shall live amid the domains of death. Let the future be bright or black, we need not wish to turn the page; that which we prize best, namely, our spiritual life, is hid with Christ in God, beyond the reach of harm, and we shall live. If old age shall be our portion, and our crown shall be delayed till we have fought a long and weary battle, yet nevertheless we shall live; or if sudden death should cut short the time of our trial here, yet we shall have lived in the fullness of that word.

III. Our third point is, THE REASON FOR THE SECURITY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

The reason assigned is this, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ has life essentially as God. Christ, as man, having fulfilled his life-work, having offered full atonement for human sin, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. His life is communicated to us, and becomes the guarantee to us that we shall live also.

Observe, first, that this is the sole reason of the believer's spiritual life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The means by which the soul is pardoned is found in the precious blood of Jesus; the cause of its obtaining spiritual life at first is found in Christ's finished work; and the only reason why the Christian continues still to live after he is quickened, lies in Jesus Christ, who liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore.

When I first come to Christ, I know I must find all in him, for I feel I have nothing of my own; but all my life long I am to acknowledge the same absolute dependence; I am still to look for everything to him. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me, yet can do nothing." the temptation is after we have looked to Jesus and found life there, to fancy that in future time we are to sustain ourselves in spiritual existence by some means within ourselves, or by supplies extra and apart from Christ. But it must not be so; all for the future as well as all for the past is wrapped up in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus. Because he died, ye are pardoned; because he lives, ye live; all your life still lies in him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Does not the Christian's life depend upon his prayerfulness? Could he be a Christian if he ceased to pray? We reply, the Christian's spiritual health depends upon his prayerfulness, but that prayerfulness depends on something else. The reason why the hands of the clock move may be found first in a certain wheel which operates upon them, but if you go to the primary cause of all, you reach the main-spring, or the weight, which is the source of all the motion. Many secondary causes tend to sustain spiritual life; but the primary cause, the first and foremost, is because Jesus Christ lives. "All my fresh springs are in thee." While Jesus lives, he sends the Spirit; the Spirit being sent, we pray; our prayer becomes the evidence of our spiritual life. "But are not good works essential to the maintenance of the spiritual life?" Certainly, if there be no good works, we have no evidence of spiritual life. In its season the tree must bring forth its fruit and its leaves; if there be no outward sign we suspect that there is no motion of the sap within. Still, to the tree the fruit is not the cause of life, but the result of it, and to the life of the Christian, good works bear the same relationship, they are its outgrowth, not its root. If then my spiritual life is low, what am I to look to? I am not to look to my prayers, I am not to find comfort in my works. I may from these discover how declining I am; but if I want my life to be renovated, I must fly to the fountain of my life, even Jesus, for there, and there only, shall I find restoration. Do let us recollect this, that we are not saved because of anything that we are, or anything that we do; and that we do not remain saved because of anything we are or can be. A man is saved because Christ died for him he continues saved because Christ lives for him. The sole reason why the spiritual life abides

is because Jesus lives. This is to get upon a rock, above the fogs which cover all things down below. If my life rests on something within me, then to-day I live, and to-morrow I die; but if my spiritual life rests in Christ, then in my darkest frames-ay, and when sin has most raged against my spirit- still I live in the ever-living One, whose life never changes.

Secondly, it is a sufficient cause for my life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." It must be enough to make believers live that Christ lives; for first, Christ's life is a proof that his work has accomplished the absolution of his people from their sins. He would have been in the tomb to this hour had he not made a complete satisfaction for their sins, but his rising again from the dead is the testimony of God that he has accepted the atonement of his dear Son; his resurrection is our full acquittal. Then if the living Christ be our acquittal, how can God condemn us to die for sins which he has by the fact of Christ's resurrection declared to be for ever blotted out? If Jesus lives, how can we die? Shall there be two deaths for one sin, the death of Christ and the death of those for whom he died? God forbid that there should be any such injustice with the Most High. The very fact that Jesus lives, proves that our sin has been atoned for, that we are absolved, and therefore cannot die.

Jesus is the representative of those for whom he is the federal head. Shall the representative live, and yet those represented die? How shall the living represent the dead? But in his life I see my own life, for as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, so is every saint in the loins of Christ, and the life of Christ is representatively the life of all his people.

Moreover, he is the surety for his people, under bonds and pledges to bring his redeemed safely home. His own declaration is, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." Will he break his covenant bonds? Shall his suretyship be cast to the winds? It cannot be. The fact that if any of his people for whom he died, to whom he has given spiritual life, should after all die, Christ would be disappointed of his intent, which supposition involves the grossest blasphemy. What so many shall he have for his reward? The purchase-price shall not be given in vain; a redemption so marvelous as that which he has presented upon the tree, shall never in

any degree become a failure. His life, which proves his labour to be over, guarantees to people. Know ye not, my brethren, that if one of those to whom Christ has given spiritual life should after all fall from it and die, it would argue either that he had a want of power to keep them, or a want of will to do so. Shall we conceive him to be devoid of power? Then how he is mighty God? Is he devoid of will to keep his people- is that conceivable? Cast out the traitorous thought! He must be as willing as he is able, and as able as he is willing. While he was in this world, he kept his people; having loved his own, he loved them to the end; he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," he will not suffer one of these little ones to perish.

Recollect, and this perhaps will cheer you most of all, that all who have spiritual life are one with Christ Jesus. Jesus is the head of the mystical body, they are the members. Suppose one of the members of the mystical body of Christ should die, then from that moment, with reverence be it spoken, Christ is not a complete Christ. What were the head without the body? A most ghastly sight. What were the head with only a part of the members? Certainly not perfect. There must be every member present to make a complete body. Therefore we gather that you, brother, though you think yourself the meanest part of the body, are nevertheless, essential to its perfection; and you, sister, though you fancy yourself to be one of the uncomely portions of the body, yet you must be there, or else the body cannot be perfect, and Christ cannot be a complete Christ. From him, the head, the life streams into all the members and while that head lives as a perfect head of a perfect body, all members must live also. As we have often said, as long as a man's head is above water you cannot drown his limbs; as long as our head is above the reach of spiritual death we also are the same-no weapons can hurt, no poison can destroy, not all hell's fires could burn, nor all earth's floods could drown, the spiritual life within us: it must be safe because it is indissolubly one with Jesus Christ the Lord. What comfort, then, lies in this, the sole but sufficient reason for the eternal maintenance of the new-born life within us, is this, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

And be it remembered, that this reason is an abiding reason—"Because I live, ye shall live also"—a reason which has as much force at one time as

another. From causes variable the effects are variable; but remaining causes produce permanent effects. Now Jesus always lives. Yesterday, dear brother you were exalted in fellowship with him, and stood upon the mountain top; then your heart was glad, and your spirit rejoiced, and you could say, "I live in Christ." To-day darkness has intervened, you do not feel the motions of the inner life as you did yesterday, but do not therefore conclude that the life is not there. What is to be your sign; what is to be the rainbow of the covenant to you? Why, that Jesus lives. Do you doubt that he lives? You dare not. You trust him, doubt not then that you live, for your life is as sure as his. Believe also that you shall live, for that also is as sure as the fact that he lives. God gave to Noah, a token that he would not destroy the earth-it was the rainbow: but then the rainbow is not often seen; there are peculiar circumstances before the bow is placed in the cloud. You, brother, you have a token of God's covenant given you in the text which can always be seen, neither sun nor shower are needful to its appearance. The living Christ is the token that you live too. God gave to David the token of the sun and the moon; he said if the ordinances of day and night should be changed, then would he cast off the seed of David. But there are times when neither sun nor moon appear, but your token is plain when these are hidden. Christ at all times lives. When you are lowest, when you cannot pray, when you can hardly groan, when you do not seem to have spiritual life enough even to heave a desire, still if you cling to Jesus this life is as surely in you as there is life in Christ himself at the right hand of the Father.

And lastly, it is a most instructive cause. It instructs us in many ways: let us hint at three. It instructs us to admire the condescension of Christ. Look at the two pronouns, "ye" and "I"; shall they ever come into contact? yes, here they stand in close connection with each other. "I"—the I AM the Infinite; "ye" the creatures of an hour; yet I, the Infinite, come into union with you, the finite; I the Eternal, take up you the fleeting, and I make you live because I live. What? Is there such a bond between me and Christ? Is there such a link between his life and mine? Blessed be his name! Adored be his infinite condescension!

It demands of us next abundance of gratitude. Apart from Christ we are dead in trespasses and sins; look at the depth of our degradation! But in

Christ we live, live with his own life. Look at the height of our exaltation, and let our thankfulness be proportioned to this infinity of mercy. Measure if you can from the lowest hell to the highest heaven, and so great let your thankfulness be to him who has lifted you from death to life.

Let the last lesson be see the all-importance of close communion with Jesus. Union with Christ makes you live; keep up your enjoyment of that union, that you may clearly perceive and enjoy your life. Begin this year with the prayer, "Nearer to thee, my Lord, nearer to thee." Think much of the spiritual life and less of this poor carnal life, which will be soon be over. Go to the source of life for an increase of spiritual life. Go to Jesus. Think of him more than you have done, pray to him more; use his name more believingly in your supplications. Serve him better, and seek to grow up into his likeness in all things. Make an advance this year. Life is a growing thing. Your life only grows by getting nearer to Christ; therefore, get under the beams of the Sun of the Righteousness. Time brings you nearer to him, you will soon be where he is in heaven; let grace bring you nearer also. You taste more of his love as fresh mercies come, give him more of your love, more of your fellowship. Abide in him, and may his word abide in you henceforth and for ever, and all shall be to his glory. Amen.

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Life From The Dead

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. -
Ephesians 2:1

Our translators, as you observe, have put in the words "hath he quickened", because Paul had thrown the sense a little farther on, and it was possible for the reader not to catch it. They have but anticipated the statement of the fourth and fifth verses: "God, who is rich in mercy, for

his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

Here is the point. God has quickened us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, spiritually dead. We were full of vigour towards everything which was contrary to the law or the holiness of God, we walked according the course of this world; but as for anything spiritual, we were not only somewhat incapable, and somewhat weakened; but we were actually and absolutely dead. We had no sense with which to comprehend spiritual things. We had neither the eye that could see, nor the ear that could hear, nor the power that could feel.

We were dead, all of us; and yet we were not all like on another. Death may be universal over a certain number of bodies, and yet those bodies may look very different. The dead that lie on the battle-field, torn of dogs or kites, rotting, corrupting in the sun, what a horrible sight! The corpse looks like life still; yet is your beloved one in the coffin as dead as the mangled bodies on the battle-field. Corruption has not yet done its work, and tender care has guarded the body as yet from what will surely come to it; yet is there death, sure, complete death, in the one case as well as in the other.

So we have many who are lovely, amiable, morally admirably, like him whom the Saviour looked upon and loved; yet they are dead for all that. We have others who are drunken, profane, unchaste; they are dead, not more dead than the others; but their death has left its terrible traces more plainly visible. Sin brings forth death, and death brings forth corruption. Whether we were corrupt or not, is not a question that I need to raise here; let everyone judge concerning himself. But dead we were, most certainly. Even though trained by godly parents, though well instructed in the gospel scheme, though saturated with the piety that surrounded us, we were dead, as dead as the harlot of the street, as dead as the thief in the jail.

Now, the text tells us that, though we were dead, yet Christ has come, and by his Spirit he has raised us out of the grave. This text brings us Easter tidings; it sings of resurrection; it sounds in our ear the trumpet of a new

life, and introduces us into a world of joy and gladness. We were dead; but we are quickened by the Spirit of God. I cannot help stopping a minute to know whether it is so with you, my dear hearers, and praying that what I might have to say act as a kind of sieve, separating between the really living and those who only think that they are alive, so that, if you have not been quickened, if you are only "a child of nature, finely dressed," but not spiritually alive, you may be made aware of it. If you have been quickened, even though your life be feeble, you may cry to the living God with the "Abba, Father," which never comes from any lip but that which has been touched and quickened by the Holy Spirit.

I. First, let us talk a little about OUR QUICKENING. You who have been quickened will understand what I say. To those who have not, I daresay it will seem as an idle tale.

Well, dear friends, if we have been quickened, we have been quickened from above. "You hath HE quickened." God himself has had dealings with us. He has raised us from the dead. He made us at the first; he has new-made us. He gave us life when we were born; but he has given us now a higher life, which could not be found anywhere else. He must always give it. No man ever made himself to live. No preacher, however earnest, can make one hearer to live. No parent, however prayerful, no teacher, however tearful, can make a child live unto God. "You hath HE quickened," is true of all who are quickened. It is a divine spark, a light from the great central Sun of light, the great Father of Lights. Is it so with us? Have we had a divine touch, a superhuman energy, a something which all the learning and all the wisdom and all the godliness of man could never work in us? Have we been quickened from above? If so, I daresay that we remember something of it. We cannot describe it; no man can describe his first birth; it remains a mystery. Neither can he describe his new birth; that is still a greater mystery, for it is a secret inward work of the Holy Ghost, of which we feel the effect, but we cannot tell how it is wrought.

I think that, usually, when the divine life comes, the first consciousness that we get of a quickening is a sense of pain. I have heard that when a man is nearly drowned, while he lies under the power of death, he feels

little or nothing, perhaps has even pleasurable dreams; but when, in the process of restoring him, they have rubbed him till the blood begins to flow, and the life begins to revive a little, he is conscious of pricking and great pain. One of the tokens that life is coming back to him is, that he wakes up out of a pleasant sleep, and feels pain. Whether it be so or not with every person restored from drowning, I do not know; but I think that it is so with every person restored from drowning in the river of sin. When the life begins to come to him, he feels as he never felt before; sin that was pleasant becomes a horror to him. That which was easy to him becomes a bed of thorns. Thank God, dear hearer, if you have living pangs. It is an awful thing to have your conscience hardened, as in the very fires of hell, till it becomes like steel. To have consciousness is a great mercy, even if it be only painful consciousness, and if every movement of life within seems to harrow up your soul. This divine life usually begins with pain.

Then, everything surprises you. If a person had never lived before, and had come into life a full-grown man, everything would be as strange to him as it is to a little-child; and everything is strange to a new-born man in the spiritual realm into which he is born. He is startled a hundred times. Sin appears as sin; he cannot understand it. He had looked at sin before, but had never seen it to be sin. And Christ appears now so glorious to him; he had heard of Christ before, and had some apprehensions of him; but now he is surprised to find that the One who he said had no form nor comeliness is, after all, altogether lovely. To the new-born soul everything is a surprise. He makes no end of blunders; he makes many miscalculations because everything is new to him. He that sitteth upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new;" and the renewed man says, "My Lord, it is even so." One said to me, when joining the church, "Either I am a new creature, or else the world is altogether altered from what it was. There is a change somewhere;" and that change is from death to life, from darkness into God's marvellous light.

Now, as life comes thus with strange surprises, and mingled with pain, so, dear friends, it comes often with many questions. The child has a thousand things to ask; it has to learn everything. We little think of the experiments that children have to go through before they arrive even at

the use of their eyes. They do not know that things are at a distance; they have to learn that fact by looking many times. So long as the object falls upon the retina. The child is not aware of whether it is distant or a near object till some time after. What you think that you and I knew from our birth, we did not so know; we had to learn it. And when a man is born into the kingdom of God, he has to learn everything; and consequently, if he is wise, he questions older and wiser believers about this and about that. I pray you that are instructed, and have become fathers, never laugh at babes in grace, if they ask you the most absurd questions. Encourage them to do so, let them tell you their difficulties. You, by God's grace are a man; this little one is but a new-born babe; hear what he has to say. You mothers, do this with your little children. You are interested, you are pleased, you are amused, with what they say. Thus ought instructed saints to deal with those who have been newly quickened. They come to us, and ask, "What is this? What is that? What is the other?" It is a time of asking, a time of enquiring. It is well, also, if it is a time of sitting at Jesus' feet, for there is no other place so safe to a new-born believer as the feet of Jesus. If he gets to the feet of anybody else, he is apt to get ill-instructed at a time when everything warps his judgment, when he is exceedingly impressionable, and not likely to forget the mistakes that he has made, if he has borrowed them from others. So you see what the divine life does when it comes into the soul. It comes to us with pain; it gives us many surprises; and it suggests a large number of questions.

We begin then to make a great many attempts at things which we never attempted before. The new-born child of God is just like the new-born child of man in some things; and after a time that child begins to walk. No, it does not; it begins to crawl; it does not walk at first. It creeps along, pleased to make any kind of progress; and when it gets up on its little feet, it moves from one chair to another, trembling at every step it takes, and presently, down it goes. But it gets up again, and so it learns to walk. Do you remember when the new life came into you? I do. I remember the first week of that new life, and how, on the second Sabbath, I went to the place where I had heard the gospel to my soul's salvation, thinking that I would attend there. But, during that week, I had made a great many experiments, and tumbled down a great many times, and the preacher took for his text, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from

the body of this death?" I thought, "Yes; I know all about that; that is my case." When the preacher said that Paul was not a Christian when he wrote those words, though I was only seven days old in divine things, I knew better than that, so I never went there any more. I knew that no man but a Christian ever could or would cry out against sin with that bitter wail; and that, if the grace of God was not with him, he would rest satisfied and contented; but that, if he felt that sin was a horrible thing, and he was a wretched man because of it, and must be delivered from it, then he surely must be a child of God, especially if he could add, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Beloved, we make many mistakes, and we shall continue to do so. At the same time, we learn by our experiments. You remember when you began to pray; would you like to have you first prayer printed? I believe that God liked it better than many of the collects. You might not like it so well; it would not look well in print. You remember when you first began to confess Christ to a friend. Oh, you did stutter and stammer over it! There were more tears than words; it was not a "dry" discourse; you wetted it well with tears of grief and anxiety. That was the new life putting forth powers with which it was not itself acquainted; and I believe that there are some of God's children who have powers that they will never find unless they try to use them. I should like some of you young men who do not pray at the prayer-meeting to make a start. And some of you older men, perhaps, have never preached yet; but you might if you tried; I wish you would. "I should break down," says one. I wish you would. A breakdown sermon, that breaks the preacher down, might break the people down, too. There might be many advantages about that kind of discourse.

This, then, was the way in which the new life, spiritual life, came into us. We did not know what it was when it came; we had never felt like that before; we could not think that we really had passed from death to life; and yet, in looking back, we are persuaded that the throes within, the anguish of heart, the longing, and the pleading, and the wrestling, and the crying, would never have been in a dead heart, but were the sure marks that God had quickened us, and we had passed into newness of life.

II. Now, secondly, let us think of OUR PRESENT LIFE. "You hath he

quickened." Well, then, we have a new life. What is the effect of this life upon us? I speak to you who are quickened by grace.

Well, first, we have become now sentient towards God. The unconverted man lives in God's world, sees God's works, hears God's Word, goes up to God's house on God's day, and yet he does not know that there is any God. Perhaps he believes that there is, because he was brought up to believe it; but he is not cognizant of God; God has not entered into him; he has not come into contact with God. Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, I think that you and I can say, that to us the surest fact in all the world is that there is a God. No God? I live in him. Tell a fish in the sea there is no water. No God? Tell a man who is breathing that there is no air. No God? I dare not come downstairs without speaking to him. No God? I would not think of closing my eyes in sleep unless I had some sense of his love shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost. "Oh!" says one, "I have lived fifty years, and I have never felt anything of God." Say that you had been dead fifty years; that is nearer to the mark. But if you had been quickened by the Holy Spirit fifty minutes, this would have been the first fact in the front rank of all fact, God is, and he is my Father, and I am his child. Now you become sentient to his frown, his smile, his threat, or his promise. You feel him; his presence is photographed upon your spirit; your very heart trembles with awe of him, and you say with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place." That is one result of spiritual life.

Now you have become also sympathetic with similar life in others. You have a wide range, for the life of God, his life in his new-born child, is the same life that is in every Christian. It is the same like in the new-born believer as in yonder bright spirits that stand before the throne of God. The life of Christ, the life of God, is infused into us in that moment when we are quickened from our death in sin. What a wonderful thing it is to have become sympathetic with God! What he desires, we desire. His glory is the first object of our being. He loves his Son, and we love his Son. We desire to see his kingdom come as he does, and we pray for his will to be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. We wish that death did not remain, the old nature hampering us; but, in perfect proportion as the new life is really in us, we now run parallel with God. The holiness which he delights in we aspire after. Not with equal footsteps, but with tottering gait, we

follow in that selfsame path that God has marked out for himself. "My soul followeth hard after thee; they right hand upholdeth me."

The new life that made us sympathetic with God, and holy angels, and holy men, and with everything that is from above, has also made us capable of great pleasure. life is usually capable of pleasure, but the new life is capable of the highest conceivable pleasure. I am certain that no ungodly man has any conception of the joy which often fills the believer's spirit. If worldlings could only know the bliss of living near to God, and of basking in the light of his countenance, they would throw their wealth into the sea, and ten thousand times as much, if they might but get a glimpse of this joy that can never be bought, but which God gives to all who trust his dear Son. We are not always alike. Alas! We are very changeable; but when God is with us, when the days are spiritually bright and long, and we have come into the midsummer of our heavenly bliss, we would not change places with the angels, knowing that by-and-by we shall be nearer to the throne than they are; and, while they are God's honoured servants, yet they are not beloved sons as we are. Oh, the thrill of joy that has sometimes gone through our spirits! We could almost have died with delight at times when we have realized the glorious things that God has prepared for them that love him. This joy we never knew till we received the new life.

But I must add that we are also capable of acute pain to which we were strangers once. God has made our conscience quick as the apple of the eye; he has made our soul as sensitive as a raw wound, so that the very shadow of sin falling on the believer's heart will cause him great pain; and, if he does go into the actual sin, then, like David, he talks about his bones being broken, and it is not too strong a figure of the sorrow that comes upon the believing heart when sin has been committed, and God has been grieved. The heart itself then, is broken, and bleeds at ten thousand wounds. Yet this is one of the results of our possessing the new life; and I will say this, the sharpest pang of spiritual life is better than the highest joy of carnal life. When the believer is at his worst, he is better than the unbeliever at his best; his reasons for happiness are always transcendentally above all the reasons for joy that worldlings can never know.

Now, dear friends, if we have received spiritual life, you see what a range of being we have, how we can rise up to the seventh heaven or sink down into the abyss. This new life makes us capable of walking with God; that is a grand thing. We speak of Enoch walking with God, and we look at the holiness of his life; but did anybody ever think of the majesty of his life? How does God walk? It needs a Milton to conceive of the walk of God; but he that hath the divine life walks with God; and sometimes he seems to step from Alp to Alp, from sea and ocean, accomplishing what, unaided, he would never even attempt. He that has the divine life is lifted up into the infinities; he gets to hear that which cannot be heard, and see that which cannot be seen, for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," when he has given us the new life.

One effect of this divine life is to put life into everything that we do. They tell me that "creeds are dead." Yes, yes! It is a pleasant thing to hear an honest confession; they are dead to dead men. I hold nothing as truth that I can put away on a shelf, and leave there. My creed is part of my being. I believe it to be true; and believing it to be true, I feel its living force upon my nature every day. When a man tells you that his creed is a dead thing, do not deny it for a minute; there is no doubt of the fact. He knows about himself better than you do. Oh, dear friends, let us never have a dead creed! That which you believe, you must believe up to the hilt; believe it livingly, believe it really; for that is not believed at all which is only believed in the letter, but is not felt in the power of it.

If you have been quickened by the Spirit of God, your prayers are living prayers. Oh, the many dead prayers that are heard at the bedside; so many good words rushed through at a canter! He that is alive unto God asks for what he wants, and believes that he shall have it, and he gets it. That is living prayer. Beware of dead prayers; they are a mockery to the Most High. I do not think that a living man can always pray by clockwork, at such a time and such a time. It would be something like the minister's sermon which he "got up" beforehand, and upon which he wrote in the margin "weep here," "here you must show great emotion." Of course that

was all rubbish; it cannot be done to order. You cannot resolve to "groan at one o'clock, and weep at three o'clock." Life will not be bound like that, I love to have an appointed season for prayer, and woe unto the man who does not have his time for prayer! But, at the same time, our living prayer bursts out hours before the appointed time, or sometimes it will not come at the time. You have to wait till another season, and then your soul is like a hind let loose. Why, sometimes we can pray, and prevail, and come off conquerors; and at another time, we can only bow at the throne, and groan out, "Lord, help me; I cannot pray; the springs seem to be all sealed." That is the result of life. Living things change. There are some personages in St. Paul's Cathedral; I have not seen them lately, but I have seen them. When I lived in the country, I came up to look at the notabilities in St. Paul's Cathedral. I have heard that they have never had a headache in the last hundred years, and no rheumatic pains, nor have they been troubled with the gout, The reason is that they are cut in marble, and they are dead; but a living man feels the fog and the winds; he knows whether it is an east wind or a west wind that is blowing. Before he gets up in the morning, he begins to feel sometimes lively and sometimes ill; he does not understand himself. Sometimes he feels merry, and can sing hymns; at another time, he can do nothing else but sigh and cry, though he scarcely knows wherefore. Yes, life is a strange thing; and if you have the life of God in your soul, you will undergo many changes, and not always be what you want to be.

If we are alive unto God, every part of our worship should be living. What a deal of dead worship there is! If we go on with our services in regular routine, a large number of our friends find it difficult to keep awake. I fear that some people go to a place of worship because they get a better sleep there than anywhere else. That is not worship which consists in doing as Hodge did, when he said, "I like Sunday, for then I can go to church, and put my legs up, and think of nothing at all." That is all the worship a great many render to God, just getting to a place of worship, and there sitting still, and thinking of nothing at all. But if you are a living child of God, you cannot do that. If, sometimes, through the infirmity of the flesh, you fall into that state of slumber, you loathe yourselves for it, but you rouse yourself up, and say, "I must worship my God; I must sing, I must praise God. I must draw near to him in prayer."

III. I must come to my third point; for our time flies. Notice what OUR PRESENT POSITION IS, if God has quickened us.

Our present position is this, first, that we are raised from the dead. "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." We cannot live where we used to live. We cannot wear what we used to wear. There is nobody here who would like to go and live in a grave. If you have been raised from the dead, after you had been buried in Norwood Cemetery, I would warrant you that you would not go there to-night to sleep. So the man, who has once been raised by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, quits the dead; his old company does not suit him. If you had been raised from the dead, and had come out of your tomb, you would not go about London streets with your shroud on. You are a living man. How is it that I find some who say they are people of God; but yet are rather fond of wearing their grave-clothes? I mean, that they like the amusements of the world; they like to put on their shroud sometimes just for s treat. Oh, do not so! If God has made you to live, come away from the dead; come away from their habits, and manners and customs. Life sees no charm in death. The living child of God likes to get as far as ever he can away from the death that once held him bound. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." That is the first part of our position, that we have come to live a separate life now, and have quitted the path we trod before.

Next to that, we are one with Christ. He hath "quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." I told you just now that the life which the Holy Spirit gives us when we are born again, is the life of God. We are made partakers of the divine nature, or course, in a modified sense, but still in a true sense. The life everlasting, the life that can never die, is put into us then, even as Christ said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The believer's life is the life of Christ in the believer. "Because I live, ye shall live also." What a mystic union there is between the believer and his Lord! Realize that; believe in it; rejoice in it; triumph in it. Christ and you

are one now, and you are made to live together with him. God grant you to know the joy of that condition!

Once more, we are told, "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That is very wonderful. We have not only left the dead, and become joined to Christ, but we are made to sit in heaven with Christ. A man is where his head is, is he not? And every believer is where his Head is; and if we are members of Christ's body, we are in heaven. It is a very blessed experience to be able to walk on earth, and look up to heaven; but it is a higher experience to live in heaven, and look down on the earth; and this is what the believer may do. HE may sit in the heavenlies; Christ is there as his Representative. The believer may take possession of what his Representative is holding on his behalf. Oh, to live in heaven, to dwell there, to let the heart be caught up from this poor life into the life that is above! This is where we should be, where we may be if we are quickened by the divine life.

One thing more, and I have done. We are in this position, that God is now working in us, through this divine life, to make us the most wonderful reflectors of his grace that he has yet formed. He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." The ages to come will have for their wonder the quickened children of God. When God made the world, it was a wonder, and the angels came from afar to see his handiwork. But when Christ makes the new creation, they will say no more that God made the heaven and the earth, but they will say in higher strains, "He made these new-born men and women. He made for them, and in them, new heavens and a new earth."

Ah! Beloved, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." God has given us a life that is more precious than the Koh-i-noor, a life that will outlast the sun and moon. When all things that are shall be like old ocean's foam, which dissolves into the wave that bears it, and is gone for ever; we shall live, and we shall live in Christ, and with Christ, glorified for ever. When the moon has become black as sackcloth of hair, the life that is within us shall be as bright as when God first gave it to us. Thou hast the dew of thy

youth, O child of God; and thou shalt have yet more of it, and be like thy Lord, when he shall take thee away from every trace of death, and the corrupt atmosphere of this poor world, and thou shalt dwell with the living God in the land of the living, for ever and for ever!

The practical outcome of all this, that some of you do not know anything at all about it. If you do not, let the fact impress you. If there be a divine life to which you are a stranger, how long will you be a stranger to it? If there be a spiritual death, and you are dead, be startled; for within a little while God will say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." And what will happen to you when the word of God is, "Depart, depart, depart, depart," and unto the graveyard of souls, to the fire that never shall be quenched, you and the rest of the dead are taken away? "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and, unless we are made alive unto him, he cannot be our God either here or hereafter. The Lord impress this solemn truth on all your hearts by his own spirit; for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Light At Evening Time (1)

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. - Zechariah 14:6-7

As we read the Scriptures, we are continually startled by fresh discoveries of the magnificence of God. Our attention is fixed upon a passage, and presently sparklets of fire and glory dart forth. It strikes us; we are struck by it. Hence these bright coruscations. Our admiration is excited. We could not have thought that so much light could possibly lie concealed within a few words. Our text thus reveals to us in a remarkable manner the penetration, the discernment, the clear-sightedness of God. To our weak vision the current of human affairs is like twilight. It is not

altogether dark, for it is broken with some gleams of hope. Nor is it altogether bright, for heavy masses of darkness intervene. It is neither day nor night. There is a mingle-mangle of good and evil, a strange confused mixture, wherein the powers of darkness contend with the powers of light. But it is not so with God. With him, it is one clear day. What we think to be confusion, is order before his eye. Where we see advance and retrogression, he sees perpetual progress. We full often bemoan our circumstances as altogether disastrous, while God, who seeth the end from the beginning, is working out his ordained purpose. Our God maketh the clouds to be the dust of his feet, and the winds to be his chariot. He sees order in the tempest and the whirlwind. When the bosom of earth heaves with earthquake, he hears music in every throb and when earth and heaven seem mingled in one wild disorder and storm, his hand is in the midst of all, so marking, that every particle of matter should be obedient to his settled laws, and that all things should work together to produce one glorious result. "Things are not what they seem." Oh! how good it is for us to know that this world's history is not so black and bad as to our dim senses it would appear. God is writing it out, sometimes with a heavy pen; but when complete, it will read like one great poem, magnificent in its plan, and perfect in all its details. At the present hour there may be much in the condition of our country to cause anxiety or even to create alarm. And it is not hard to point certainly to many things that seem to augur no good. But there always were evil prophets. There always have been times and crises when dark portents favoured unwelcome predictions. But thus far the fury of every tempest has been mitigated; a sweet calm has followed each perilous swell of the ocean, and the good old ship has kept afloat England's flag—we fondly believe: -

"The flag that's braved a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze,"

will not be run down yet. We thank God that the history of our deliverances supplies us with fair omens of an ever-gracious Providence. Let us comfort ourselves with the belief that there is a future of peace and prosperity within her borders and of influence for good among the nations of the world for Britain and British Christians.* Then let each man brace up his sinews for the fight, and struggle for the right Bright

days are assuredly in store for those who lift the standard and unfurl the flag of righteousness and truth. "At evening time it shall be light." Even now it is "one day" which is known to the Lord.

As our time is brief, I mean to confine your attention to one clause of the text, "At evening time it shall be light." It seems to be a rule in God's dispensations that his light should break upon men gradually; and when it appears about to suffer an eclipse it will brighten up and shine with extraordinary lustre. "At evening time it shall be light." Of this mode of God's procedure we will take five illustrations.

I. LET REVELATION SUPPLY US WITH THE FIRST.

When God first revealed himself to the sons of men, he did not come to them in a blazing chariot of fire, manifesting all his glorious attributes. The sun in the Tropics, we are told, rises on a sudden. The inhabitants of those regions know none of our delightful twilight at dawn or evening, but the curtain rises and falls abruptly. This is not the way in which God has revealed himself to us by degrees, softly, slowly, he lifts the veil. Thus has God been pleased to make himself known. He took in his hand a flaming torch when the world was dark. Without a single ray of comfort, and he lit up the first star that ever shone over the wild waste of the world's wilderness. That star was the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In the light of that promise our first parents and their immediate descendants were cheered in their daily toil. Seth and Enoch walked with no other light that we know of but that. There is no record of any promise beside, which they had received from the Lord. By-and-bye, as years revolved, God lit up another star, and then another and another, till at last Holy Scripture became like our sky at midnight-studded all over with greater and lesser luminaries, all brightly manifesting the glory of God.

Still it was night. Though there was a little light, there was a prevalence of darkness. All through the Jewish dispensation, the sun did not shine. There was only cold, but beautiful in its season, silver moonlight. Heavenly truths were reflected in shadows; the substance was not visible. It was an economy of cloud and smoke, of type and symbol, but not of

light and day of life, and immortality. For all the light that "o'er the dark her silver mantle threw," the saints of those times were glad and grateful; but how much more cause for joy and gratitude have we on whom the golden sun has shone! Star after star had been lit up in the heavens by the inspiration of Moses, and Samuel, and David, and all the prophets, till dark and deep the night began to fall, till sable clouds gathered dense with direful auguries. and at length a wild tempest was heard thundering in the sky. Isaiah had completed the long roll of his prophecy; Jeremiah had uttered all his lamentations. The eagle wing of Ezekiel soared no longer. Daniel had recorded his visions and entered into rest. Zechariah and Haggai had fulfilled their mission, and at last Malachi, foreseeing the day that should burn as an oven, and beyond it the day when the Sun of righteousness should arise with healing in his wings, closed that volume of testimony. That was midnight. The stare seemed to be dying out, like as withered fig-leaves fall from the tree. There was no open vision; the Word of God was scarce; there was a famine of the bread of life in those days. And what then? Why, you all know. At evening time it was light. He who had long been promised suddenly came into his temple, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. The world's darkest hour had come, when there was born in Bethlehem, of the house of David, Jesus, the Kin, of the Jews, and the Saviour of men. Then the day dawned, and the day-spring from on high visited us, precisely at that darkest hour, when men said, "God has forsaken the world, and left it to pine away in everlasting gloom". Let that serve for a first illustration of light at evening time, notable as a fact, and worthy to be recollected. This, too, is precisely the way in which God acts:—

II. IN THE CONVERSION OF INDIVIDUALS.

God's laws on a great scale are always the same as his laws on little scale. A pretty little rhyme, that many of you are familiar with, endorses this statement.

"The very law that moulds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source
That law preserves the world a sphere,
And guides the planets in their course."

The same law which controls a planet affects a grain of dust. As God caused revelation to arise gradually, and, growing clearer and clearer, to become clearest when it seemed about to expire, so in the experience of each individual, the dawn precedes the day. When the light of divine grace first visits a man, it shines with feeble beam. Man by nature is, like a house shut up, the windows of which are all boarded over. Grace does not open every window jet once and bid the sun stream in upon weak eyes accustomed to darkness. It rather takes down a part of a shutter at a time, removes some obstruction, and so lets in, through chinks, a little light, that one may be able to bear it by degrees. The window of man's soul is so thickly encrusted with dirt, so thoroughly begrimed, that no light at all can penetrate it, till one layer is taken off, and a little yellow light is seen; and then another is removed, and then another, still admitting more light, and clearer. Was it not so with you who are now walking in the light of God's countenance, Did not your light come to you by little and little? Your experience, I know, confirms my statement, and as the light came, and you discovered your sin, and began to see the suitability of Christ to meet your case, you hoped that all was going on well. Then peradventure, on a sudden, the light seemed altogether to depart. You were cast into the thick darkness into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and you said, "Oh! now my lamp is put out for ever! I am cast out from God's presence! I am doomed beyond the hope of mercy! I shall be lost for ever and ever!" Well now, Christian, ask yourself what came of this? When you were thus broken, sore broken in the place of dragons, and your soul suffered the wreck of all its carnal confidence, what then? At that evening time the light shone clearer with you than it had ever before. When darkness veiled your mind, you looked to Christ, and were lightened with the true light. Despairing of yourself, you cast yourself into the arms of Christ, and you had that peace of God which passeth all understanding, and still keeps your heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

May be I am addressing some who have been for a long while the subjects of such humbling influences, breaking them down. You had hoped things were going pretty fairly with you, and you trusted that at the last you would come out into clear sunshine. But oh! how disappointed you feel!

You never felt so wicked, never knew that you were so desperately rebellious. Your heart is hard and stubborn; you feel as if there was a mutiny in your breast. "Surely," you say, "such an one as I am never can be saved; it is a hopeless case." Oh! my brother, very hopeful to our view is that which appears so hopeless to you.

"Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."

Are you emptied of all merit, goodness, and hope in yourselves? Then your redemption draweth nigh. When you are cleared out and turned upside down, then eternal mercy greets you. Trust Christ. If you cannot swim, give yourselves up to the stream, and you shall float. If you cannot stand, give yourselves up to him, and he will bear you as on eagles' wings. Give up yourself. There, let it die; it is the worst enemy you ever had. Though you relied upon it, it has been a delusion and a snare to you. Now, therefore, throw the whole weight and burden of your life of sin and folly upon Jesus' Christ, the Sin-bearer, and this shall be the time of your deliverance, so the darkest hour you ever knew shall give place to the brightest you have ever experienced. You shall go your way rejoicing, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. A third illustration may be found in:—

III. THE DELIVERANCES WHICH A COVENANT GOD WORKS FOR AN AFFLICTED PEOPLE

The same rule which we have already observed will hold good here—at evening time it shall be light. No child of God can be very long without trouble of some kind or other, for sure it is that the road to heaven will always be rough. Some visionaries have been talking of making a railroad to the city. With this view, they would fill up the Slough of Despond, run a tramway right through the middle of it, and construct a tunnel through the hill Difficulty. I would not advise any of you to be shareholders in the company, for it will never answer. It will bring thousands to the river of Death, and swamp them there, but at the gates of the Celestial City not a passenger will ever arrive by that route. There is a pilgrimage, and a

weary pilgrimage too, which must be taken before you can obtain entrance into those gates. Still, in all their trials, God's people always find it true that at evening time it shall be light. Are you suffering from temporal troubles. You cannot expect to be without these. They are hard to bear. This, however, should cheer you, that God is as much engaged to succour and support you in your temporal, as he is in your spiritual interests. Beloved, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Not a sparrow falls on the ground without your Father knowing it. Well, now, taking quite a material view of the question, you are of more value than many sparrows. You may be very poor, yet be very, very dear to your Father in heaven. Your poverty may reduce you to the utmost pinch, but that will be the time of your sweetest relief. The widow woman at the gates of Zarepta could hardly have been more wretched than when she had gone out to gather a few sticks—she says two—enough, I suppose, to cook the handful of meal and the few drops of oil, with which to make the last morsel for herself and for her son. Ay, poor soul! At that very moment the prophet of God came in—not while there was much meal or much oil, but just as they were all spent. He came to tell her that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain, and famine ceased in the land. God's people in Egypt were not brought out until the rigour of their bondage had become too bitter to bear. When it was intolerable, the Lord redeemed them with a strong arm and a high hand. You may, my dear hearer, be so tried that you think nobody ever had such a trial. Well, then, your faith may look out for such a deliverance as nobody else ever experienced. If you have an excess of grief, you shall have the more abundant relief. If you have been alone in sorrow, you shall, by-and-bye, have a joy unspeakable, with which no stranger can intermeddle. You shall lead the song of praise, as chief musicians, whose wailings were most bitter in the abodes of woe. Do cast your burden on God. Let me beseech those of you who love him, not to be shy of him. Disclose to him your temporal griefs. For you, young people, you remember I have just prayed that you might early in life learn to cast your burden upon God. Your trials and troubles, while you are at home under your father's roof, are not so heavy as those that will come when you begin to shift for yourselves. Still, you may think them heavier, because your older friends make light of them. Well, while you yet remain at the home of your childhood, acquire the habit of carrying your daily

troubles and griefs to God. Whisper them into your Heavenly Father's ear, and he will help you. And why should you men of business try to weather the storm without your God? 'Tis well to have industry, shrewdness, and what is called self-reliance—a disposition to meet difficulties with determination, not with despondency:—

"To take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them."

Still, the only safe, the only happy course for merchant or tradesman is to commit his way unto God, with a simple, child-like faith, taking counsel at the Scriptures, and seeking guidance in prayer. You will find it to be a blessed way of passing through the ordinary routine of daily anxieties, and the extraordinary pressure of occasional alarms and panics, if you can but realise your sacred privileges as disciples of Christ in the midst of all your secular duties.

Or are our trials of a spiritual character? Here full often our trials abound, and here, too, we may expect that at evening time it shall be light. Perhaps some of you pursue the road to heaven with very few soul-conflicts. Certainly there are some who do not often get through a week without being troubled on every side—fighting without, and fears within. Ah! brethren, when some of you tell me of your doubts and fears, I can well sympathise with you, if I cannot succour you. Is there anywhere a soul more vexed with doubts, and fears, and soul-conflicts than mine? I know not one. With heights of joy in serving my Master, I am happily familiar, but into very depths of despair—such an inward sinking as I cannot describe—I have likewise sunk. A more frequent, or a more fearful wretchedness of heart than I have suffered it is not likely any of you ever felt. Yet do I know that my Redeemer liveth, that the battle is sure, that the victory is safe. If my testimony be worth aught, I have always found that when I am most distressed about circumstances that I cannot control, when my hope seems to flicker where it ought to flare, when the worthlessness and wretchedness of my nature obscure the evident of any goodness and virtue imparted to me or wrought in me, just then it is that a sweet spring of cool consolation bubbles up to quench my thirst, and a sweet voice greets my ear, "It is I; be not afraid". My witness is for the

Master, that, though he may leave us for a little, it is not for long. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy have I gathered thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting mercy will I have pity upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. "Oh! believer, stay yourself upon God when you have nothing else to stay upon. Do not rely upon appearances; above all, do not listen to the suggestions of a murmuring, hardened spirit; do not credit the insinuations of the infernal fiend who, when he finds you downhearted, be it from sickness of body or anxiety of mind, is sure then to whisper some disparaging thoughts of God. What though the suggestion strikes your heart that the Lord has forsaken you, that your sins cannot be forgiven, that you will fall by the hand of the enemy, hurl it back. You know whence it came. Depend upon it, though heaven and earth go to wreck, God's promise will stand. Should hell break loose, and demons innumerable invade this earth, they shall not go one inch beyond their tether. The chain that God has cast about them shall restrain them. Not an heir of heaven shall be left to the clutch of the destroyer. Nay, his head shall not lose a hair without divine permission. You shall come out of the furnace with not a smell of fire upon you. And being so eminently preserved, in such imminent peril, your salvation shall constrain you to bless God on earth, and bless him to all eternity, with the deepest self-humiliation and the highest strains of gratitude and adoration. So, then, both in our temporal and spiritual concerns, at evening time, when the worst has come to the worst, it shall be light. When the tide has ebbed out the farthest, it will begin to flow in. When the winter has advanced to the shortest day, we shall then begin to return to spring. Be assured that it is so, it has been so, and it shall be so. To the very end of your days you may look for light at evening time. And now may I not appeal for a fourth illustration of the same truth to some of our friends who have come to:—

IV. THE EVENING TIME OF HUMAN LIFE?

This is often a delightful time, when the shadows are drawn out, and the air is still, and there is a season of preparation for the last undressing, and of anticipation for the appearing before the King in his beauty. I envy some of our brethren, the more advanced saints. Although old age brings its infirmities and its sorrows, yet they have found that brings with it the

mellow joys of a matured experience, and a near prospect of the coming glory so near, so very near to their actual realisation. John Bunyan's picture of the Land Beulah was no dream, though he calls it so. Some of our aged brethren and sisters have come to a place of very peaceful repose, where they do hear the songs of angels from the other side of the stream, and the bundles of myrrh from the mountains of Bethen they bear in their bosoms. I know you find, my dear friends, that at evening time it is light to you, very light. You were called by grace when you were young. Bright was your day-dawn; a precious dew from the Lord fell upon you in the morning. You have borne the burden and heat of the day. You feel like a child that has grown tired. You are ready to say, "Let us go to sleep, mother; let us go to sleep." But meanwhile, before you close your eyes you are conscious of such divine refreshment, of such love and such joy shed abroad in your hearts, that you find the last stage of the journey to be blessed indeed, waiting and watching for the trumpet-call that shall bid you come up higher. Your light is brighter now than ever it was before. When you come at length to depart, though it will be "evening time" in very truth, it will be "light." You have watched the sun go down sometimes. How glorious he is at his setting! He looks twice as large as he did when he was high up in the sky, and if the clouds gather round him, how he tints them all with glory! Is there anything in all the world so magnificent as the setting sun, when all the colours of heaven seem poured out upon earth's sky? It does not fill you with gloom, for it is so radiant with glory. Such, now, shall your dying bed be. To those who watch you, you shall be an object of more sacred interest than ever you were before. If there be some pains that distress you, and some temptations that harass you, they shall be but the clouds which your Master's grace and your Saviour's presence shall gild with splendour. Oh! how light, how very light, it has been at evening time with some of our beloved friends! We have envied them as we have beheld the brightness gleaming from their brows in their last expiring moments. Oh! their songs! You cannot sing like them. Oh! their notes of ecstasy! You cannot understand the bliss unspeakable, as though the spray of the waves of heaven dashed into their faces, as though the light of the unclouded land had begun to stream upon their visage, and they were transfigured upon their Tabor before they passed into their rest!

Never fear dying, beloved. Dying is the last, but the least, matter that a Christian has to be anxious about. Fear living—that is a hard battle to fight; a stern discipline to endure; a rough voyage to undergo. You may well invoke God's omnipotence to your aid. But to die, that is to end the strife, to finish your course, to enter the calm heaven. Your Captain, your Leader, your Pilot is with you. One moment, and it is over: "A gentle wafting to immortal life." It is the lingering pulse of life that makes the pains and groans. Death ends them all. What a light, oh! what a transparent light it must be when the spirit immediately passes through the veil into the glory-land! In vain the fancy strives to paint the vision of angels and of disembodied spirits, and, above all, the brightness of the glory of Christ the Lamb in the midst of the throne! Oh! the joy of that first bowing before the Mercy-seat! Oh! the rapture of that first casting the crown at his feet who loved us and redeemed us! Oh! the transport of that first folding in Immanuel's bosom, that first kiss with the kisses of his mouth, face to face! Do you not long for it? May you not say, "drop rapidly, ye sands of time! Fly round, ye axles of the running years, and let his chariot come, or let our soul soon pass, and leave her mortal frame behind, to be for ever with the Lord!" Yes, "at evening time is shall be light." Turning now from these personal reflections, we seek our last illustration in the mysterious unfolding of destiny, for it is our firm belief that:—

V. IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AT LARGE this saying shall be verified, and it shall come to pass that "at evening time it shall be light."

Darkness has prevailed for a long time, nor does the prospect grow much brighter at present. The noble enterprise of our great missionary societies is not altogether unrequited. The prayers and efforts of a long succession of godly men are not to be accounted vain and fruitless, but we commonly feel more cause to lament than to exult. How little is the world lit up with the light of God yet! Are there more saved souls in the world now than there were a hundred years after Christ's death? I do not know that there are. A greater surface is covered with the profession of Christianity now, but at that time the light was bright where it did shine. I am afraid to say what I think of the gloom that is hanging in thick folds of cloud and scud, over the nations of the earth. Still the oracle cheers my heart, "At evening

time it shall be light." Some men prophesy that it will not be so. Long ages of delay make them grow impatient. This impatience provokes questioning. Those questions invariably tend to unbelief. But who shall make void the promises of God? Are not nations to be born in a day? Will the wild Arab never bow before the King of Zion? Shall not Ethiopia stretch out her arms to God? As children of the day, doth it not behove us to walk in the light of the Lord? Divine testimony has more weight with us than the conjectures of benighted men! Christ has bought this world, and he will have it in possession from the river even to the ends of the earth. He has redeemed it, and he will claim it for his own. You may rest assured that whatever is contained in the scroll of prophecy shall be fulfilled according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Notwithstanding any difficulties you may have in interpreting the seals or the trumpets of the Apocalypse, You have no room to doubt that Jesus Christ will be acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords over this whole world, and that in every corner and nook of it his name will be famous. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Do not be troubled by seers or soothsayers. Rest patiently. "Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." As for you, your business is to work for the spreading of his kingdom, to be continually scattering the light you have, and praying for more, to be waiting upon God for more of the tongue of fire, for more of the baptism of the Eternal Spirit, for more vital quickening power. When the whole Church shall be wakened up to a spirit of earnestness and enterprise, the conversion of this world will be speedily accomplished; the idols will then be cast to the moles and the bats; anti-Christ shall sink like a millstone in the flood, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Talking but the other day upon missionary affairs with one who understands them well, he said, "Sir, we have enough missionaries in India now, of all sorts, for the evangelisation of India, if no more were sent out, provided that they were the right men." Oh! God, call, qualify, send for the right men; baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and make them fit instruments to do, to dare, to die, but withal to

conquer. Bethink you, brethren, how, when Christ began with twelve men, he shook the earth, and now that Christians are numbered by tens of thousands, do ye tell me that the glory of God is not to be revealed, and the conquest of the world is not to be completed? I am afraid the Church is getting downhearted. She holds her banner low; she marches to the fight with bated breath and tremulous spirit. She will never win thus with craven heart. Oh! that she had more faith in her God! Then would she be "clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." If she would expect great things, she would see great things. Nations would be born in a day if we believed it and myriads would flock, like doves, to their windows if we did but look for it, work for it, and bless God for such a measure of encouragement as we have. "At evening time it shall be light." Accept this as a prophecy. Believe it on the highest warranty. Hope for it with the liveliest anticipation. So may ye live to see it. And unto God shall be the praise, world without end. Amen.

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Light At Evening Time (2)

It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light. - Zechariah 14:7

I shall not stay to notice the particular occasion upon which these words were uttered, or to discover the time to which they more especially refer; I shall rather take the sentence as a rule of the kingdom, as one of the great laws of God's dispensation of grace, "that at evening time it shall be light." Whenever philosophers wish to establish a general law, they think it necessary to collect a considerable number of individual instances; these being put together, they then infer from them a general rule. Happily, this need not be done with regard to God. We have no need, when we look abroad in providence, to collect a great number of incidents, and then from them infer the truth; for since God is immutable, one act of his grace is enough to teach us the rule of his conduct. Now, I find in this one place it is recorded that on a certain

occasion, during a certain adverse condition of a nation, God promised that "at evening time it should be light." If I found that in any human writing, I should suppose that the thing might have occurred once, that a blessing was conferred in emergency on a certain occasion, but I could not from it deduce a rule; but when I find this written in the book of God, that on a certain occasion when it was evening time with his people God was pleased to give them light, I feel myself more than justified in deducing from it the rule, that always to his people at evening time there shall be light.

This, then, shall be the subject of my present discourse. There are different evening times that happen to the church and to God's people, and as a rule we may rest quite certain that at evening time there shall be light.

God very frequently acts in grace in such a manner that we can find a parallel in nature. For instance, God says, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, even so shall my word be, it shall not return unto me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I have sent it." We find him speaking concerning the coming of Christ, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." We find him liking the covenant of grace to the covenant which he made with Noah concerning the seasons, and with man concerning the different revolutions of the year - "Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." We find that the works of creation are very frequently the mirror of the works of grace, and that we can draw figures from the world of Nature to illustrate the great acts of God in the world of his grace toward his people. But sometimes God oversteps nature. In nature after evening time there cometh night. The sun hath had its hours of journeying; the fiery steeds are weary; they must rest. Lo, they descend the azure steeps and plunge their burning fetlocks in the western sea, while night in her ebon chariot follows at their heels God, however, oversteps the rule of nature. He is pleased to send to his people times when the eye of reason expects to see no more day, but fears that the glorious landscape of God's mercies will be shrouded in the darkness of his forgetfulness. But instead thereof God

overleapeth nature, and declares that at evening time instead of darkness there shall be light.

It is now my business to illustrate this general rule by different particulars. I shall dwell most largely upon the last, that being the principal object of my sermon this morning.

I. To begin, then, "At evening time it shall be light." The first illustration we take from *the history of the church at large*. The church at large has had many evening-times. If I might derive a figure to describe her history from anything in this lower world, I should describe her as being like a sea. At times the abundance of grace has been gloriously manifest. Wave upon wave has triumphantly rolled in upon the land, covering the mire of sin, and claiming the earth for the Lord of Hosts. So rapid has been its progress that its course could scarce be obstructed by the rocks of sin and vice. Complete conquest seemed to be foretold by the continual spread of the truth. The happy church thought that the day of her ultimate triumph had certainly arrived, so potent was her word by her ministers, so glorious was the Lord in the midst of her armies, that nothing could stand against her. She was "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Heresies and schisms were swept away, false gods and idols lost their thrones; Jehovah Omnipotent was in the midst of his church, and he upon the white horse rode forth conquering and to conquer. Before long, however, if you read history, you find it always has happened that there came an ebb-tide. Again the stream of grace seemed to recede, the poor church was driven back either by persecution or by internal decay; instead of gaining upon man's corruptions it seemed as if man's corruptions gained on her; and where once there had been righteousness like the waves of the sea, there was the black mud and mire of the filthiness of mankind. Mournful tunes the church had to sing, when by the rivers of Babylon she sat down and wept, remembering her former glories, and weeping her present desolation. So has it always been - progressing, retrograding, standing still awhile, and then progressing once more, and falling back again. The whole history of the church has been a history of onward marches, and then of quick retreats - a history which I believe is, on the whole, a history of advance and growth, but which read chapter by chapter, is a mixture of success and repulse,

conquest and discouragement. And so I think it will be even to the last. We shall have our sunrises, our meridian noon, and then the sinking in the west; we shall have our sweet dawns of better days, our Reformations, our Luthers and our Calvins; we shall have our bright full noon-tide, when the gospel is fully preached, and the power of God is known; shall have our sunset of ecclesiastical weakness and decay. But just as sure as the evening-tide seems to be drawing over the church, "at evening time it shall be light." Mark well that truth all through the sacred history of the church. In the day when every lamp of prophesy seemed to have ceased, when he who once thundered in the streets of Rome was burned at the stake and strangled; when Savonarola had departed, and his followers had been put to confusion, and the black clouds of Popery seemed to have quenched the sunlight of God's love and grace upon the world; in those dark dim ages when the gospel seemed to have died out, no doubt Satan whispered in himself, "The church's sunset is now come." It is evening time with her. Only a few rays are struggling from the sun of righteousness to cheer the darkness. Satan thought mayhap the world should lie for ever beneath the darkness of his dragon wing. But lo! at evening time it was light. God brought forth the solitary monk that shook the world; he raised up men to be his coadjutors and helpers; the sun rose in Germany; it shone in every land, nor have we ever had an even-tide so near to darkness since that auspicious time. Yet there have been other seasons of dark foreboding. There was a time when the church of England was sound asleep, when the various bodies of Dissenters were quite as bad, when religion degenerated into a dead formality, when no life and no power could be found in any pulpit throughout the land, but when an earnest man was so rare that he was almost a miracle. Good men stood over the ruins of our Zion, and said, "Alas, alas, for the slain of the daughter of my people! Where, where are the days of the mighty puritans who with the banner of the truth in their hand crushed a lie beneath their feet? O truth! thou hast departed; thou hast died." "No," says God, "it is evening time; and now it shall be light." There were six young men at Oxford who met together to pray those six young men were expelled for being too godly; they went abroad throughout our land, and the little leaven leavened the whole lump. Whitfield, Wesley, and their immediate successors flashed o'er the Land like lightning, in a dark night, making all men wonder whence they came and who they were; and working so great

a work, that both in and out of the Establishment, the gospel came to be preached with power and vigor. At evening time God has always been pleased to send light to his church.

We may expect to see darker evening times than have ever been beheld. Let us not imagine that our civilization shall be more enduring than any other that has gone before it, unless the Lord shall preserve it. It may be that the suggestion will be realized which has so often been laughed at as folly, that one day men should sit upon the broken arches of London Bridge, and marvel at the civilization that has departed, just as men walk over the mounds of Nimroud, and marvel at cities buried there. It is just possible that all the civilization of this country may die out in blackest night; it may be that God will repeat again the great story which has been so often told - "I looked, and lo, in the vision I saw a great and terrible beast, and it ruled the nations, but lo, it passed away and was not." But if ever such things should be - if the world ever should have to return to barbarism and darkness - if instead of what we sometimes hope for, a constant progress to the brightest day, all our hopes should be blasted, let us rest quite satisfied that "at evening time there shall be light," that the ends of the worlds history shall be an end of glory. However red with blood, however black with sin the world may yet be, she shall one day be as pure and perfect as when she was created. The day shall come when this poor planet shall find herself unrobed of those swaddling bands of darkness that have kept her luster from breaking forth. God shall yet cause his name to be known from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof,

"And the shouts of jubilee,
Loud as mighty thunders roar,
Or the fullness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore,
Shall yet be heard the wide World o'er."

"At evening time it shall be light."

II. This rule holds equally good *in the little*, as well as *in the great*. We know that in nature the very same law that rules the atom, governs also

the starry orbs.

"The very law that molds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source,
That law preserves the earth a sphere,
And guides the planets in their course."

It is even so with the laws of grace. "At evening time it shall be light" to the church; "at evening time it shall be light" *to every individual*. Christian let us descend to lowly things. Thou hast had thy bright days *in temporal matters*: thou hast sometimes been greatly blessed: thou canst remember the day when the calf was in the stall, when the olive yielded its fruit, and the fig-tree did not deny its harvest; thou canst recollect the years when the barn was almost bursting with the corn, and when the vat overflowed with the oil; thou rememberest when the stream of thy life was deep, and thy ship floated softly on, without one disturbing billow of trouble to molest it. Thou saidst in those days, "I shall see no sorrow; God hath hedged me about; he hath preserved me; he hath kept me; I am the darling of his providence; I know that all things work together for my good, for I can see it is plainly so." Well, Christian, thou hast after that had a sunset; the sun which shone so brightly, began to cast his rays in a more oblique manner every moment, until at last the shadows were long, for the sun was setting, and the clouds began to gather; and though the light of God's countenance tinged those clouds with glory, yet it was waxing dark. Then troubles lowered o'er thee; thy family sickened, thy wife was dead, thy crops were meager, and thy daily income was diminished, thy cupboard was no more full, thou wast wondering for thy daily bread; thou didst not know what should become of thee, mayhap thou wast brought very low; the keel of thy vessel did grate upon the rocks; there was not enough of bounty to float thy ship above the rocks of poverty. "I sink in deep mire," thou saidst, "where there is no standing; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." What to do you could not tell; strive as you might, your strivings did but make you worse. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." You used both industry and economy, and you added "hereunto perseverance; but all in vain. It was in vain that you rose up early, and sat up late, and ate the bread of carefulness; nothing could you do to deliver yourself, for

all attempts failed. You were ready to die in despair. You thought the night of your life had gathered with eternal blackness. You would not live always, but had rather depart from this vale of tears. Christian! bear witness to the truth of the maxim of the text! Was it not light with thee at evening time? The time of thine extremity was just the moment of Godly opportunity. When the tide had run out to its very furthest, then it began to turn; thine ebb had its flow; thy winter had its summer; thy sunset had its sunrise; "at evening time it was light." On a sudden by some strange work of God, as thou didst think it then, thou wast completely delivered. He brought out thy righteousness like the light, and thy glory as the noon-day. The Lord appeared for thee in the days of old: he stretched out his hand from above; he drew thee out of deep waters; he set thee upon a rock and established thy goings. Mark, thou then, O heir of heaven! what hath been true to thee in the years that are past, shall be true to thee even till the last. Art thou this day exercised with woe, and care, and misery? Be of good cheer! In thine "evening time it shall be light." If God chooseth to prolong thy sorrow, he shall multiply thy patience; but the rather, it may be, he will bring thee into the deeps, and thence will he lead thee up again. Remember thy Saviour descended that he might ascend: so must thou also stoop to conquer; and if God bids thee stoop, should it be to the very lowest hell, remember, if he bade thee stoop, he will bring thee up again. Remember what Jonah said - "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me." Oh! exclaim with him of old, who trusted his God when he had nothing else to trust: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Do thou so, and be blessed; for "at evening time it shall be light."

III. But now we seek a third illustration from *the spiritual sorrows of God's own people*. Godly children have two kinds of trials, trials temporal and trials spiritual. I shall be brief on this point, and shall borrow an illustration from good John Bunyan. You remember John Bunyan's description of Apollyon meeting Christian. Bunyan tells it figuratively, but it is no figure: he that hath ever met Apollyon will tell you that there is no mistake about the matter, but that there is a dread reality in it. Our

Christian met Apollyon when he was in the valley of humiliation, and the dragon did most fiercely beset him; with fiery darts he sought to destroy him, and take away his life. The brave Christian stood to him with all his might, and used his sword and shield right manfully, till his shield became studded with a forest of darts, and his hand did cleave unto his sword. You remember how for many an hour that man and that dragon fought together, till at last the dragon gave Christian a horrible fall, and down he went upon the ground; and woe worth the day! at the moment when he fell he dropped his sword! You have but to picture the scene: the dragon drawing up all his might, planting his foot upon Christian's neck, and about to hurl the fiery dart into his heart. "Aha! I have thee now," saith he, "thou art in my power." Strange to say, "at evening time it was light." At the very moment when the dragon's foot was enough to crush the very life out of poor Christian, it is said, he did stretch out his hand; he grasped his sword, and giving a desperate thrust at the dragon, he cried, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; for when I fall I shall arise again;" and so desperately did he cut the dragon that he spread his wings and flew away and Christian went on his journey rejoicing in his victory. Now, the Christian understands all that! it is no dream to him. He has been under the dragon's foot many a time. Ah! and all the world put on a man's heart at once is not equal in weight to one foot of the devil. When Satan once gets the upper hand of the spirit, he neither wants strength, nor will, nor malice, to torment it. Hard is that man's lot, that has fallen beneath the hoof of the evil one in his fight with him. But blessed be God, the child of God is ever safe, as safe beneath the dragon's foot as he shall be before the throne of God in heaven. "At evening time it shall be light." And let all the powers of earth and hell, and all the doubts and fears that the Christian ever knew, conspire together to molest a saint, in that darkest moment, lo, God shall arise and his enemies shall be scattered, and he shall get unto himself the victory. O for faith to believe that. O! for confidence in God never to doubt him, but in the darkest moment of our sorrows, still to feel all is well with us. "At evening time it shall be light."

IV. Bear with me whilst I just hint at one more particular, and then I will come to that upon which I intend to dwell mainly at the last. To *the sinner when coming to Christ* this is also a truth. "At evening time it shall be light." Very often when I am sitting to see inquirers, persons have

come to me to tell me the story of their spiritual history; and they tell me their little tale with an air of the greatest possible wonder, and ask me as soon as they have told it whether it is not extremely strange. "Do you know, sir, I used to be so happy in the things of the world, but conviction entered into my heart, and I began to seek the Saviour; and do you know that for a long time, sir, when I was seeking the Saviour I was so miserable that I could not bear myself? Surely sir, this is a strange thing." And when I have looked them in the face, and said, "No, it is not strange; do you know I have had a dozen to-night, and they have all told me the same; that is the way all God's people go to heaven," they have stared at me as if they did not think I would tell them an untruth, but as if they thought it the strangest thing in all the world that anybody else should have felt as they have felt. "Now, sit down," I say sometimes, "and I will tell you what were my feelings when I first sought the Saviour." "Why, sir," they say, "that is just how I felt; but I did not think any one ever went the same path that I have gone." Ah! well, it is no wonder that when we hold little acquaintance with each other in spiritual things our path should seem to be solitary; but he who knows much of the dealings of God with poor seeking sinners, will know that their experience is always very much alike, and you can generally tell one by another, while they are coming to Christ. Now, whenever the soul is truly seeking Christ it will have to seek him in the dark. When poor Lot ran out of Sodom, he had to run all the way in the twilight. The sun did not rise upon him until he got into Zoar. And so when sinners are running from their sins to the Saviour they have to run in the dark. They get no comfort and no peace, till they are enabled by simple faith to look for all to him who died upon the cross. I have in my presence this morning many poor souls under great distress. Poor heart! my text is a comfort to thee. "At evening time it shall be light." You had a little light once, the light of morality; you thought you could do something for yourself. That is all put out now. Then you had another light: you had the wax taper of ceremonies, and you thought full sure that it would light you; but that is all out now. Still you thought you could grope your way a little by the remaining twilight of your good works, but all that seems to have gone now. You think "God will utterly destroy such a wretch as I am! O sir! O sir!

'I the chief of sinners am.'"

There never lived a wretch so vile; or if there ever lived such an one, surely God must have cast him into hell at once; I am certain there is no hope for me. Why, sir, do what I may, I can not make myself any better. When I try to pray I find I can't pray as I should like; when I read the Bible it is all black against me; it is no use, when I go to the house of God the minister seems to be like Moses, only preaching the law to me - he never seems to have a word of comfort to my soul. Well, I am glad of it, poor heart, I am glad of it; far be it from me to rejoice in thy miseries as such, but I am glad thou art where thou art. I remember what the Countess of Huntingdon once said to Mr. Whitfield's brother. Mr. Whitfield's brother was under great distress of mind, and one day when sitting at tea, talking of spiritual things, he said, "Your ladyship, I know I am lost, I am certain I am!" Well, they talked to him, and they tried to rally him; but he persisted in it, that he was absolutely undone, that he was a lost man. Her ladyship clapped her hands, and said, "I am glad of it, Mr. Whitfield, I'm glad of it." He thought it was a cruel thing for her to say. He knew better when she explained herself by saying, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost; so then, he came to seek and to save you. Now, if there be any here who are lost, I can only say, I am glad of it too, for such the mighty Shepherd came to rescue. If there are any of you who feel that you are condemned by God's law, I thank God you are; for those who are condemned by the law in their consciences shall yet be pardoned by the gospel.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
This is the glorious gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

Nay, this very hour, when you have no day in your heart, when you think the evening time has come, and you must perish for ever - now is the time when God will reveal himself to you. Whilst thou hast a rag of thine own thou shalt never have Christ; whilst thou hast a farthing of thine own righteousness, thou shalt never have him; but when thou art nothing, Christ is thine; when thou hast nothing of thyself to trust to, Jesus Christ in the gospel is thy complete saviour; he bids me tell thee he came to seek

and to save such as thou art.

V. And now I am about to close, dwelling rather more largely upon the last particular - "At evening time it shall be light." If our sun do not go down ere it be noon, we may all of us expect to have an evening time of life. Either we shall be taken from this world by death, or else, if God should spare us, ere long we shall get to the evening of life. In a few more years, the sere and yellow leaf will be the fit companion of every man and every woman. Is there anything melancholy in that? I think not. The time of old age, with all its infirmities, seems to me to be a time of peculiar blessedness and privilege to the Christian. To the worldly sinner, whose zest for pleasure has been removed by the debility of his powers and the decay of his strength, old age must be a season of tedium and pain; but to the veteran soldier of the cross, old age must assuredly be a time of great joy and blessedness. I was thinking the other evening, whilst riding in a delightful country, how like to evening time old age is. The sun of hot care has gone down; that sun which shone upon that early piety of ours, which had not much depth of root, and which scorched it so that it died - that sun which scorched our next true godliness, and often made it well nigh wither, and would have withered it had it not been planted by the rivers of water - that sun is now set. The good old man has no particular care now in all the world. He says to business, to the hum and noise and strife of the age in which he lives, "Thou art nought to me; to make my calling and election sure, to hold firmly this my confidence, and wait until my change comes, this is all my employment; with all your worldly pleasures and cares I have no connection." The toil of his life is all done, he has no more now to be sweating and toiling, as he had in his youth and manhood; his family have grown up, and are now no more dependent upon him; it may be, God has blessed him, and he has sufficient for the wants of his old age, or it may be that in some rustic alms-house he breathes out the last few years of his existence. How calm and quiet! Like the laborer, who, when he returns from the field at evening time casts himself upon his couch, so does the old man rest from his labors. And at evening time we gather into families, the fire is kindled, the curtains are drawn, and we sit around the family fire, to think no more of the things of the great rumbling world; and even so in old age, the family and not the world are the engrossing topic.

Did you ever notice how venerable grandsires, when they write a letter, fill it full of intelligence concerning their children? "John is ill," "Mary is well," "all our family are in health." Very likely some business friend writes to say "Stocks are down," or, "the rate of interest is raised," but you never find *that* in any good old man's letters; he writes about his family, his lately married daughters, and all that. Just what we do at evening time; we only think of the family circle and forget the world. That is what the gray-headed old man does. He thinks of his children, and forgets all beside. Well, then, how sweet it is to think that for such an old man there is light in the darkness! "At evening time it shall be light." Dread not thy days of weariness, dread not thine hours of decay, O soldier of the cross; new lights shall burn when the old lights are quenched; new candles shall be lit when the lamps of life are dim. Fear not! The night of thy decay may be coming on, but "at evening time it shall be light." At evening time the Christian has many lights that he never had before; lit by the Holy Spirit and shining by his light. There is the light of bright experience. He can look back, and he can raise his Ebenezer, saying, "Hither, by thy help I've come." He can look back at his old Bible, the light of his youth, and he can say, "This promise has been proved to me, this covenant has been proved true. I have thumbed my Bible many a year; I have never yet thumbed a broken promise. The promises have all been kept to me; 'not one good thing has failed.'" And then, if he has served God he has another light to cheer him: he has the light of the remembrance of what good God has enabled him to do. Some of his spiritual children come in and talk of times when God blessed his conversation to their souls. He looks upon his children, and his children's children, rising up to call the Redeemer blessed; at evening time he has a light. But at the last the night comes in real earnest; he has lived long enough, and he must die. The old man is on his bed; the sun is going down, and he has no more light. "Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky," says the old man. The sun has gone down; I can not see the mountains yonder; they are all a mass of mist; my eyes are dim, and the world is dim too. Suddenly a light shoots across his face, and he cries, "O daughter! daughter, here! I can see another sun rising. Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another; and where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in the darkness, daughter, I

can see hills that seem like burning brass; and methinks upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper. Yes, and I see a gate opening, and spirits coming forth. What is that they say? O they sing! they sing! Is this death?" And ere he has asked the question, he hath gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold; his head is bedecked with a crown of immortality; the palm-branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God hath accepted him in the beloved.

"Far from the world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,"

he is numbered with the saints in light, and the promise is fulfilled, "At evening time it shall be light."

And now, my gray-headed hearer, will it be so with thee? I remember the venerable Mr. Jay once in Cambridge, when preaching, reaching out his hand to an old man who sat just as some of you are sitting there, and saying, "I wonder whether those gray hairs are a crown of glory, or a fool's cap; they are one or else the other." For a man to be unconverted at the age to which some of you have attained is indeed to have a fool's cap made of gray hairs; but if you have a heart consecrated to Christ, to be his children now, with the full belief that you shall be his for ever, is to have a crown of glory upon your brows.

And now, young men and maidens, we shall soon be old. In a little time our youthful frame shall totter; we shall need a staff by-and-by. Years are short things; they seem to us to get shorter, as each one of them runs o'er our head. My brother, thou art young as I am; say, hast thou a hope that thine even-tide shall be light? No, thou hast begun in drunkenness; and the drunkard's eventide is darkness made more dark, and after it damnation. No, young man; thou hast begun thy life with profanity, and the swearer's even-tide hath no light, except the lurid flame of hell. Beware thou of such an even-tide as that! No; thou hast begun in gayety; take care lest that which begins in gayety ends in eternal sadness. Would God ye had all begun with Christ! Would that ye would choose wisdom; for "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Some

religious men are miserable; but religion does not make them so. True religion is a happy thing. I never knew what the hearty laugh and what the happy face meant, till I knew Christ; but knowing him I trust I can live in this world like one who is not of it, but who is happy in it. Keeping my eye upward to the Saviour, I can say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." and bless him most of all for this, that I know how to bless him. Ah! and if ye in your prime, in the days of your youth, have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to consecrate yourselves to God, you will, when you come to the end, look back with some degree of sorrow upon your infirmities, but with a far greater degree of joy upon the grace which began with you in childhood, which preserved you in manhood, which matured you for your old age, and which at last gathered you like a shock of corn fully ripe into the garner. May the great God and Master bless these words to us each, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Light For Those Who Sit In Darkness

The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up, - Matthew 4:15-16

Full of love to the place where he had been brought up, our Lord had gone to Nazareth, and in the Synagogue he had preached the gladdest tidings; but, alas, the greatest of prophets and the Lord of prophets, received no honor in his own country. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." Expelled the city by violence, the patient one turned his footsteps another way, yet, even when justly angry, love guided his footsteps. He must go for the Nazarenes had proved themselves unworthy, but whither shall he go? He will go to the outcasts, to that part of his country which was most neglected, to that region where the

population was mixed and degenerate so as to be called, not Galilee of the Jews, but Galilee of the Gentiles, where from distance from Jerusalem little was known of the worship of the temple, where error was rampant, where men's minds were enveloped in darkness, and their hearts in the gloom of deathshade. The loss of Nazareth shall be the gain of Galilee. Even his judgment upon a place is overruled in mercy, and even thus to day there are some in this house who have often had Jesus preached to them from their very childhood, but until this hour they have refused obedience to the gospel's command. What if he should now turn away from them; I pray he may not have done so already. Yet, in turning away from them, he will deal with others in mercy. As the casting away of the Jews was the salvation of the Gentiles, so the leaving of these privileged ones shall open a door of mercy and hope to those who have not enjoyed the privilege aforetime. To you who are not familiar with the gospel sound, to you who count yourselves more unworthy than the rest of mankind, to you desponding and despairing ones who write bitter things against yourselves, to you is the gospel sent. As aforetime, the Lord preached to Zabulon and Nephthalim, and the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, even so is he this day proclaimed among you.

From the text it appears that some are in greater darkness than others; and that, secondly, for such there is a hope of light; but that, thirdly, the light which will come to them lies all in Christ; and, fourthly (joyful news!) that light is already sprung up all around them: they have but to open their eyes to delight in it.

I. SOME SOULS ARE IN GREATER DARKNESS THAN OTHERS. It appears from the text that it was so in Christ's days, and certainly it is so now. Divine sovereignty runs through all God's dealings. He does not even distribute the privilege of hearing the gospel to all alike, for some lands are as yet untrodden by the missionary's foot, while here at the corner of all our streets the gospel is preached to us. Some, from the very circumstances of their birth and parentage, have never attended the worship of God, while others, even before they had the discretion to choose, were carried in their parents' arms to the place where prayer is wont to be made. God distributeth his grace and privileges even as he wills.

In the text, those persons who were more deplorably circumstanced than others are described first as being in darkness—"The people that sat in darkness;" by which is meant, first, ignorance. The Galileans were notoriously ignorant: few teachers of the law had been among them; they did not know even the letter of the law. So are there many, to whom the gospel, even in the theory of it, is a thing scarcely known. They may have gone to places of worship in this country from their youth up, and have never heard the gospel, for the gospel is a rare thing in some synagogues; you shall hear philosophy, you shall hear ceremonialism and sacramentarianism cried up, but the blessed truth, "Believe, and live," is kept in the background, so that men may come to full age, ay, and even to old age, in Christian England, and yet the plan of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ may be an unknown thing to them. They sit in the darkness of ignorance.

The consequence is, that another darkness follows, the darkness of error. Men who know not the truth, since they must have some faith, seek out many inventions; for, if they are not taught of God, they soon become taught of Satan, and apt scholars are they in his school. Galilee was noted for the heresies which abounded there. But what a mercy it is that God can save heretics. Those who have received false doctrine, and added darkness to darkness in so doing, can yet be brought into the glorious light of truth. Though they may have denied the Deity of Christ, though they may have doubted the inspiration of Scripture, though they may have fallen into many traps and pitfalls of false doctrine, yet the Divine Shepherd, when he seeks his lost sheep, can find them out and bring them home again.

In consequence of being in the darkness of ignorance and error, these people were wrapt in the gloom of discomfort and sorrow. Darkness is an expressive type of sorrow. The mind that knows not God, knows not the heart's best rest. There is no solace for our griefs like the gospel of Jesus Christ, and those who are ignorant of it are tossed about upon a stormy sea, without an anchorage. Glory be to God; when sorrow has brought on a midnight, grace can transform it into noon.

This darkness of sorrow was no doubt attended with much fear. We love not darkness because we cannot see what is before us, and therefore we are alarmed by imaginary dangers; and, in the same way, those who are ignorant of the light of Christ will frequently be the victims of superstitious dread; ay, and true and well founded fears will arise too, for they will dread death, and the bar of God, and the sentence of justice. Believe me, there is no darkness so black as the horror which surrounds many an awakened conscience when it sees its ruin, but cannot find a Savior; feels its sin, and cannot see the way by which it may be expiated.

Here, then, we have considered one part of this sad condition; perhaps it describes some of you.

It is said next that they "sat in darkness." Matthew did not quote from Isaiah correctly; I think he purposely alters it. Isaiah speaks, in his ninth chapter, of a people that "walked in darkness;" but here the evangelist speaks of a people who "sat in darkness." That is a state of less hopefulness. The man who walks is active, he has some energy left, and may reach a brighter spot; but a man sitting down is inactive, and will probably abide where he is. "The people that sat in darkness"—as if they had been there a long while, and would be there longer yet. They sat as though they had been turned to stone. They "sat in darkness," probably through despair; they had, after a fashion, striven for the light, but had not found it, and so they gave up all hope. Their disappointed hearts told them that they might as well spare those fruitless efforts, and therefore down they sat with the stolidity of hopelessness. Why should they make any more exertion? If God would not hear their prayers, why should they pray any longer? Being ignorant of his abounding grace, and of the way of salvation by his Son, they considered themselves as consigned to perdition. They "sat in darkness." Perhaps they sat there so long that they reached a state of insensibility and indifference, and this is a horrible condition of heart; but, alas! a very common one. They said, "What matters it, since there is no hope for us? Let it be as fate appoints, we will sit still, we will neither cry nor pray." How many have I met with who are not only thus in darkness, but are half-content to dare the terrible future, and sullenly to wait till the storm-cloud of wrath shall burst over them. It is a most sad and wretched condition, but what a blessing it is that this

day we have a gospel to preach to such.

Our description is not complete, for the text goes on to speak of them as sitting "in the region of death;" that is to say, these people lived in a territory that appeared to be ruled by death, and to be death's haunt and natural abode. Many at this time, and in this City, are truly living in the domain of spiritual death. All around them is death. If they have stepped into this house this morning, their position is an exception to their general one. They will go home to a Sabbath-breaking household; they hear habitually oaths, profane language, and lascivious songs; and thus they breathe the reek of the charnel-house. If they have a good thought, it is ridiculed by those about them. They dwell as among the tombs, with men whose mouths are open sepulchres, pouring forth all manner of offensiveness. How sad a condition! It seems to such poor souls, perhaps, being now a little awakened, that everything about them is prophetic of death. They are afraid to take a step lest the earth should open a door to the bottomless pit. I remember well, when I was under conviction, how all the world seemed in league against me, the beasts of the field and the stones thereof. I wondered then the heavens could refrain from falling upon me, or the earth from opening her mouth to swallow me up. I was under sentence of divine wrath, and felt as if I were in a condemned cell, and all creation were but the walls of my dungeon. "They sat in the region of death."

But it is added that they sat "in the shadow of death;" that is, under its cold, poisonous, depressing shade; as though grim death stood over them in all they did, and his shadow kept from them the light of heaven. They are sitting there this morning: they are saying to themselves, "Preach, sir, as you may, you will never comfort me: you may tell me of love and mercy, but I shall never be cheered thereby: I am chilled through my very marrow, as though the frost of death had smitten me: I am unable now to hope, or even to pray, even my desires are all but dead. Like a frozen corpse is my soul."

And it is implied, too, that to such death itself is very near, for those who are in the shadow of a thing are near to the thing itself; and the sinner, bewildered and amazed at the guilt of his sin, is only sure of one thing,

and that is, that he is in immediate danger of being cast into hell. I have known some afraid to shut their eyes at night, lest they should open them in torments; others have been afraid to go to their beds, lest their couch should become their coffin; they have not known what to do, by reason of depression of spirit. Job's language has been theirs, "My soul is weary of my life." It is clear to me that the description of the text very accurately pictures many of the sons of men. I pray God that none of you poor darkened souls may be so foolish as to try to exclude yourself from it, though such is the perversity of despondency that I greatly fear you may do so. However small we make the meshes of the gospel net, there are certain little fish that will find a way of escaping from its blessed toils, though we try to meet the character, we miss it through the singular dexterity of despair. The fact is that when a man is sin-sick, his soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and unless the beloved physician shall interpose, he will die of famine with the bread of life spread out before him. Dear friends, may the Lord visit you with his saving health, and give to the saddest of you joy and peace in believing.

II. Having given the description of those in the darkness, let us now pass on to the second point. **FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN A WORSE CONDITION THAN OTHERS THERE IS HOPE AND LIGHT.**

To the benighted land of Zabulon and Naphtali the gospel came, and evermore to souls enwrapt in gloom the gospel has come as a cheering and guiding light; and there are good reasons why it should be so. For, first, among such people the gospel has reaped very rich fruit. Among barbarous nations Christ has won great trophies. The poor Karens are wonders of grace, the cannibals of the South Sea Islands are miracles of mercy, and among the once enslaved Ethiopians there are warm and loving hearts which rejoice in Jesus' name. In this city, I will venture to say, that no churches reflect more honor upon the Master's name than those which have been gathered from among the destitute districts. What wonders God has done by that blessed church in Golden Lane, under our dear brother Orsman? What conversions have taken place in connection with the mission churches of St. Giles' and Whitechapel? churches made of the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low. God is glorified when the thief and the harlot are washed and cleansed and made obedient to

the law of Christ. When those who are healed stand at the pastor's side, even ribald tongues are silent, or are made to exclaim, "What hath God wrought?" The same is true of persons mentally depressed, who are despairing of themselves; many such have been converted. Some of us were brought very low before we found the Savior; lower we could not well have been: we were emptied like a dish that a man wipes and turns upside down; we had not even a drop of hope left in us; but we rejoice in Christ to-day, and we say to despairing souls, we are personal witnesses that Christ has saved such as you are, he has in our case caused light to shine on those who sat in darkness, and out of death's cold shade into life's full light he has brought us as prisoners of hope; and, therefore, he can do the same with you. Be of good courage, there is hope for you.

It is a further consolation to sad hearts, that many promises are made to such characters, even to those who are most dark. How precious is that word, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is not that made for you, ye burdened and laboring sinners? What say you to that gracious word—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them?" Is there no light in that word of love—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon?" Is there no music in this passage—"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea?" I recollect when my soul was stayed for weeks on that one short word, "Whosoever calleth upon the Lord, shall be saved." I knew I did call on his name, and therefore I hoped to see his salvation. Many have laid hold and rested themselves on this faithful saying, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." He will receive any "him" or "her" in all the world that comes, be he or she ever so defiled. That also is a rich word, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." What a word was that of our Master when he commanded his disciples to preach the gospel

to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem. They were to commence their labors amongst his murderers, amongst hypocritical Pharisees and proud Herodians; they were to begin where the devil reigned most supreme, and to present Christ to the worst sinners first. See you, then, that great sinners, so far from being excluded, are just those to whom the good news is to be first published. Be of good comfort, then, ye that sit in darkness: there are special promises for you.

Moreover, remember, that the conversion of the more deplorably dark and despairing brings the highest degree of glory to God. When his glory passes by great sin, then it is mercy indeed. Where it is greatly displaced, it is greatly extolled. Many are saved by Christ, in whom the change is not very apparent, and consequently but little fame is brought to the good Physician through it; but, oh, if he will have mercy upon yonder mourner, who has been these ten years in despair; if he will say, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmities," the whole parish will ring with it! If Jesus will come and save that black, ignorant sinner, whom everybody knows because he has become a pest and a nuisance to the town; if such a demoniac has the devil cast out of him, how all men will say. "This is the finger of God." Yes, a poor wretch brought back again, as the sixty-eighth Psalm has it, "from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea," is a splendid trophy to the conquering power of Almighty grace. God's great object is to glorify his great name; and, as this is best accomplished when his mercy delivers the worst cases, there is surely hope for those who sit in darkness, bound in affliction and iron.

Moreover, when they happily behold the light, such persons frequently become eminently useful to others. Their experience aids them in counseling others, and their gratitude makes them eager to do so. O sweet light, how precious art thou to blind eyes, when they are newly opened. You do not know what it is to be blind: thank God that you do not: there are some here, however, who painfully know what constant darkness is; it is a grievous privation: but when their eyes are opened, as they will be in another state, and they see that best of sights, the King in his beauty, how sweet will light be to them!

"Nights and days of total blindness

Are their portion here below;
Beams of love from eyes of kindness,
Never here on earth they know.
But on high they shall behold
Angels tuning harps of gold;
Rapture to the new-born sight;
Jesus in celestial light!

So, when the spiritual eye has long been dim, and we have mourned and wept for sin, but could not behold a Savior, light is sweet beyond expression. And, because it is so sweet, there is a necessity within the enlightened soul to tell out the joyful news to others. When a man has deeply felt the evil of sin, and has at length obtained mercy, he cries with David, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." John Bunyan's impulse when he found the Savior was to tell the crows on the ploughed ground about it, and he lived to do better than talk to crows, for day by day, from generation to generation, his works proclaim the Friend of sinners, who leads them from the City of Destruction to the Celestial glory. Zealous saints are usually those who once were in great darkness; they see what grace has done for them, and for that very reason they feel an attachment to their dear Lord and Master, which they might never had felt if they had not once sat in the valley of the shadow of death. So, poor troubled ones, for these reasons, and fifty more I might bring if time did not fail me, there is hope for you.

III. But now, the best part of our discourse comes under the third head. THE TRUE LIGHT FOR A SOUL IN DARKNESS IS ALL IN CHRIST. Hear ye the text. "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." Now Christ is not only light, but great light; he reveals great things, he manifests great comforts, saves us from great sin and great wrath, and prepares us for great glory. He is, however, a Savior that must be seen. "The people that sat in darkness saw great light." Light is of no use unless it be seen. Faith must grasp the blessings which the Savior brings. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." We must see the Savior with a glance of faith, then have we light. Let us consider how clearly Christ Jesus himself is the light of every believing eye, and delivers the most troubled soul from its misery. In him is light, and the light is the

light of men. Jesus personally is the day-dawn and the morning without clouds.

First, there is light in Christ's name for a troubled sinner. What is it? Jesus. Jesus, a Savior. I am a sinner lost and ruined, but I rejoice, for Jesus has come to seek and to save that which was lost. My sins trouble me, but he shall save his people from their sins. Satan annoys me, but he has come to destroy the works of the devil. He is not a nominal, but a real Savior. We know captains and colonels who have no troops, and never saw fighting, but not so the Captain of our salvation; he brings many sons unto glory. If a man is called a builder, we expect him to build; if a merchant, we expect him to trade; and as Jesus is a Savior, he will carry on his sacred business, he will save multitudes. Why, surely there is comfortable hope here. Do you not see the dawning in the name of Savior? Surely if he comes to save, and you need saving, there is a blessed suitability in you for one another. A prisoner at the bar is glad to meet one who is by profession an advocate, a ship out of its track welcomes a pilot; a traveler lost on the moors is delighted if he meets one who is by trade a guide; and so a sinner should rejoice at the bare mention of a Savior.

There is similar encouragement in the second name, Christ, for it means anointed. Our Lord Jesus is not an amateur Savior, who has come here without a commission from God; he is not an adventurer, who sets up on his own account to do a kind of work for which he is not qualified: no, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, for the Lord hath anointed him to this work of saving souls. He is Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent. Him hath God the Father sealed. He spake not of himself, but God was with him, and in him. Why, beloved friend, now that I am in the light I can see a whole sunful of splendor in that double name Jesus Christ, and yet I fear that those who are in darkness may not perceive it. Whom God anoints to save, must surely be both able and willing to save the guilty. This name is as the morning star; look at it, and know that day is near. It has such joy in it that misery itself ought to leap with holy mirth at the sound of it.

It is our delightful task to add that there is light for those who sit in darkness in our Lord's person and nature. Mark right well who this Jesus

Christ is. He is in the constitution of his person both God and man, divine and human, equal with God and fellow with man. Do you not see in this fact the love of God, that he should be willing to take humanity into union with himself? If God becomes man, he does not hate men, but has love towards them. Do you not see the suitability of Christ to deal with you, for he is like yourself a man, touched with the feeling of your infirmities; of a human mother born, he hung at a woman's breast, he suffered hunger and thirst and weariness, and, dead and buried in the tomb, he was partaker in our doom as well as our sorrow? Jesus of Nazareth was most truly a man, he is bone of our bone and flesh of your flesh. O sinner, look into the face of the man of sorrows and you must trust him. Since he is also God, you therein see his power to carry on the work of salvation. He touches you with the hand of his humanity, but he touches the Almighty with the hand of his Deity. He is man, and feels your needs; he is God, and is able to supply them. Is anything too tender for his heart of love? Is anything too hard for his hand of power? When the Lord himself, that made the heavens and digged the foundations of the earth, comes to be your Savior, there remains no difficulty in your being saved. Omnipotence cannot know a difficulty, and, O sinner, to an omnipotent Savior it is not hard to save even you. A look of faith will give you perfect pardon. A touch of the hem of the Redeemer's garment will heal you at once. Come, then, and trust the incarnate God. Cast yourself into his arms at once.

There is light, moreover, in his offices, and, indeed, a brightness of glory which a little thought will soon perceive. What are his offices? I cannot stay to mention a tithe of them, but one of them is that of Mediator. Your soul longs to speak to God and find acceptance with him, but you are afraid to venture into his terrible presence. I wonder not at your fear, for "even our God is a consuming fire." But be of good comfort, the way of access is open, and there is One who will go in unto the King with you, and open his mouth on your behalf. Jesus has interposed and filled the great gulf which yawned between the sinner and his righteous judge. His blood has paved the crimson way; his cross has bridged each stream; his person is the highway for those who would draw near to God. Now, as Christ Jesus is the Mediator between God and man, and you want one, take him and you will have light at once.

You desire, also, this day a sacrifice, to make atonement for your iniquities; that also you will find in Christ. God must punish sin, every transgression must receive its just recompense of reward; but, lo, Christ has come, and as the scape-goat he has carried sin away; as the sin-offering he has removed transgression. Is not this good news? But I hear you say that your sins are too many and great. Do you then foolishly think that Christ is a sin-bearer for the innocent? That would be ridiculous. Do you suppose that Christ bore little sins only? That is to make him a little Savior. Beware of this. Nay, but mountain sins, heaven-defying sins, were laid on him when he hung upon the tree, and for these he made effectual atonement. Is there no light in all this?

Moreover, to mention only one other office, our Lord is an Intercessor. Perhaps, one of your greatest difficulties is that you cannot pray. You say, "I cannot put a dozen words together; if I groan, I fear I do not feel in my heart what I ought to feel." Well, there is One who can pray for you if you cannot for yourself. Give him your cause to plead, and do not doubt but that it shall succeed. God grant you grace, as you see each office of Christ, to perceive that it has a bright side for sinners. I doubt not, light streams continually from every part of the sun to cheer the worlds that revolve around it; so, from the whole of Christ, there issues forth comfort for poor and needy souls. He delighteth in mercy. He is a Savior and a great one. He is all love, all tenderness, all pity, all goodness; and the very chief of sinners, if they do but see him, shall see light.

Once again, if you want light, think of his character, as the meek and lowly Savior. Little children loved him; he called them and they willingly came, for he was meek and lowly of heart. O sinner, could he refuse thee? Do you think he could give you a hard word and send you about your business, if you were to seek mercy to day? It could not be; it is not in the nature of him, who was both the Son of God and the Son of Man, ever to repel a heart that fain would cling to him. Until he has once acted harshly to a coming sinner, you have no right to dream of his rejecting you, if you come to him.

Think for a minute of his life. He was "separate from sinners," we are

told, and yet it is elsewhere said of him, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Friend of sinners was his name, and is still. Think of that self-denying life spent among the sick and the sinful for their good. And then think of his death, for here the light of grace is focused; the cross, like a burning-glass, concentrates the light and heat of Christ's love upon the sinner. See him agonizing in the garden for sins that were not his own: see him scourged with awful flagellations for transgressions in which he had no share: behold him bleeding and dying on the tree for his enemies; sufferer for iniquities in which he never was a participator, for in him was no sin. It must be true that God can save me, if Christ has died in the stead of the guilty. This argument has killed my unbelief. I cannot disbelieve, when I see incarnate God suffering for the guilty, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God.

"Sinners! come, the Savior see,
Hands, feet, side, and temples view;
See him bleeding on the tree,
See his heart on fire for you!

View awhile, then haste away,
Find a thousand more, and say:
Come, ye sinners! come with me,
View him bleeding on the tree."

I wish it were in my power to convey the light which I see in the cross into the mental eyeballs of all my hearers, but I cannot; God the Holy Ghost must do it. Yet, beloved, if ever you get light, it will be in this way: Christ must be a great light to you. Nobody ever found light by raking in his own inward darkness; that is indeed seeking the living among the dead. You may rake as long as ever you will among the embers of your depravity before you will find a spark of good there. Away from self, away from your own resolutions, away from your own prayers, repentances, and faith; away to Christ on the cross must you look. All your hope and help are laid on Immanuel's shoulders. You are nothing. Not a rag nor a thread of your own righteousness will do; Christ's robe of righteousness must cover you from head to foot. Blow out your paltry candles, put out the sparks which you have vainly kindled, for behold the Sun is risen! "Arise, shine; for thy

light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Ye want no other light than that of Jesus: dream of no other. Give up self, give up self-hope, be in utter despair of anything that you can do, and now, whether you sink or swim, throw yourself into the sea of Christ's love: rest in him and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you from his hands.

"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet,
Stand in him, in him alone,
Gloriously complete."

IV. But, lastly, we would say to every poor soul in darkness, you need be in darkness no longer; for LIGHT IS ALL AROUND YOU: it has already "sprung up."

What a mercy, my dear despairing hearer, that you are not in hell! You might have been there: many no worse than you are there; and yet here you are in the land of hope. This day God does not deal with you according to the law, but after the gospel fashion; you are not come to Sinai this morning, no burning mountain is before you, and no tones of thunder peal from it; you are come unto Mount Zion, where the mediator of the new covenant speaks peace and pardon. I have no commission to curse you, but I have distinct authority from my Master to bid you come and receive his blessing. On Zion's top to-day ye have come to the blood of sprinkling; you might have been called to the blood of your own execution! No devils are around you, but an innumerable company of angels, who wish you well. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. Remember, dear hearers, that to-day the gospel command is sent to you all; you that are most despairing, you are bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Prove that," say you. I prove it thus: he bade his disciples go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; you are a creature, therefore we preach it to you. And what was the gospel? Why, just this: "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." That gospel, then, comes to you—God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent. O what mercy it is that the light of the gospel shines around you still! Will you shut your eyes to it? I

beseech you, do not so wickedly.

Moreover, the provisions of the gospel, which are full of light and love, are all around you at this moment. If you will now believe in Christ Jesus, every sin that you have committed shall be forgiven you for his namesake; you shall be to God as though you had never sinned; the precious blood shall make you as white as snow. "But that will not suffice," says one, "for God righteously demands obedience to his holy law, and I have not kept his commandments, and therefore am weighed in the balances and found wanting." You shall have a perfect righteousness in one moment if you believe in Jesus, "even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Happy is the man to whom Jesus Christ is made wisdom and righteousness, and he is so to every one that believeth." There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Ah," say you, "but I have a bad heart and an evil nature." If thou believest, thy nature is changed already, "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." "They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them." He can change you so that you shall scarcely know yourself; you shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things shall pass away and all things shall become new. He will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. "Alas," say you, "even this is not enough, for I shall never hold on in the ways of righteousness, but shall go back unto perdition." Hear, O thou trembler, these gracious words: "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from; me." And what saith our Lord himself? He saith, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." "But what, if I go astray," says one. Then he will heal your backslidings, receive you graciously, and love you freely. "He restoreth my soul." He will not suffer even his wandering sheep to perish, but once again will he put them in the right way. "Ah, but my soul-poverty is deep, and my wants will be too great." How can you say this? Is he not the God all sufficient? Has the arm of the Lord waxed short! Did he not furnish a table in the wilderness? Is it not written, "My God shall supply all your need?" He shall cause all grace to abound towards you. "Fear not thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord." "Ah, but," saith one, "I shall

surely be afraid to die, for I am afraid of it even now." "He that liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee." Death is swallowed up in victory. Having loved his own which are in the world, he will love them to the end. Thou shalt have such faith in dying moments that thou shalt say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "But you do not mean me," saith one. I mean you that sit in darkness, you that are ignorant, you that are depressed, you that have no good thing of your own, you that cannot help yourselves, you lost ones, you condemned ones, I mean you. And this is God's message to you: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Oh, come, ye guilty; for he is ready to forgive you. Come, ye filthy; the fountain is ready for your cleansing. Come, ye sorrowful, since joy is prepared; his oxen and fatlings are killed, for all things are ready; come to the feast of love. But I hear you say, "I must surely do something." Have done with your doings, and take Christ's doings. "Oh, but I do not feel as I should." Have done with your feelings: Christ's feelings on the cross must save you, not your own feelings. "Oh, but I am so vile." He came to save the vile.

"Come, in all thy filthy garments,
Tarry not to cleanse or mend;
Come, in all thy destitution,
As thou art, and he'll befriend.
By the tempter's vain allurements,
Be no longer thou beguiled:
God the Father waits to own thee
As his dear adopted child."

"But I have been an adulterer, I have been a thief, I have been a whoremonger, and everything that is bad." Be it so, yet it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners. All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. It is true that you are much worse then you think you are: you may tell me you are horribly bad, but you have no idea how bad you are: the hottest place in hell is your desert; but it is to you the mercy is sent; to you, O man, to you, O woman, to you who have defiled yourself with all manner of unmentionable enormities, even to you, thus saith the Lord, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud and like a thief; cloud thy transgressions; return unto me and I will have mercy upon thee." I cannot say more. I wish I had the power to speak, I was about to say, with the tongues of men and of angels, but I have such a blessed message to deliver to you, that I feel it need not goodly words, the message itself is all that is needed if the Spirit bless it. Oh, do not reject it, I beseech you, you guilty ones! you despairing ones, do not turn from it, put not away from you the kingdom lest you prove yourselves unworthy, and bring upon yourselves wrath unto the uttermost.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. Receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, now on the spot. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to do this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Limiting God

They limited the Holy One of Israel, - Psalm 78:41

MAN IS ALWAYS ALTERING what God has ordained. Although God's order is ever the best, yet man will never agree therewith. When God gave forth the law it was engraved upon two stones. The first table contained the commandments concerning man and God, the second dealt with man and man. Sins against God are sins against the first table: sins against man are offenses against the second table. Man, to prove constantly his

perversity, will put the second table before the first, nay, upon the first, so as to cover and conceal it. There are few men who will not allow the enormity of adultery, fewer still who will dispute the wickedness of murder. Men are willing enough to acknowledge that there is sin in an offense against man. That which endanger the human commonwealth, that which would disturb the order of earthly governments - all this is wrong enough even in man's esteem, but when you come to deal with the first table it is hard indeed to extort a confession from mankind. They will scarce acknowledge that there is any such thing as an offense against God, or if they do acknowledge it, yet they think it but a light matter. What man is there among you that hath not in his heart often lamented sins against man, rather, than sins against God? And which of you hath not felt a greater compunction for sins against your neighbor, or against the nation, than for sins committed against God and done in his sight? I say that such is the perversity of man, that he will think more of the less than the greater. An offense against the Majesty of heaven is thought to be far more venial than an offense against his fellow-creature. There are many transgressions of the first table of which we think so little, that perhaps we scarcely ever confess them at all, or if we acknowledge them, it is only because the grace of God has taught us to estimate them aright. One offense against the first table which seldom agitates the mind of an unconvicted sinner is that of unbelief, and with it, I may put the want of love to God. The sinner does not believe in God, does not trust in him, does not love him. He gives his heart to the things of earth, and denies it to his Creator. Of this high treason and rebellion he thinks nothing. If you could take him in the act of theft, a blush would mantle his cheek; but you detect him in the daily omission of love to God, and faith in his Son Jesus Christ, and you cannot make him feel that he is guilty of any evil in this. Oh! strange contortion of human judgment! Oh! blindness of mortal conscience, that this greatest of iniquities - a want of love to the All-Lovely, and a want of faith in him who is deserving of the highest trust - should be thought to be as nothing, and reckoned among the things that need not to be repented of.

Among such sins of the first table is that described in our text. It is consequently one of the masterpieces of iniquity, and we shall do well to purge ourselves of it. It is full of evil to ourselves, and is calculated to

dishonor both God and man, therefore let us be in earnest to cut it up both root and branch. I think we have all been guilty of this in our measure; and we are not free from it even to this day. Whether we be saints or sinners, we may stand here and make our humble confession that we have all "tempted the Lord our God and have limited the Holy One of Israel."

What then is meant by limiting the Holy One of Israel? Three words will set forth the meaning. We limit the Holy One of Israel, sometimes by *dictation* to him; at other times by *distrust* of him, and some push this sin to its farthest extreme by an utter and entire despair of his goodness and his mercy. These three classes all in their degree limit the Holy One of Israel.

I. In the first place, I say we limit the Holy One of Israel by DICTATING TO HIM. Shall mortal dare to dictate to his Creator? Shall it be possible that man shall lay down his commands, and expect the King of heaven to pay homage to his arrogance? Will a mortal impiously say, "Not thy will but mine be done?" Is it conceivable that a handful of dust, a creature of a day, that knoweth nothing, should set its judgment in comparison with the wisdom of the Only Wise? Can it be possible that we should have the impertinence to map out the path of boundless wisdom, or should decree the footsteps which infinite grace should take, and dictate the designs which Omnipotence shall attempt? Startle! Startle at your own sin. Let each of us be amazed at our own iniquity. We have had the impudence to do this in our thoughts; we have climbed to the throne of the Highest; we have sought to take him from his throne that we might sit there; we have grasped his scepter and his rod; we have weighed his judgments in the balances and tried his ways in the scales; we have been impious enough to exalt ourselves above all that is called God.

I will first address myself to the saint, and with the candle of the Lord attempt to show to Israel her secret iniquity, and to Jerusalem her grievous sin.

Oh heir of heaven, be ashamed and be confounded, while I remind thee that thou hast dared to dictate to God! How often have we in our prayers

not simply wrestled with God for a blessing - for that was allowable - but we have imperiously demanded it. We have not said, "Deny this to me, O my God, if so thou pleasest." We have not been ready to play as the Redeemer did, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," but we have asked and would take no denial. Not with all humble deference to our Lord's superior wisdom and grace, but we have asked and declared that we would not be content unless we had that particular blessing upon which we had set our hearts. Now, whenever we come to God and ask for anything which we consider to be a real good, we have a right to plead earnestly, but we err when we go beyond the bounds of earnestness, and come to impudent demand. It is ours to ask for a blessing, but not to define what that blessing shall be. It is ours to place our head beneath the mighty hands of divine benediction, but it is not ours to uplift the hands as Joseph did those of Jacob, and say, "Not so, my father." We must be content if he gives the blessing cross-handed; quite as content that he should put his left hand on our head as the right. We must not intrude into God's almonry, let him do as seemeth him good. Prayer was never meant to be a fetter upon the sovereignty of God, much less a licensed channel for blasphemy. We must always subjoin at the bottom of the prayer this heavenly postscript, "Father, deny this if it be most for thy glory." Christ will have nothing to do with dictatorial prayers, he will not be a partaker with us in the sin of limiting the Holy One of Israel.

Oftentimes, too, I think, we dictate to God with regard to the measure of our blessing. We ask the Lord that we might grow the enjoyment of his presence, instead of that he gives us to see the hidden depravity of our heart. The blessing comes to us, but it is in another shape from what we expected. We go again to our knees, and we complain of God that he has not answered us, whereas the fact has been that he has answered the spirit of our prayer, but not the letter of it. He has given us the blessing itself, but not in the shape we asked for it. We prayed him to give us silver, he has given us gold; but we blind creatures cannot understand the value of this new-shaped blessing, and therefore we go grumbling to him as if he had never heard us at all. If ye ask, especially for temporal mercies, always take care to leave the degree of those mercies with God. Ye may say, "Lord, give me food convenient for me," but it is not yours to stipulate how many shillings you shall have per week, or how many

pounds in the year. You may ask that your bread may be given you and that your water may be sure, but it is not yours to lay down to God out of what kind of vessels you shall drink, or on what kind of table your bread shall be served up to you. You must leave the measuring of your mercies with Him who measures the rain, and weighs the clouds of heaven. Beggars must not be choosers, and especially they must not be choosers when they have to deal with infinite wisdom and sovereignty.

And yet further, I fear that we have often dictated to God with regard to the time. As a church we meet together, and we pray God to send us a blessing. We expect to have it next week: it does not come. We wonder that the ministry is not blessed on the very next Sabbath day; so that hundreds are pricked in the heart. We pray again, and again, and again, and at last we begin to faint. And why is this? Simply because that in our hearts we have been setting a date and a time to God. We have made up our minds that the blessing must come within a certain period; and as it does not come, we do as it were spite our God by declaring we will stop no longer; that we have waited time enough; we will have no more patience; we will be gone; it is clear the blessing will not come. We waste our words we imagine by seeking it. Oh, how wrong is this! - What! is God to be tied to hours, or months, or years? Do his promises bear dates? Has he not himself said "Though the vision tarry, wait for it, it shall come, it shall not tarry." And yet we cannot wait God's time, but we must have our time. Let us always remember it is God's part to limit a certain day to Israel, saying, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice." But it is not our part to say to God, "To day if thou wilt hear my voice." No; let us leave time to him, resting assured that when the ship of our prayers are long at sea, they bring home all the richer cargo, and if the seeds of supplication are long buried, they shall produce the richer harvest; for God, honoring our faith which he has exercised by waiting, shall multiply his favors and enlarge his bounty. Your prayers are out at interest at a great percentage. Let them alone. They shall come back - not only the capital, but with compound interest - if ye will but wait till the time runs out, and God's promises becomes due.

Brethren, in these matters we cannot acquit ourselves, and I fear that much more than this will be necessary before our sin is fully unveiled. We

have limited the Holy One in other ways, and I may remark that we have done this with regard to our prayers and efforts for others. A mother has been anxious for her children's conversion. Her eldest son has been the object of her fervent prayer. Never a morning has passed without earnest cries to God for his salvation; she has spoken to him with all a mother's eloquence; she has prayed in private with him, she has used every means which love could suggest to make him think of a better world. All her efforts at present seem to be wasted. She appears to be ploughing upon a rock, and casting her bread upon the waters. Year after year has rolled on - her son has left her house; he has commenced business for himself: he begins now to betray worldliness; he forsakes the house of prayer which his mother frequents. She looks round every Sabbath morning, but John is not there. The tear is in her eye. Every allusion in the minister's sermon to Gods' answering prayer makes her heart beat again. And at last she says, "Lo these many years have I sought God for this one blessing; I will seek no longer. I will however, pray another month, and then, if he hear me not, I think I can never pray again "Mother, retract the words. Blot out such a thought from thy soul, for in this thou art limiting the Holy One of Israel. He is trying thy faith. Persevere, persevere while life lasts, and if thy prayers be not answered in thy lifetime, mayhap from the windows of heaven thou shalt look down and see the blessing of thy prayers descend on the head of thy child.

This has been the case, too, when we have sought to do good to our fellow men. You know a certain man in whose welfare you take an extraordinary interest. You have availed yourself occasionally of an opportunity of addressing him; you have pressed him to attend the house of God, you have mentioned him in your private devotions, and often at your family altar. You have spoken to others that they might pray with you, for you believed the promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." But now months have rolled on, and your friend seems to be in a more hopeless condition than ever. Now he will not go to the house of God at all; perhaps some ungodly acquaintance has such power over him that your efforts are counteracted by his evil influence. All the good you can do is soon undone, and you are ready to say, "I will never use another effort; I will turn my attention to someone else. In this man's case, at

least, my prayers will never be heard. I will withdraw my hand; I will not use unprofitable labor." And what is this but limiting the Holy One of Israel? What is this but saying to God, "Because thou hast not heard me when I wished to be heard - because thou hast not exactly blessed my efforts as I would have them blessed, therefore I will try this no more!" Oh impudence! oh impertinence to the majesty of heaven! Christian! cast out this demon and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God." Once again attempt, and not once, but though a thousand times thou fairst, try again, for God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith and your labor of love. Only continue to exercise your patience and your diligence. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand, for either this or that shall surely prosper in its appointed season.

While thus charging the people of God with sin, I have been solemnly condemning myself, and if a like conviction shall abide upon all my believing hearers, my errand is accomplished. I will address myself now to those who cannot call themselves the children of God, but who have lately been stirred up to seek salvation. There are many of you who are not hardened and careless now. There was a time when you were callous and indifferent, but it is not so with you at the present moment. You are anxiously saying, "What must I do to be saved?" and have been, perhaps, very earnestly in prayer during the last two or three months. Every Sunday morning's service sends you home to your knees, and you cannot refrain from sighs and tears even in your daily business, for you cry as one that cannot be silenced, "Lord, save, or I perish!" Mayhap Satan has been putting it into your heart, that since your prayers have not been heard it is now of no avail. "Oh," saith the Evil One, "these many months hast thou prayed to God to put away thy sin, and he has not heard thee. Give it up; never bend thy knees again. Heaven is not for thee, therefore, make the best of this world; go and drink its pleasures; suck in its joys, lose not the happiness of both worlds; make thyself gay here, for God will never bless thee and save thee hereafter." And is this what he has said? Oh! listen not to him; he designs thy destruction. Hearken not to his voice. There is nothing he desires so much as that thou shouldst be his prey; therefore, be thou on thy watch-tower against him, and listen not to his cajoling. Hearken to me for a season, and God bless thee in the

hearing, that thou mayest no longer limit the Holy One of Israel.

Sinner what hast thou been doing, while thou hast said "I will restrain prayer because God has not as yet answered me." I say what hast thou been doing? Hast thou not been stipulating with God as to the day when he shall save thee? Suppose it is written in the book of God's decree, "I will save that man and give him peace after he has prayed seven years," would that be hard upon thee? Is not the blessing of divine mercy worth waiting for? If he keep thee tarrying at his gate day after day - though shouldst wait fifty years - if that gate opens at the last, will it not well repay thy waiting Knock man, knock again and go not away. Who art thou that thou shouldst say to God, "I will have peace on such a day or else I will cease to supplicate" This is a common offense with all poor trembling seeming souls. Confess it now and say unto God, "Lord I leave the time with thee, but I will not cease to supplicate, for 'If I perish I will pray, And perish only there.'"

And do you not think again that perhaps the cause of your present distress is that you have been dictating to God as to the way in which he shall save you? You have a pious acquaintance who was converted in a very remarkable manner. He was suddenly convicted and as suddenly justified in the sight of God. He knows the very day and hour in which he obtained mercy, and you have foolishly made up your mind that you will never lay hold upon Christ unless you feel the same. You have laid it down as in a decree, that God is to save you, as it were, by an electric shock, that you must be consciously smitten, and vividly illumined, or else you will never lay hold on Christ. You want a vision. You dictate to God that he must send one of his angels down to tell you he has forgiven you. Now rest assured God will have nothing to do with your dictation. With your desire to be saved he will have to do, but with your planning as to how he should save you, he will have nought to do. Oh, be content to get salvation anyhow if thou dost but get it. If thou canst not have it like the prodigal son, who felt his father's arms about him, and knew his father's kiss, and had music and dancing in the moment that he was restored - if thou canst not come in by the front door, be content to enter

at the back. If Mercy comes on foot do not despise her, for she is just as fair as when she rides in her chariot. Be content to go in sackcloth before God, and there to bemoan thy guilt and to lay hold on him who taketh away the sin of the world. Sinner, believe in Christ. That is God's command, and thy privilege. Cast thyself flat on his atonement; trust thou him and him alone and if God choose not to comfort thee in the way in which thou hast expected, yet be content to get the blessing anyhow so long as thou receivest it at all. Limit not, I beseech thee, the Holy One of Israel.

Upon this point of dictation I might tarry very long and give many instances. But I choose rather to close up this first head of my discourse by observing once again, what a heinous offense, what an unreasonable iniquity it is for any of us to attempt to dictate to God. Oh man, know that he is sovereign.

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might."

Wilt thou, a beggar, dictate to the King of kings, the Lord of lords, when the angels veil their faces before him, and scarcely dare to look upon his brightness? Wilt thou dare to lord it over him, and command thy Maker? Shall infinite wisdom stoop to obey thy folly, and shall divine goodness be cooped and caged and imprisoned within the bars of thy frantic desires. What! dost thou dare to mount the steps of his throne, and affront him with thy haughty speeches, when cherubim dare not look upon his brightness - when the pillars of heaven's starry roof tremble and start at his reproof! Wilt thou seek to be greater than he is? Shall mortal man be greater than his God? Shall he dictate to the everlasting - he who is born of a woman and of few days, and full of folly? No go thou to his throne, bow thyself reverently before him; give up thy will, let it be bound in golden fetters a bond-slave to God. Cry thou this day, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner, and let it be not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Thus, then, I have discoursed on the first part of the subject.

II. In the second place, we limit the Holy One of Israel by DISTRUST. And here again I will divide my congregation into the two grand classes of

saints and sinners. Children of God, purchased by blood and regenerated by the Spirit, you are guilty here; for by your distrust and fear you have often limited the Holy One of Israel, and have said in effect, that his ear is heavy that it cannot hear, and that his arm is shortened that it cannot save. In your trials you have done this. You have looked upon your troubles, you have seen them roll like mountain waves; you have hearkened to your fears, and they have howled in your ears like tempestuous winds, and you have said, "My bark is but a feeble one, and it will soon be ship-wrecked. It is true that God has said that through tempests and tossings he will bring me to my desired haven. But alas! such a state as this was never contemplated in his promise; I shall sink at last and never see his face with joy." What hast thou done, fearful one? O thou of little faith, dost thou know what sin thou best committed? Thou hast judged the omnipotence of God to be finite. Thou hast said that thy troubles are greater than his power, that thy woes are more terrible than his might. I say retract that thought; drown it and thou shalt not be drowned thyself. Give it to the winds, and rest thou assured that out of all thy troubles he will surely bring thee, and in thy deepest distress he will not forsake thee.

But says one, "I did believe this once, and I had hoped for an escape from my present predicament, but that escape has failed me. I did think that some friend would have assisted me, and thus, I imagined I should have come out of the furnace." Ah! and thou art distrusting God because he does not choose to use the means which thou hast chosen; because his election and thy election are not the same, therefore thou doubttest him. Why man, he is not limited to means - to any means, much less to one of thy choosing. If he deliver thee not by calming the tempest, he hath a better way in store; he will send from above and deliver thee; he will snatch thee out of the deep waters lest the floods overflow thee. What might Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego have said? Suppose they had got it into their heads that God would deliver them in some particular way. They did have some such idea, but they said, as if to prove that they trusted not really to their thought about the deliverance - "Nevertheless, be it known unto thee, O king, we will not worship thy gods, nor bow before the image which thou hast set up." They were prepared to let God have his will, even though he used no means of deliverance. But suppose,

I say, they had conferred with flesh and blood, and Shadrach had said, "God will strike Nebuchadnezzar dead; just at the moment when the men are about to put us into the furnace the king will turn pale and die, and so we shall escape." O my friends, they would have trembled indeed when they went into the furnace if they had chosen their own means of deliverance, and the king had remained alive. But instead of this, they gave themselves up to God, though he did not deliver them. And, though he did not prevent their going into the furnace, yet he kept them alive in it, so that not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them. It shall be even so with you. Repose in God. When thou seest him not, believe him; when everything seems to contradict thy faith, still stagger not at the promise. If HE hath said it, he can find ways and means to do it. Rest assured, sinner, he would come from his throne to do it himself in person, rather than suffer his promises to be unfulfilled. The harps of heaven should sooner lament an absent God than thou shouldst have to mourn a broken promise. Trust in him, repose constantly on him, and limit not the Holy One of Israel. Do you not think that the church as a great body has done this? We do not any of us expect to hear that a nation is born in a day. If it should be said that in a certain chapel in London this morning some thousand souls had been converted under one sermon, we should shake our heads incredulously, and say it cannot be. We have a notion that because we have only had drops of mercy of late, we are never to have showers of it; because mercy seems only to have come in little rills and trickling streamlets, we have conceived the idea that it never can roll its mighty floods like the huge rivers of the western world. No, we have limited the Holy One of Israel; especially as preachers have we done it. We do not expect our ministry to be blessed, and therefore it is not blessed. If we had learned to expect great things we should have them. If we had made up our minds to this, that the promise was great, that the Promiser was great, that his faithfulness was great, and that his power was great; and if with this for our strength we set to work expecting a great blessing, I trow we should not be disappointed. But the universal church of Christ hath limited the Holy One of Israel. Why, my friends, if God should will it, ye need not ask where are to come the successors of such and such a man. Ye need not sit down and ask when such and such a one is gone where shall be another who shall preach the word with power. When God gives the word, great shall be the multitude of them that

publish it; and when the multitude shall begin to publish, believe me, God can move thousands as easily as he can move tens, and where our baptismal pool hath been stirred by ones and twos he can bid millions descend to be baptized into our holy faith. Limit not, O limit not, thou church of the living God, limit not the Holy One of Israel.

And now I turn to the poor troubled heart, and although I accuse of sin, yet I doubt not the Spirit shall bear witness with the conscience, and leading to Christ, shall this morning deliver from its galling yoke. Poor troubled one, thou hast said in thy heart, "my sins are too many to be forgiven." What hast thou done? Repent thee, and let the tear roll down thy cheek. Thou hast limited the Holy One of Israel. Thou hast put thy sins above his grace. Thou hast considered that thy guilt is more omnipotent than omnipotence itself. He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ. Thou canst not have exceeded the boundlessness of his grace. Be thy sins ever so many, the blood of Christ can put them all away; and if thou doubttest this, thou art limiting the Holy One of Israel. Another says, I do not doubt his power to save, but what I doubt is his willingness. What hast thou done in this? Thou hast limited the love, the boundless love of the Holy One of Israel. What, dost thou stand on the shore of a love which ever must be shoreless. Was it deep enough and broad enough to cover the iniquities of Paul, and doth it stop just where thou art? Why thou art the limit, then; thou standest as the limiting landmark of the grace of the Holy One of Israel! Out upon thy folly! get rid of this thy mistrust. He whom love has embraced the chief of sinners, is willing to embrace thee, if now hating thy sin and leaving thy iniquity, thou art ready to put thy trust in Jesus. I beseech thee, limit not the Holy One of Israel by thinking he is unwilling to forgive. Are you really conscious of the sin you are committing when you think God unwilling to save? Why you are accusing God of being a liar. Does not that alarm you? You have done worse than this, you have even accused him of being perjured, for you doubt his oath. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." You do not believe that? then you make God to be perjured. Oh! tremble at such guilt as this, "No, but," you say, "I would not accuse him; but he would be quite just if he were unwilling to save me." I am glad thou sayest that; that proves thou

dost not accuse his justice. But I still say thou art limiting his love. What doth he say himself? hath he limited it? Hath he not himself said, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!" And thou art thirsty, and yet thou thinkest that his love cannot reach to thee. Oh! while God assures thee that thou art welcome, be not wicked enough to throw the lie in the teeth of mercy. Limit not the Holy One of Israel. "But, sir, I am such an old sinner." Yea, but limit not God. "But I am such a black sinner." Limit not the efficacy of the cleansing blood. "But I have aggravated him so much." Limit not his infinite longsuffering. "But my heart is so hard." Limit not the melting power of his grace, "But I am so sinful." Limit not the potency of the atonement. "But, sir, I am so hard-hearted, and I feel so little my need of him." Limit not the influences of the Spirit by thy folly or thy stubbornness but come as thou art, and put thy trust in Christ, and so honor God and he will not dishonor thy faith.

If you will but now for half a moment consider how faithful God has been to his children and how true he has been to all his promises, I think that saint and sinner may stand together and make a common confession and utter a common prayer: "Lord, we have been guilty of doubting thee; we pray that we may limit thee no longer." Oh! remember, remember more and more God's Love and goodness to his ancient people, remember how he delivered them many a time, how he brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm; think how he fed them in the wilderness, how he carried them all the days of old; remember his faithfulness to his covenant and to his servant Abraham, and say will he leave you, will he forget his covenant sealed with blood will he be unmindful of his promise, will he be slow to answer or slack to deliver? Scout the thought, drive it far away, and now come, and at the foot of the cross renew your faith; in the sight of the flowing wounds renew your confidence and say, "Jesus, we put our trust in thee; thy Father's grace can never fail, thou hast loved us, and thou wilt love us despite our sins, thou wilt present us at last before thy Father's face in glory everlasting."

III. And now, to conclude, I want your solemn attention while I address myself to a very small number of person here present, for whose

sorrowful state I feel the greatest pity. It has been my mournful duty as pastor of so large a congregation, to have to deal with desperate cases. Here and there, there are men and women who have come into a state which, without meaning to wound them, I am free to confess I think, is sullen DESPAIR. They feel that they are guilty; they know that Christ is able to save; they also doctrinally understand the duty of faith, and its power to bring peace but they persevere in the declaration that there is no mercy for them. In vain you find out a parallel case; they soon discover some little discrepancy and so escape you. The most mighty promises lose all their force because they turn their edge by the declaration - "That does not mean me." They read in the Word of God that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" they are sinners, but they cannot think he came to save them. They know right well that he is able to save them to the uttermost; they would not say they had gone beyond the uttermost, but still they think so. They cannot imagine that free grace and sovereign love can ever come to them. They have, it is true, their gleams of sunshine, sometimes they believe, but when the comfortable presence of God is gone, they relapse into their old despair. Let me speak very tenderly, and O that the Spirit of God would speak also! My dear brother and sister, what art thou doing? I ask thee; what art thou doing? - if thou art not limiting the Holy One of Israel? Wouldst thou dishonor God? "No," sayest thou, "I would not." But thou art doing it. Thou art saying that God cannot save thee, or if not saying that, thou art implying - that all the torture thou hast felt in thy conscience, and all the anxiety thou hast in thy heart, have never yet moved God to look on thee. Why, thou makest God to be the most hard-hearted of all beings. If thou shouldst hear another groan as thou art groaning, thou wouldst weep over him; but thou thinkest that God looks on thee with cold indifference, and will never hear thy prayer. This is not only limiting - it is slandering the Holy One of Israel. Oh, come forth, I beseech you, and dare to believe a good thing of thy God. Dare to believe this, that he is willing now to save thee - that now he will put away thy sins. "But suppose, sir, I should believe something too good?" Nay, that thou canst not do. Think of God as being the most loving, the most tender-hearted being that can be, and thou hast thought just rightly of him. Think of him as having a mother's heart, that mourns over its sick babe; think of him as having a father's heart, pitying his children; think of him as having a husband's heart, loving his spouse

and cherishing her, and thou hast just thought rightly of him. Think of him as being one who will not look on thy sins, but who casts them behind his back. Dare for once to give God a little honor. Come, put the crown on his head; say, "Lord, I am the vilest rebel out of hell, the most hard-hearted, the most full of blasphemous thoughts; I am the most wicked, the most abandoned; Lord let me have the honor now of being able to say, Thou art able to save even me; and on thy boundless love, thy great, thine infinite grace, do I rely." One of Charles Wesley's hymns, which I forget just now, has in it an expression something like this - Lord, if there be a sinner in the world more needy than I am, then refuse me; if there be one more undeserving than I am, then cast me away; if there be one that needs grace and mercy, pity and compassion, more than I, then pass me by. "But, Lord," says he in his song, "thou knowest I the chief of sinners am, the vilest of the vile, the most hardened, and the most senseless, then, Lord, glorify thyself by showing to men, to angels, and to devils, what thy right hand can do. May the Holy Ghost enable thee now to come forth from the dungeon of despair, and no longer limit the Holy One of Israel.

I shall add no more, but leave the effect of this sermon with my God. May every one of us believe him better, and have greater thoughts of him, and never let us be guilty henceforth of confining, as it were, within iron bonds the limitless One of Israel.

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Lions Lacking - But The Children Satisfied

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. - Psalm 34:10

Right truly did Paul say, "Whereby he hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises;" for surely this promise is exceeding great indeed. In the entire compass of God's holy word, there is not to be found a precious declaration which can excel this in sweetness; for how could God promise to use more than all things? how could even his infinite benevolence stretch the line of his grace farther than it hath gone in this verse of the psalm?—"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." There is here no reserve; nothing is kept back; there is no solitary word of exception. There is no codicil in this will striking off the smallest portion of the estate; there is no caveat put in to warn us that there are domains upon which we must not intrude; a large field is laid before the children of God; a wide door is open, and no man can shut it. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

Now, we shall notice, first of all, the Christian character beautifully delineated. "They that seek the Lord;" secondly, we shall notice a promise set in a glorious light by a contrast, "they shall not want any good thing," although the young lions do lack and suffer hunger;" and thirdly, we shall consider whether we cannot bring some evidence to prove the fulfilment of the promise.

I. First, we have here a very short, but very beautiful DESCRIPTION OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN: he is said to "seek the Lord." "They that seek the Lord (Or Jehovah, as the original has it) shall not want any good thing." Ah! beloved, if some of us had the drawing up of this description we should have made it too narrow. Possibly some of you might have said, "They that seek the Lord in the established church, within the pale of the state religion, shall not lack any good thing;" others might have said, "They that seek the Lord in the orthodox Calvinistic manner shall not lack

any good thing;" and others might have said, "They that seek the Lord in the Baptist fashion, or the Methodist fashion, or some other, shall not lack any good thing." But it is not written so. It is written, "They that seek the Lord," in order that it may take in the Lord's people of all classes and denominations, and all shades of character. It is a description very brief, yet full and comprehensive, including Christians in all stages and positions. Now let me show you that the Christian, in whatever portion of his spiritual history he may be, is one that seeks the Lord.

We commence with conviction of sin. That is where God begins with us, and no man is a Christian unless the Holy Spirit has revealed to him in his own entire helplessness, his want of merit, and absence of power ever to accumulate merit in the sight of God. Well, then, the man who is under a conviction of sin, and feels his need of a Saviour—what is he doing? What is his occupation, now that he is hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Why, he is seeking the Lord. Ask him what is his one want, and he will say, 'Christ is all my desire: I rise early in the morning, and the first thought I have is, 'O that I knew where I might find him?' I am in my business, and my ejaculatory prayers go up to heaven like hands searching for Jesus; and when I lie down again upon my bed, my heart says, 'I seek him whom my soul loveth: I seek him, but I find him not.'" Such a man will offer prayer. Why? Not because there is any merit in it, not because he will be praised for it, but to seek the Lord. He turns the pages of Scripture, not as he would a book of philosophy, from curiosity, or for mere instruction, but to seek the Lord. He has one passion, one desire—to seek the Lord. For that he would barter his life, and be content to have his name cancelled from the register of men below, if he might but find the Lord Jesus, desiring above everything to have his name recorded in some humble place in the Lamb's book of life. Are you thus in the dim morn of spiritual life seeking the Lord? Is he your one object of pursuit? Rejoice then, and tremble not, for the promise is to you in this earlier stage of your calling, when you are only just struggling into being, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

But let us go a stage further on, when the Christian has found the Saviour, and is justified, when he can say, in those sweet words I so often repeat, "Now, freed from sin I walk at large, My Jesus' blood's my full discharge."

You will find that he has not left off seeking the Lord. No; he seeks now to know more of him; he seeks to understand more of the heights and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. I ask any one here who has an assurance that he is a pardoned man, thoroughly justified and complete in Christ—are you not seeking the Lord? "Oh yes," you say, "I thirst, I long to know more of him; I feel that all I have ever known of him is like the whispering of the sea in the shell, while the awful roar of the sea itself has not yet reached mine ears. I have heard the whisperings of Christ in some little mercy, and I have heard his bounties sing of bottomless, eternal, unchangeable love; but oh! I long to plunge into the sea itself, to bathe myself in the broad ocean of his infinite generosity and love to me." No Christian ever fancies that he knows enough of his Master; there is no Christian who has found the Lord who does not desire to be better acquainted with him. "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," is the cry of the man who has had his sins forgiven. He sitteth down at the feet of Jesus, and looketh up to him, and saith, "Master, teach me more; I am a little child; thou art a great instructor; oh! I long to love and learn more of thee." He is ever seeking the Lord; and, in this more advanced stage, the promise to him is, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

But go a little further on, when the Christian has scarcely ever a shadow of a doubt of his acceptance; he has progressed so far in spiritual life that he has attained to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus; his faith has become so confident, that "His steady soul doth fear no more Than solid rocks when billows roar."

He can read his "title clear to mansions in the skies;" he has climbed the Delectable Mountain; his feet are standing fast upon a rock, and his goings are established; but even then he is seeking the Lord. In the highest flights of his assurance, on the topmost pinnacle of his faith, there is something yet beyond. When he had sailed farthest into the sea of Acceptance, there are Fortunate Isles that he hath not reached; there is an ultima thule, a distant land, that he hath not yet seen. He is still seeking the Lord; he feels that he has "not yet attained;" he is still "pressing forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in

Christ Jesus." But then he seeks the Lord in a different fashion; he seeks him that he may put a crown on his head; he is not seeking him for mercy, but to give him praise. Oh, that my heart could find thee! that all its strings might sing sweet music to thee. Oh that my mouth could find thine ear, and that I might bid it open and listen to the whisper of my song. Oh that I knew where thou didst dwell, that I might sing hard by the eaves of thy habitation, and that thou mightest hear me ever—that I might perpetually send the songs of my gratitude up to thy sacred courts? I seek thee that I may break the alabaster box of praise on thy dear sacred head. I seek thee that I may put my soul upon the altar, and sacrifice my living self to thee. I seek thee, that I may go where cherubim are singing, whom I envy, because they "All night long unwearied sing High praises to the Eternal King."

I will seek thee in business, that there I may adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. I will seek thee in my songs that I may hymn thy praise. I will seek thee in my musings, that I may magnify the Lord in my thoughts. I will seek thee in my words, that my conversation may show forth thy praise. I will seek thee in my gifts of benevolence, that I may be like my Saviour. I will seek thee ever, for enough I have attained to know that I am thine and thou art mine, though I have nought else to ask of thee, seeing thou hast given me thyself; though thou art "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, My kinsman near allied by blood," though now my soul stands perfect in thee, and "Not a shadow of a spot Can on my soul be found," yet still I will seek thee—seek to honor thee—seek to kiss those blessed feet that bled for me—seek to worship that dear "man who once on Calvary died," and put crowns of eternal unfading honor upon his blessed, thorn-crowned, but now exalted brow.

Then bring the Christian to the last period of life, to the brink of death. Set him on those hoary rocks that skirt the edge of Jordan; let him sit there, looking down at the dark stream rolling rapidly below, not afraid to wade it, but rather wishing to die that he may be with Jesus. Ask the old man what he is doing, and he will answer, "Seeking the Lord." But I thought thou hadst found him many a year, old man? "So I have, but when I found him I sought him more; and I am seeking him now—seeking him that I may be complete in him, at his appearing; that I may

be like him when I shall see him as he is. I have sought to understand more of his love to me, and now I do not know it all. I know as much as mortal can know; I am living in the land of Beulah. See this bunch of spices; angel hands have brought it to me, a present from my King; here are tokens of his love, his mercy, and his grace. And dost not see yonder the golden light of the celestial city? and didst not hear just now the sweet singing of the angels?" "Nay, nay," saith the young man, "I hear them not." "But," the old man replies, "I am on the edge of Jordan, and my ears are open, whereas thine are dull, still I am doing what I have done all my life-long—seeking the Lord, and till this pulse shall cease its perpetual beating, I will still seek him, that dying, I may clasp him in my arms, the antidote of death."

You will readily confess that this description of a Christian is invariably correct. You may take the youngest child of God—yon little boy ten years old, who has just been baptized, and received into the church. Ask what he is doing? "Seeking the Lord." Follow him till he becomes a middle-aged man with all the cares of life about him. Ask what he is doing then? Still he answers, "Seeking the Lord." Put a few grey hairs upon his head, and let him know that half a century has gone. Again, ask what he is doing? "Seeking the Lord." Then make his head all frosty with the winters of old age, and ask him the same question; and he will still reply, "Seeking the Lord." Take away those hairs until the head is entirely bald, and the man is trembling on the grave; what is he doing then? "Seeking the Lord." Ay, as long as we are in this body, whatever our position, or condition, this will ever apply to us: "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

But let us not leave this one point without asking you one solemn question. Will you answer it? I beseech you to answer it to yourselves. Are ye seeking the Lord? Nay; some of you there, if you only can have your bottle of wine and your fowl, that will satisfy you better than seeking the Lord. There is another—give you health and strength and let you enjoy the pleasures of this world, and that will be better to you than seeking the Lord. There is another flying in the face of the Almighty, cursing and swearing—you are not seeking the Lord. Another is here this morning who once thought that he did seek the Lord, but he has left off doing it

now; he went away from us because he was not of us, for, "if he had been of us, he doubtless would have continued with us." There is a young woman who thought she sought the Lord once, but she has gone astray, she has backslidden, proving that after all that it was mere excitement. Would God I could include you all in this promise this morning; but can I, dare I, must I? No, I must not. As the Lord liveth, if you are not seeking the Lord, the devil is seeking you; if you are not seeking the Lord, judgment is at your heels. Even now, the swift-winged angel of justice is holding the torch before the fierce messenger of vengeance who, with his naked dagger, is about to execute the wrath of God upon your spirit. Ah! take no lease of your lives; fancy not that you are to live for ever. If you have not sought the Lord, as Jonathan Edwards said, "thou standest over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten." You are hanging over hell by a single rope, and all the strands of the rope are creaking, snapping, breaking. Remember after death, judgment; and after judgment, woe; and after woe, nought; for woe, woe, woe, must be for ever. "The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" It needs a damned spirit to start from the grave to preach to you, and let you know something of it; but though one should rise from the grave with all the scars of all his torments upon him, with his hair all crisp by the hot fire of vengeance, his body scorched in the flames which no abatement know, though he should tell you with a tear at every word and a groan as a stop at every sentence, and a deep sigh on every syllable, how horribly he feels, how damnably he is tormented, still ye would not repent. Therefore we will say little of it. May God the Holy Ghost seek you, and then you will seek him, and you shall be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.

II. Now we come to THE PROMISE SET FORTH BY WAY OF CONTRAST. "they shall not want any good thing:" that is the jewel. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;" that is the foil to set off the jewel and make it shine more brightly. "They shall not want any good thing." I can hardly speak of that, for there is too much to say. Did you never see a horse let into a wide field where the grass grew so thickly, that he scarcely knew where to begin to eat? If not, you have seen children taken into the field where wild flowers grow; it is so full of them in their liveries of white and yellow that the children know not where to pluck first, they have so

wide a choice. That is how I feel when I have such a text as this: "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." We have heard of the celebrated cheque for a million pounds which has been preserved; here is one for millions of millions. Here is a promise wide as our wants, large as our necessities, deep as our distresses. There are some persons whose ambitious desires are very much like the Slough of Despond, which, though the king's labourers cast in thousands of tons of good material, never could be filled up. But the Lord can fill them. However bottomless our desires, however deep our wishes, however high our aspirations, all things meet in this promise, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

We take it concerning things spiritual. Are we wanting a sense of pardon? We shall not want it long. Are we desiring stronger faith? We shall not want it long. Do you wish to have more love to your Saviour, to understand more concerning inward communion with Jesus? You shall have it. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Do you desire to renounce your sins, to be able to overcome this corruption or that? to attain this virtue, or that excellency? "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Is it adoption, justification, sanctification, that thou wantest? "Thou shalt not lack any good thing."

But are thy wants temporal? Dost thou want bread and water? No, I know thou dost not, for it is said, "Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Or, if thou dost want it somewhat, it shall come before long; it shall not be to starvation. David said, "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Do you want clothes? You shall have them. "He that clothes the lilies of the valley, will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Do you need temporary supplies. You, shall receive them, for "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Whatever your desire, there is the promise, only go and plead it at the throne, and God will fulfil it. We have no right to look for the fulfilment of the promises unless we put the Promiser in mind of them, although truly, at times, he exceeds our desires or wishes. He gives us these promises as his notes of hand, his bills of exchange, and if we do not take our notes to get them cashed at the throne it is our fault, for the promise is just as good:

"they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

But here is a contrast, and we will proceed to that at once. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." The old Psalter has it: "The rich had need, and they hungered; but seekers of the Lord shall not be lessed of all good." It appears that there is only the difference of a very little mark in the Hebrew between the words "mighty men" and "young lions." But it is of very little consequence for, doubtless "the young lions" are put by way of figure to denominate certain characters of men who do "lack and suffer hunger."

There are certain men in the world who, like the lions, are kings over others. The lion is lord of the forest, and at his roar others tremble; so are there men who walk about among us—noblemen, respectable, great, honorable—persons who are had in reverence and esteem; and they suppose, sometimes, because they are lions they are sure never to have any spiritual hunger. They are great and mighty men; they have no need of a Saviour. Are they not the elders of the city? are they not mighty men of valour? are they not noble and great! They are, moreover, so excellent in their own esteem that their proper language seems to be when they come before their Maker's bar: "Lord, I had not a very bad nature, and wherein it was a little bad, I made the best of it! and wherein I did not do quite as well as I ought, Jesus Christ will make it up." Talk to these men about being depraved! "Rubbish!" they say; they know better; their heart is pure enough. They have no need of the Holy Spirit; they are young lions; you small mice may want it, but not they indeed! They have no need of another's righteousness to cover them; their old shaggy mane is glory enough to them. But do you know these young lions "lack and suffer hunger;" ay, even when we do not know anything about it? They can play bombast before men, but they "lack and suffer hunger" when they are alone. A suspicion often crosses their minds that their righteousness is not good for much; they know very well that while they can make a long prayer the poor widow's house sticks in their throat; that while they boast of their good works they are no better than they should be. You may think, perhaps, like David, that "they are not plagued like other men." But you don't know that. They are very often plagued when they do not tell

you. When they roar so loudly their mane scarcely covers their bare ribs. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;" but, blessed be God, "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Poor and helpless though they are, having no works of righteousness of their own, confessing their sin and depravity, they shall want no good thing. Is it not amazing? There is a poor sinner who has sinned against God and in every way dishonored his name; yet he cannot lack any good thing. "Poor, helpless worms in Christ possess Grace, wisdom, peace, and righteousness."

Again, by young lions we may understand men of cunning and men of wisdom. The lion goeth out at night, and prowleth silently through the jungle. It hath a keen scent, and knoweth where to find its prey. It scenteth the fountain, and knoweth that the antelope will go there to drink. When he comes, the lion croucheth down, with wild eyes looks upon him, and in a moment, ere the antelope is aware, he is in the fangs of the lion. Men of cunning and wisdom—have you not seen such? Have you not heard their boastful exclamation, "Submit myself to a dogmatical preacher! No, sir, I will not. Believe in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures! I cannot believe in any such absurdity. Sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him in the Scriptures! No, sir, I cannot. I like something to discuss; I like an intellectual religion; I cannot believe everything simply because God says it. I want to be allowed to judge for myself. Am I not wise learned?" And when he sees us in distress, sometimes he says, "Nonsense! you have no brains! you, poor Calvinists must be bereft of your senses." And yet we can show as many men of sense as they can, and we are not afraid of them, however much they glory in their wisdom. But sometimes the poor Christian is frightened by them; he cannot answer their sophisms; he does not see his way through their labyrinths, and cannot escape from their nets. Well, don't try to escape from them. Let them talk on; the best answer is often silence. But do you know that these young lions so gloriously self-sufficient when in argument with you, in secrecy often "lack and suffer hunger?" There was never an infidel in the world that did not suffer spiritual hunger, though he might not confess it. His creed did not satisfy him; there was a hollow place, an aching void somewhere, which the world could never fill. But "they that seek the Lord," who take the Scriptures for their guide, who bow implicitly to the

words of Jehovah, "do not lack any good thing." They feel no hollow unoccupied; Christ has filled their hearts, and they are satisfied with his presence and his love. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

Again, the young lions denote those who are very strong, so that they hope to save themselves, and very swift in their course of profession. Some are very fierce in the matter of religion, very anxious to obtain salvation; and they are very strong, so that they think it scorn to borrow strength of another. Like the Jews, they follow after righteousness, but they do not attain it because they seek it by the works of the law. Have you never seen what they will do? There is a goodly chapel they have built; they are engaged at six o'clock in the morning at prayers, and repeat so many Ave Marias and Pater-nosters; then comes the daily service, the mass, and all that rubbish—the messe, as they call it in France, and verily a mess it is; then they whip themselves, fetch blood from their bodies, and perform all kinds of penances. Even among Protestants, meritmongery is not quite gone by; for there be many who are full of holy works, in which they are thirsting for salvation. The poor Christian says, "I cannot perform all these works; I wish it were in my power to serve the Lord more devoutly." But dost thou not know that these "young lions do lack, and suffer hunger?" The formalist is never satisfied with all his forms; the hypocrite is never contented; there is always something he misses that makes his heart ache.

Then we may take it in a temporal sense. Young lions may mean deep cunning schemers. Have you never seen men with their thousand schemes and plans to make themselves rich, men who can overreach others, who are so subtle that you cannot see through them? Their instinct seems to be cunning. They are always lying in wait to take advantage of others; they prowl the world around, to seize on the helpless widow and the defenceless orphan. Or, perhaps, they may be following more legitimate schemes yet, such as are full of speculation and will involve the exercise of all their wits. Surely such can live if others stand. But no, they are just the men who "lack and suffer hunger;" their schemes all prove futile; the arrow which they shoot returneth on their own head and woundeth them. But they who lie gently down in passive faith,

singing

"Father, I wait thy daily will;
Thou shalt divide my portion still,
Give me on earth what seems thee best,
'Till death and heaven reveal the rest,"

do not lack any good thing.

Again, by "young lions," we may understand "rich men"—men who have abundance. We have known persons who have ridden in fine carriages and dwelt in noble mansions, brought to the depths of poverty. Every now and then we hear of men, almost millionaires, who are turned out into the very streets. Kings have walked our soil without their crowns, and nobles even now are living on our charity. Daughters of men in high positions have to work as menials, and long sometimes to be allowed to do that. The rich sometimes "lack, and suffer hunger;" but they that wait on the Lord," poor as they may be, "do not lack any good thing."

Again, this may apply to you who earn your living by bodily labour. Perhaps you are a weak and sickly man; you are not one of the "young lions," like your neighbour, a strong big fellow, who can earn his day's wages without the least difficulty. He says to you, perhaps, "I shouldn't like to be such a poor lean thing as you are. If you should be ill, what would become of you? You trust in Providence, but I trust in my big arms. The best providence is to take care of yourself—to go and eat a good dinner, and keep yourself in trim." Nay, nay; have you not seen those young lions, "lack and suffer hunger?" Our missionary can tell of strong men whom he visits, who cannot find employment, but are brought almost to starvation; while he does not find that they that wait on the Lord lack any good thing. Don't be afraid because you have a sick and weakly frame; labour as hard as you can, and be sure, that if you wait on the Lord you will not lack any good thing.

Once more, the lion is a creature that overcomes and devours all others. We have some such in our society; you find them everywhere. They put their hand upon you, and you feel you are in a vice. They understand law

better than you do: and woe be to you if you make a mistake! won't they take advantage of you? So in business they can always over-reach you; like sharks, if they do not devour you altogether, they leave you minus a leg or an arm. Yes, but you have seen these men, too, "lack and suffer hunger." And amongst all the miserable miscreants that walk the earth, there is none so destitute as the young lion that lacks, and suffers hunger. He puts his money into a bag full of holes; and methinks hell laughs at the covetous man, at him who grasps his neighbour's wealth. "Ha! ha!" says the devil, "damn thy soul to win—nothing! send thy soul to hell to win—a dream! A thing which thou hadst, but is gone; thou didst grasp it—it was a shadow! Sold thine immortal spirit to win a bubble which burst in thy grasp." Christian, do not be concerned about temporal things; trust in God; for while "young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

III. And now, I come to the third part, which is THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE. Time fails me, and I shall not try to prove to you that God can in the ordinary course of his providence make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked; that would be an easy task. While God has the hearts of all men under his control, he can make the rich give where he pleases; and he can influence the church, and those that love the Lord, always to take care of the Lord's poor. But I am going to state one or two facts by way of stimulating you to assist me in the noble enterprise of endeavouring to support the poor disabled ministers of the everlasting gospel. Amongst the particular Baptists we have a fund called the Baptists Fund. It was instituted in 1717, in order to afford assistance to ministers in England and Wales, who were in poverty and distress, in consequence of the inability of their churches and congregations to furnish them with a competent maintenance for themselves and their families. During nearly a century and a half, it has carried out, so far as its funds were sufficient, the benevolent purposes for which it was established. It publishes its accounts yearly; and from the last printed statement for 1854-5, it appears that in that year, one hundred and sixty-five cases were relieved in England, and sixty-five in the Principality, by grants in money to the amount of £1,560, no one receiving a larger sum than £10, and no grant being in any case made where the minister's income from every source exceed £80. In addition to the money grants,

books also of the value together of £155 have been presented to thirty-five poor ministers unable to purchase them. Towards raising the necessary funds to meet these cases, collections are annually made in this and in number, character, and circumstances of the objects to be relieved, and the purpose for which the relief is afforded are considered, it will be well understood that this is no ordinary collection. We have the right of four votes, one for the pastor and three messengers sent by us, owing to our fathers having in olden times deposited £150 by way of starting the fund, the interest of which sum, and of that given by other churches, is spent every year. Different legacies having been left by other persons, a considerable sum has accumulated, and I believe the yearly income is somewhere about £2,000 at the present time. We need, however, much more. I am not going to detain you long by telling you about the fund, but I will read you one or two letters from the recipients. The first is from an old minister aged eighty.

[It is thought best not to print these, lest the worthy men who wrote them should feel aggrieved.]

I think I need add nothing more to move you. There are many poor ministers now, who, when they go up the pulpit stairs, are obliged to hold their arms pretty close to their bodies lest they should rend their coats to pieces; and I have seen them with such coats on, as you would not like to put on if you were going into the meanest chapel in London. I have myself found livery for some of these holy men year by year, but one person cannot supply the necessities of all. I know the case of a preacher who walked to a chapel, within ten miles of this spot, and preached in the morning, and walked back again; he also preaching in the evening, and had to walk back to his house; and what do you think the deacons gave him? The poor man had nothing else to live upon, and he was nearly eighty years of age. When he had finish (oh! don't hear it, ye angels! pray shut up your ears) they gave him—a shilling! That was for his day's work. Another brother told me some time ago that he preached three sermons, walking eight miles and back again and going dinnerless all the while; and the deacons gave him the munificent sum of—half-a-crown! Oh! if you knew all the circumstances connected with the fund, you would not long restrain your benevolence. The funds are mostly given to those who

preach the gospel—gospel ministers of the best sort, men who preach what we consider to be gospel—Calvinistic sentiments. And the funds must always be given in that way, for so the deed directs it. I bless God for this society, and I ask you, under God, to take care of it, that while "the young lions do lack, and suffer hunger," the ministers of the Lord shall "not want any good thing."

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A Little Sanctuary

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them, as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. - Ezekiel 11:16

The text begins with "therefore." There was a reason for God's speaking in this way. It is profitable to trace the why and the wherefore of the gracious words of the Lord. The way by which a promise comes usually shines with a trail of light. Upon reading the connection we observe that those who had been carried captive were insulted by those who tarried at Jerusalem. They spoke in a very cruel manner to those with whom they should have sympathized. How often do prosperous brothers look with scorn on the unfortunate! Did not Job of old complain, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease"?

The Lord hears the unkind speeches of the prosperous when they speak bitterly of those who are plunged in adversity. Read the context—"Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in

possession." This unbrotherly language moved the Lord to send the prophet Ezekiel with good and profitable words to the children of the captivity. Many a time the cruel word of man has been the cause of a tender word from God. Because of the unkindness of these people, therefore God, in lovingkindness, addressed in words of tender grace those whom they despised. As, in our Saviour's days, the opposition of the Pharisees acted upon the Saviour like a steel to the flint, and fetched bright sparks of truth out of him, so the wickedness of man has often been the cause why the grace of God has been more fully revealed. This is some solace when under the severe chastisement of human tongues.

Personally, I am glad of this comfort. I would gladly be at peace with all men: I would not unnecessarily utter a word of provocation; but it is a world in which you cannot live at peace unless you are willing to be unfaithful to your conscience. Offences, therefore, will come. But why should we fret unduly under this trial when we perceive that out of opposition to the cause of God occasions arise for the grandest displays of God's love and power? If from the showers we gain our harvests, we will not mourn when the heavens gather blackness, and the rain pours down. If the wrath of man is made to praise the Lord, then let man be wrathful if he wills. Brethren, let us brace ourselves to bear the bruises of slanderous tongues! Let us take all sharp speeches and cutting criticisms to God. It may be that he will hear what the enemy has said, and that he will be very pitiful to us. Because of the bitterness of the oppressor he will bring home to our heart by the Spirit, with greater tenderness and power, some sweet word of his which has lain hidden from us in his Book. Be not dismayed, but go to him who is the God of all comfort, who comforteth all those that are bowed down, and he will give you a word which shall heal your wounds, and breathe peace into your spirit.

Now to proceed at once to our text, seeing that the occasion of it is a sufficient preface. Let us notice, first, *where God's people may be, and yet be God's people*. They may be by God's own hand "scattered among the countries, and cast far off among the heathen." And, secondly, *what God will be to them when they are in such circumstances*. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." May the Holy Spirit, who spake by Ezekiel, speak through these words to our

hearts!

I. First, then, WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE MAY BE.

If you ask where they may be, the answer to the question is, first, *they may be under chastisement.*

If you will remember, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God threatened Israel that if they, as a nation, sinned against him, they should be scattered among the nations, and cast far off among the heathen. Many a time they so sinned. I need not recapitulate the story of their continued transgressions and multiplied backslidings. The Lord was slow to fulfil his utmost threatenings, but put forth his utmost patience, till there was no more room for long-suffering. At last the threatened chastisement fell upon them, and fierce nations carried them away in bonds to the far-off lands of their dread. They were not utterly destroyed: their being scattered among the people showed that they still existed. Though they were a people scattered and peeled, yet they were a people, even as Israel is to this day. For all that tyrants and persecutors have ever done, yet the Jew is still extant among us, even as the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. Israel is still to the front, and will be to the world's end. The Lord hath not cast away his people, even though he has cast them far off among the heathen. He has scattered them among the countries, but they are not absorbed into those countries; they still remain a people separated unto the living God, in whom he will yet be glorified.

But, assuredly, the chosen seed came under chastisement. When, by the rivers of Babylon, they sat down and wept, yea, they wept when they remembered Zion, then were they under the Lord's heavy hand. The instructed among them knew that their being in exile was the fruit of the transgressions of their fathers, and the result of their own offences against God. And yet, though they were under chastisement, God loved them, and had a choice word for them, which I will by-and-by endeavour to explain to you; for the Lord said, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary." Beloved, you and I may lie under the rod of God, and we may smart sorely because of our iniquities, even as David did; and yet we may be the children of God towards whom he has thoughts of grace. Our moisture may be

turned into the drought of summer, while day and night the Lord's hand is heavy upon us; we may be in sore temporal trouble, and may be compelled by an enlightened conscience to trace our sorrow to our own folly. We may be in great spiritual darkness, and may be compelled to confess that our own sins have procured this unto ourselves. And yet, for all that, the Lord may have sent the chastisement in love, and in nothing else but love; and he may intend by it, not our destruction, but the destruction of the flesh; not our rejection, but our refining, not our curse, but our cleansing. Let us take comfort, seeing that God has a word to say to his mourners and to his afflicted, and that word in the text is a "yet" which serves to show that there is a clear limit to his anger. He smites, but it is with an "although" and a "yet": he scatters them to a distance, but he sends a promise after them, and says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." In the Lord's hand towards his chosen there may be a rod, but not a sword. It is a heavy rod, but it is not a rod of iron. It is a rod that bruises, but it is not a rod that batters to pieces. God tempers our afflictions, severe though they may seem to be; and though, apparently, he strikes us with the blows of a cruel one, yet there is a depth unutterable of infinite love in every stroke of his hand. His anger endureth but for a night: he hastens to display his favour. Listen to his own words of overflowing faithfulness: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." However, it is clear that God's own people may be under chastisement.

But, secondly, wherever they are, whether they are under chastisement or not, *they are where the Lord has put them*. Read the text carefully: "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries." The Lord's hand was in their banishment and dispersion: Jehovah himself inflicted the chastisement for sin. You say to me, "Why, it was Nebuchadnezzar who carried them away: the Babylonians and the Chaldeans took them captive." Yes, I know it was so; but the Lord regards these as instruments in his hand, and he says, "I have done it," just as Job, when the Chaldeans and the Sabeans had swept away his property, and his children had been destroyed through the agency of Satan, yet said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath

taken away." The Lord was as truly in the taking away as he was in the giving. It is well to look beyond all second causes and instrumentalities. Do not get angry with those who are the nearer agents, but look to the First Cause. Do not get fretting about the Chaldeans and Sabeans. Let them alone, and Satan too. What have you to do with them? Your business is with God. See *his* hand, and bow before it. Say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Come to that, for then you will be able to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Though your trials be peculiar, and your way be hedged up, yet the hand of the Lord is still in everything; and it behoves you to recognize it for your strengthening and consolation.

Note, next, that *the people of God may dwell in places of great discomfort*. The Jews were not in those days like the English, who colonize and find a home in the Far West, or even dwell at ease beneath sultry skies. An ancient Hebrew out of his own country was a fish out of water: out of his proper element. He was not like the Tyrian, whose ship went to Tarshish, and passed the Gates of Hercules, seeking the *Ultima Thule*. The Jew tarried at home. "I dwell among mine own people," said a noble woman of that nation; and she did but speak the mind of a home-loving people who settled each one upon his own patch of ground, and sat down under his vine and fig-tree, none making him afraid. Their Lord had driven them into a distant land, to rivers whose waters were bitter to their lips, even to the Tigris and the Euphrates. They were in a foreign country, where everything was different from their ways—where all the customs of the people were strange and singular. They would be a marked and despised people, nobody would fraternize with them, but all would pass them by in scorn. The Jews excited much prejudice, for, as their great adversary, the wicked Haman, said, "their laws were diverse from all people," and their customs had a peculiarity about them which kept them a distinct race. It must have been a great discomfort to God's people to dwell among idolaters, and to be forced to witness obscene rites and revolting practices. God's own favoured ones in these days may be living where they are as much out of place as lambs among wolves, or doves among hawks. Do not imagine that God makes a nest of down for all his eaglets. Why, they would never take to flying if he did not put thorns under them, and stir up their nest that they may take to their wings, and

learn the heavenward flight to which they are predestinated! Perfect comfort on earth is no more to be expected than constant calm on the sea. Sleep in the midst of a battle, and ease when on the march, would be more in place than absolute rest in this present state. God meaneth not his children to take up their inheritance on this side Jordan. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." And so he often puts us where we are very uncomfortable. Is there any Christian man who can say that he would, if he might, take up his lot for ever in this life? No, no. There is an irksomeness about our condition, disguise it as we may. In one way or another we are made to remember that we are in banishment. We have not yet come unto our rest. That rest "remaineth for the people of God," but as yet we have not come into the land which the Lord our God has given to us to be our place of rest. Some of God's servants feel this in a very peculiar manner, for their soul is among lions, and they dwell among those whose tongues are set on fire of hell. Abel was hated by Cain, Isaac was mocked by Ishmael, Joseph was among envious brethren, Moses was at first rejected by Israel, David was pursued by Saul, Elijah was hunted by Jezebel, Mordecai was hated by Haman; and yet these men were wisely placed, and the Lord was eminently with them. I mention this in order that tried believers may still know that, however uncomfortable their position, it is nevertheless true that God has put them there for some good end.

The beloved of God may yet be in a place of great barrenness as to all spiritual good. "I have cast them far off among the heathen"—far off from my temple—far off from the place of my worship—far off from the shrine of my glory. "I have scattered them among the countries," where they will learn no good—where, on the contrary, they will see every abominable thing, and often feel like Lot, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the people among whom he dwelt. We are not kept apart from the wicked by high walls, or guards of heavenly soldiery. Even our Lord did not pray that we should be taken out of the world. Grace builds neither monasteries nor nunneries. "Woe is me," is frequently the cry of God's chosen, "that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" David knew what it was to be cut off from the assemblies of the Lord's house, and to be in the cave or in the wilderness. It may be so with you, and yet you may be a child of God. You may not be out of your place, for the dear path to his abode may go straight through this barren land. You

may have to pass for many a day through this great and terrible wilderness, this land of fiery serpents, and of great drought, on your way to the land that floweth with milk and honey. To make heaven the sweeter we may find our exile made bitter. Our education for eternity may necessitate spiritual tribulation, and bereavement from visible comforts. To be weaned from all reliance on outward means may be for our good, that we may be driven in upon the Lord, and made to know that he is all in all. Doubtless the jeers of Babylon endeared the quiet of Zion to the banished: they loved the courts of the Lord's house all the more for having sighed in the halls of the proud monarch.

Worse still, *the Lord's chosen may be under oppression through surrounding ungodliness and sin.* The captive Israelites found Babylonia and Chaldea to be a land of grievous oppression. They ridiculed them, and bade them sing them one of the songs of Zion. They required of them mirth when their hearts were heavy. On the festivals of their false gods they demanded that the worshippers of the Eternal One should help in their choirs, and tune their harps to heathenish minstrelsy. Even Daniel, in his high position under the Persian monarch, found that he was not without adversaries, who rested not till they had cast him into a den of lions. Those who were far away, whether in Babylonia or in Persia, found themselves the constant subjects of assault from the triumphant foe. They were crushed down, until they cried by reason of their oppression. It was not the first time that the people of God had been in the iron furnace. Did they not come forth from the house of bondage at the first, even from Egypt? Neither was Babylon the last place of trial for saints; for until the end of time the seed of the serpent will war with the seed of the woman. Is it not still true of us, as well as of our Saviour, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son"? Expect still to meet with opposition and oppression while you are passing to the land where the seed shall possess the heritage. Those of us who bear public testimony may have to bear the brunt of the battle, and suffer much from angry tongues. Nevertheless, to us it shall be an evident token of the Lord's favour, inasmuch as he counts us worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

But enough of that. I am making a very long story about the grievous routes through which we wend our way to the Celestial City. We climb on

hands and knees up the Hill Difficulty; we tremblingly descend the steep of Humiliation. We feel our way through the tremendous pass of the Shadow of Death, and hasten through Vanity Fair, and walk warily across the Enchanted Ground. Not much of the way could one fall in love with. Perhaps the only part of it is that Valley of Humiliation, where the shepherd boy sat down and sang his ditty among the wild flowers and the lambs. One might wish to be always there; but fierce adversaries invade even these tranquil meadows, for hard-by where the shepherd sang his happy pastoral Christian met Apollyon, and had to struggle hard for his life. Do you not remember the spot where

"The man so bravely played the man,
He made the fiend to fly"?

You see where God's people may be, and yet may be none the less, but all the more, under the divine protection. Are you in difficult places? Be not dismayed, for this way runs the road to glory. Sigh not for the dove's wing to hurry to your rest, but take the appointed path: the footsteps of your Lord are there.

II. So, now, I hasten at once into the sweet part of the subject, which consists of this: WHAT GOD WILL BE TO HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY GET INTO THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

Brethren, the great sanctuary stood on Mount Sion, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." That glorious place which Solomon had builded was the shrine to which the Hebrew turned his eye: he prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. Alas! when the tribes were carried away captive, they could not carry the holy and beautiful house with them, neither could they set up its like within the brazen gates of the haughty city. "Now," says the Lord God in infinite condescension, "I will be a travelling temple to them. I will be as a little sanctuary to each one of them. They shall carry my temple about with them. Wherever they are, I will be, as it were a holy place to them." In using the word "little," the gracious God would seem to say, "I will condescend to them, and I will be as they are. I will bow down to their littleness, and I will be to each

little one of them a little sanctuary." Even the temple which Solomon builded was not a fit habitation for the infinite Jehovah, and so the Lord will stoop a little further, and be unto his people, not as the sanctuary "exceedingly magnificent," but as a little temple suitable for the most humble individual, rather than as a great temple in which vast multitudes could gather. "I will be to them as a little sanctuary" is a greatly condescending promise, implying an infinite stoop of love. There is a good deal more in my text than I shall be able to bring out, and I may seem, in making the attempt, to give you the same thought twice over. Please bear with me. Let me begin at the beginning.

A sanctuary was *a place of refuge*. You know how Joab fled to the horns of the altar to escape from Solomon's armed men: he ran to the temple hoping to find sanctuary there. In past ages, churches and abbeys and altars have been used as places of sanctuary to which men have fled when in danger of their lives. Take that sense, and couple it with the cities of refuge which were set up throughout all Israel, to which the man who killed another by misadventure might flee to hide himself from the manslayer. Now, beloved fellow-believer, wherever you are, wherever you dwell, God will be to you a constant place of refuge. You shall flee from sin to God in Christ Jesus. You shall flee from an accusing conscience to his pardoning love. You shall flee from daily cares to him who careth for you. You shall flee from the accusations of Satan to the advocacy of Jesus. You shall flee even from yourselves to your Lord, and he will be to you in all senses a place of refuge. This is the happy harbour of all saints in all weathers. Hither come all weather-beaten barques, and cast anchor in placid waters.

"God is our refuge, tried and proved,
Amid a stormy world:
We will not fear though earth be moved,
And hills in ocean hurled,"

O my hearer, make the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, and then shalt thou know the truth of this text: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Wherever thou art cast, God will be to thee a suitable refuge, a little haven for thy little boat:

not little in the sense that he cannot well protect thee; not little in the sense that his word is a small truth, or a small comfort, or a small protection, but little in this respect—that it shall be near thee, accessible to thee, adapted to thee. It is as though the refuge were portable in all our wanderings, a protection to be carried and kept in hand in all weathers. Thou shalt carry it about with thee wherever thou art, this "little sanctuary." Thy God, and thy thoughts of thy God, and thy faith in thy God, shall be to thee a daily, perpetual, available, present refuge. Oh, it is a delightful thought to my mind, that from every danger and every storm God will be to us an immediate refuge, which we carry about with us, so that we abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

Next, a sanctuary signifies also *a place of worship*. It is a place where the divine presence is peculiarly manifested—a holy place. It usually means a place where God dwells, a place where God has promised to meet with his people, a place of acceptance where prayers, and praises, and offerings come up with acceptance on his altar. Now, notice, God says to his people, when they are far away from the temple and Jerusalem, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." Not, "I have loved the people, and I will build them a synagogue, or I will lead others to build for them a meeting-place; but I myself will be to them as a little sanctuary." The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the true place of worship for saved souls. "There is no chapel in the place where I live," says one. I am sorry to hear it, but chapels are not absolutely essential to worship, surely. Another cries, "There is no place of public worship of any sort where the gospel is fully and faithfully preached." This is a great want, certainly, but still, do not say, "I am far away from a place of worship." That is a mistake. No godly man is far away from a holy place. What is a place of worship? I hope that our bed-chambers are constantly places of worship. Place of worship? Why, it is one's garden where he walks and meditates. A place of worship? It is the field, the barn, the street, when one has the heart to pray. God will meet us by a well, a stone, a bush, a brook, a tree. He has great range of trysting-places when men's hearts are right.

"Where'er we seek him he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

When a man lives near to God, and abides in him, he should shake off the folly of superstition, and talk no more of holy places. God himself, his own presence makes a place of worship. Do you not catch the fulness of the thought? Yonder is Jacob. He lies down to sleep in a desert place with a stone for his pillow. No bishop had ever been upon the spot to consecrate it, no service had been held in the place by way of dedication, and yet when he awoke in the morning, he said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." God had been to his servant a little sanctuary in that instance, as he has been oftentimes since. Whenever you go to sea, God in your cabin shall be to you a little sanctuary. When you travel by railway, the carriage shall, through the Lord's presence, be a little sanctuary. God's presence, seen in a bit of moss, made in the desert for Mungo Park a little sanctuary. How often have the streets of London been to some of us as the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem, for God has been there! The Lord himself is the temple of saints in heaven, and he is their temple on earth. When God draws near to us, we worship and rejoice. Whenever we are abroad, and cannot come to the visible sanctuary where multitudes worship, let us ask the Lord to be to us as "a little sanctuary." Have not your hearts cried out as you have thought of this house when you have been far away—"Ziona, Ziona, the place of our solemn assemblies, when shall we return to thee? O sacred spot, where we have worshipped God, and God has met with us, and made the place of his feet glorious, when shall we again behold thee"? I shall not contend with the feeling; but I would supplant it with this higher thought: the Lord himself is our dwelling-place, and our holy temple. Hath he not said, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary"?

Now, go a little farther. Our God is to us *a place of stillness*. What was the sanctuary of old? The sanctuary was the most holy place, the third court, the innermost of all within the veil. It was the stillest place that ever was on earth: a closet of absolute silence. You must not think of the tabernacle in the wilderness as being a huge building. It was a small affair, and the innermost room of all was of narrow dimensions. The Holy of Holies was great for holiness, but not for space. There was this peculiarity about it, that it was the shrine of unbroken quiet. Was ever a voice heard in it? Once in the year the high-priest went in, and filled it full of the smoke of

incense as he waved his censor in the mystic presence; but otherwise it was a chamber in which there was no footfall of living thing, or voice of mortal man. Here was the home of absolute quiet and silence. The stillness within the Holy of Holies of the temple must have reached the intensity of awe. What repose one might enjoy who could dwell in the secret place of the Most High! How one sighs for stillness! We cannot get it to the full anywhere in this country: even to the loneliest hill-top the scream of the railway-engine rises to the ear. Utter and entire stillness, one of the richest joys on this side heaven, one cannot readily obtain. Those who live in the wear and tear of this city life—and it is an awful wear and tear—might well pay down untold gold to be still for a while. What would we not give for quiet, absolute quiet, when everything should be still, and the whirring wheels of care should cease to revolve for at least a little while?

I sometimes propose to myself to wait upon God and be still. Alas! There is the bell! Who is this? Somebody that will chatter for a quarter of an hour about nothing! Well, that intruder has gone; let us pray. We are on our knees. What is this? A telegram! One is half frightened at the very sight of it: it is opened, and it calls you away to matters which are the reverse of quieting. Where is stillness to be had? The only prescription I can give is this promise: "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." If you can get with God, you will then escape from men, even though you have to live among them. If you can baptize your spirit into the great deeps of Godhead, if you can take a plunge into the fathomless love of the covenant, if you can rise to commune with God, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend, then will he be unto you as a little sanctuary, and you shall enjoy that solemn silence of the soul which hath music in it like the eternal harmonies. The presence of the Lord will be as a calm hand for that fevered brow, and a pillow for that burdened head. Use your God in this way, for so he presents himself to you.

The sanctuary was *a place of mercy*. When the high-priest entered within the veil, he passed into the throne-room of mercy. The blood had been sprinkled there, and man might draw near to the God of mercy. A light was shining—a light of love and mercy, between the wings of the cherubim. Those angelic forms were ministers of mercy, attendants upon

the Lord of grace. Before the high-priest stood the mercy-seat. That was the name of the cover of the sacred ark of the covenant. On that mercy-seat there was the shechinah, which symbolized the presence of a merciful God. Of that mercy-seat the Lord had said, "There will I meet with you." The holy place was a house of mercy. God was not there in power to destroy, nor in subtle wisdom to discover folly: he was there in mercy, waiting to forgive. Now, dear friends, God says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary," that is to say, an accessible throne of mercy, an accessible place of mercy. When men have no mercy on you, go to God. When you have no mercy on yourself—and sometimes you have not—run away to God. Draw near to him, and he will be to you as a little sanctuary.

The sanctuary was the house of mercy, and hence, *a place of condescension*—"a little sanctuary." Brethren, to suit our needs the blessings of grace must be given in little forms. What are we great in at all except in sin? We hear of "great men." O friends, a great man! Does not the term make you laugh? Did you ever hear of a great ant, or a great emmet, or a great nothing? And that is all that the greatest of us can ever be. Our degrees and ranks are only shades of littleness; that is all. When the Lord communes with the greatest of men, he must become little to speak with him.

I cannot convey to you quite what I see to be the meaning of this little sanctuary, laying the stress upon the adjective "little." If you are talking of anything that is very dear, the tendency is always to call it "little." The affectionate terms of language are frequently diminutives. One never says, "My dear great wife," but we are apt to say, "My dear little wife." We speak thus of things which are not "little" really, but we use the word as a term of affection. To speak very simply, there is a cosiness about a little thing which we miss in that which is on a large scale. We say, "Well, I did so enjoy that little prayer-meeting; but when it grew so much in numbers I seemed lost in it." It is to me so marvellous that I hardly dare to say what I mean; but when the Lord brings himself down to our capacity he is greatly dear to us, and he would have us feel at home with him, comfortable with him. When he becomes to us "as a little sanctuary," and we are able to compass his mercy to ourselves, and perceive its adaptation to our little trials and little difficulties, then we feel ourselves

at home with him, and he is most dear to us. O thou blessed God, thou art so great, that thou must, as it were, belittle thyself to manifest thyself to me; how I love and adore thee that thou wilt deign to do this! Glory be to thy great name, though the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, yet thou dwellest in the temple of my poor heart!

Dear brethren, the sanctuary was only a little place. But then, if it had been ever so great—if it had been as spacious as this whole island, and had been shut in to be the house of God—would it have been a house fitted to contain the infinite God? If you take the arch of heaven as a roof, and floor it with the sea, or if you soar into still more boundless space, is that a house fit for him who filleth all immensity? When Jehovah makes himself little enough to be in the least comprehended by us, the descent is immeasurable. It is nothing more to him to come down to count the hairs of our head than to bow in the infinity of his mercy to take an interest in our littlenesses.

Go a stage further. That sanctuary, of which we read in the Old Testament, was not only a place of great stillness, great mercy, and great condescension but it was *a place of great holiness*. "Holiness becometh thy house." This applied to the whole temple, but the inner shrine was called "sanctum sanctorum"—the Holy of Holies, for so the Hebrews make a superlative. It was the holiest place that could be. The world is an unholy place, and at times it is most grievously so. You mix up with people who defile you; how can you help it? Your daily business calls you to see and hear many things which are defiling. When these things are more than ordinarily glaring, you say to yourself, "Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, that I might get away from the very sight of men!" I was with a mountain-climbing friend some time ago, and being thirsty, I drank some water from a fountain by the roadside. when I held the cup to my companion, he refused it, saying, "I don't drink that." I said, "Why don't you drink it?" He answered, "I wait till I have climbed up into the mountains, where mortal men never pollute the streams, and then I drink. I like drinking of fountains at which none but birds sip: where the stream pours forth from God's hand pure as crystal." Alas! I cannot climb with my Alpine friend as to material things; but what a blessed thing it is to get right away from man, and drink of the river of God which is full of

water, and know the joys of his own right hand, which are for evermore! What bliss to enter into the Holy of Holies! Now, you cannot do that by getting into a cell, or by shutting yourselves up in your room; but you can enter the most holy place by communion with God. Here is the promise; the text means this—" I will be to them as a little sanctuary—a little Holy of Holies. I will put them into myself as into the most holy place, and there will I hide them. In the secret of my tabernacle will I hide them. I will set them up upon a rock." Away from the unholiness of your own hearts, and the unholiness of those about you, get to your God, and hide yourselves in him.

Again, we may regard the sanctuary as *a place of cleansing*. That may be gathered from the other rendering of my text. "I will be unto them a little sanctification." God is the sanctification of his people he cleanses them from daily defilements, and is himself their righteousness. Those that come to God shall find in him sanctification for the daily acts of life, cleansing from ordinary as well as extraordinary transgression. We want not only the great blood-washing, but also the lesser washing of the feet with water; and the Lord himself will give us this blessing. Did not Jesus take a towel, and gird himself for this very purpose?

Lastly, God will be to us *a place of communion and of revelation*. In the Holy of Holies God spoke with man, on that one day in the year, in a wondrous manner; and he that had been there, and came forth alive, came out to bless the congregation. Every day of the year the teaching of the sanctuary was that in God there was everything his people wanted. In the holy place was the shechinah light, and "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "The Lord is my light and my salvation." In the holy place were the cherubim: God has legions of angels at his bidding, waiting to bless his people. In the holy place was the ark: God is to us the ark of the covenant. He has entered into covenant with men, towards us he has a throne of grace, and there he meets us, even in Christ Jesus, who is our propitiation.

Within that ark there were three things: the rod of Aaron, that divine work of Christ which always buds; the pot of manna, the emblem and token of the living bread whereon his people feed; and the tablets of the law unbroken, in all their splendour, whereby the saints are justified. O brethren, if you want anything, if you want everything, go to God for it!

He will be to you as a little sanctuary; that is to say, he will bring to you everything which was inside that holy place. Though but one piece of furniture, yet that ark of the covenant did really contain in itself, and round about it, all that the heirs of God can ever need while in this wilderness. Let this be a joy to you this day. Do not rely upon the creature. "All men are liars," said David; and he was not far out. Broken cisterns abound on all sides; why waste your time on them? Get you straight away to your Creator, and find your all in him. If this day you are wrapped up in the things that are seen and temporal, may God deliver you therefrom, for all these things will melt as you hold them in your hand! The joys of this life are like the ice palace of Montreal, which is fair to look upon while the winter lasts, but it all dissolves as the spring comes on. All things round about us here are myths and dreams. This is the land of fancies and of shadows. Pray God to get you our of them, and that you may find in him your sanctuary, and indeed all that you want.

If at this time you have lost many of the comforts of this life, and seem bereaved of friends, then find in God your "little sanctuary." Go home to your chamber with holy faith and humble love, and take him to be your all in all, and he will be all in all to you. Pray after this fashion—"O Lord, so work in me by thy Spirit that I may find thee in all things, and all things in thee!"

The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and the tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and the real, in order to prepare us for that next stage, that better life, that higher place, where we shall really deal with eternal things only. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light; and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. The holy leads to the holiest: living upon God here leads to living with God hereafter. Oh, that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more and more into the inward and unseen! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle; and if you do know it, ask him to keep you to the life and walk of faith, and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling. For Christ's sake we ask it. Amen.

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Little Sins

Is it not a little one? - Genesis 19:20

THESE words we shall take for a *motto*, rather than a *text* in the ordinary acceptation of that term. I shall not this morning attempt to explain the connection. It was the utterance of Lot, when he pleaded for the salvation of Zoar; but I shall take it altogether away from the connection in which it stands, and make use of it in another fashion. The great Father of Lies hath multitudes of devices by which he seeks to ruin the souls of men. He uses false weights and false balances in order to deceive them. Sometimes he uses false times, declaring at one hour that it is too early to seek the Lord, and at another that it is now too late. And he uses false quantities, for he will declare that great sins are but little, and as for what he confesses to be little sins, he makes them afterwards to be nothing at all - mere peccadilloes, almost worthy of forgiveness in themselves. Many souls, I doubt not, have been caught in this trap, and being snared thereby, have been destroyed. They have ventured into sin where they thought the stream was shallow, and, fatally deceived by its depth, they have been swept away by the strength of the current to that cataract which is the ruin of such vast multitudes of the souls of men.

It shall be my business this morning to answer this temptation, and try to put a sword in your hands wherewith to resist the enemy when he shall come upon you with this cry; - "Is it not a little one?" and tempt you into sin because he leads you to imagine that there is but very little harm in it. "Is it not a little one?"

With regard then to this temptation of Satan concerning the littleness of sin, I would make this first answer, *the best of men have always been afraid of little sins*. The holy martyrs of God have been ready to endure

the most terrible torments rather than step so much as one inch aside from the road of truth and righteousness. Witness Daniel: when the king's decree went forth that no man should worship God for such and such a time, nevertheless he prayed three times a day as aforetime, with his window open towards Jerusalem, not fearing the king's commandment. Why could he not have retired into an inner chamber? Why might he not have ceased from vocal prayer, and have kept his petitions in his thought and in his heart? Would he not have been as well accepted as when he kneeled as usual, with the window open, so that all the world might see him? Ah! but Daniel judged that little as the offence might seem, he would rather suffer death at the jaws of the lion, than he would by that little offence provoke the anger of his God, or lead men to blaspheme his holy name, because his servant had been afraid to obey. Mark, too, the three holy children. They are asked by king Nebuchadnezzar simply to bend the knee and worship the golden image which he had set up. How slight the homage! One bend of the knee, and all is done. One prostration, and they may go their way safely. Not so. They will not worship the golden image which the king has set up. They can burn for God, but they cannot turn from God. They can suffer, but they will not sin; and though all the world might have excused them with the plea of expediency, if they had performed that one little act of idol worship, yet they will not do it, but would rather be exposed to the fury of a furnace, seven times heated, than commit an offence against the Most High. So also among the early Christians. You may have read of that noble warrior for Christ, Martin Arethusa, the bishop. He had led the people to pull down the idol temple in the city over which he presided; and when the apostate emperor Julian came to power, he commanded the people to rebuild the temple. They were bound to obey on pain of death. But Arethusa all the while lifted up his voice against the evil they were doing, until the wrath of the king fell upon him of a sudden. He was, however, offered his life on condition that he would subscribe so much as a single half penny towards the building of the temple; nay, less than that, if he would cast one grain of incense into the censer of the false god he might escape. But he would not do it. He feared God, and he would not do the most tiny little sin to save his life. They therefore exposed his body, and gave him up to the children to prick him with knives; then they smeared him with honey, and he was exposed to wasps and stung to

death. But all the while the grain of incense he would not give. He could give his body to wasps, and die in the most terrible pains, but he could not, he would not, he dared not sin against God. A noble example!

Now, brethren, if men have been able to perceive so much of sin in little transgressions, that they would bear inconceivable tortures rather than commit them, must there not be something dreadful after all in the thing of which Satan says, "Is it not a little one?" Men, with their eyes well opened by divine grace, have seen a whole hell slumbering in the most minute sin. Gifted with a microscopic power, their eyes have seen a world of iniquity hidden in a single act, or thought, or imagination of sin; and hence they have avoided it with horror, - have passed by and would have nought to do with it. But if the straight road to heaven be through flames, through floods, through death itself, they had sooner go through all these torments than turn one inch aside to tread an easy and an erroneous path. I say this should help us when Satan tempts us to commit little sins, - this should help us to the answer, "No, Satan, if God's people think it great, they know better than thou dost. Thou art a deceiver; they are true. I must shun all sin, even though thou sayest it is but little." It may be further answered, in reply to this temptation of Satan with regard to little sins, thus: - "Little sins lead to great ones. Satan! thou biddest me commit a small iniquity. I know thee whom thou art, thou unholy one! Thou desirest me to put in the thin end of the wedge. Thou knowest when that is once inserted thou canst drive it home, and split my soul in twain. Nay, stand back! Little though the temptation be, I dread thee, for thy little temptation leads to something greater, and thy small sin makes way for something worse."

We all see in nature how easily we may prove this, - *that little things lead to greater things*. If it be desired to bridge a gulf, it is often the custom to shoot an arrow, and cross it with a line almost as thin as film. That line passes over and a string is drawn after it, and after that some small rope, and after that a cable, and after that the swinging suspension bridge, that makes a way for thousands. So it is oft times with Satan. It is but a thought that he would shoot across the mind. That thought shall carry a desire; that desire a look; that look a touch; that touch a deed; that deed a habit; and that habit something worse, until the man, from little

beginnings, shall be swamped and drowned in iniquity. Little things, we say, lead on to something worse. And thus it has always been. A spark is dropped by some unwary traveller amidst the dry grass of the prairie. It is but a spark; "Is it not a little one?" A child's foot may tread it out; one drop from the rain-cloud may quench it. But ah! what sets the prairie in a blaze? what bids the rolling waves of flame drive before them all the beasts of the field? what is it that consumes the forest, locking it in its fiery arms? what is it that burns down the habitation of man, or robs the reaper of his harvest? It is this solitary spark, - the one spark - the breeder of the flames. So is it with little sins. Keep them back Oh Satan! They be sparks, but the very fire of hell is only a growth from them. The spark is the mother of conflagration, and though it be a little one I can have nought to do with it. Satan always begins with us as he did with Achan. He showed Achan, first of all, a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold. Achan looked at it: was it not a little thing to do, - to look? Achan touched it: was not that a little thing? How slight a sin - to touch the forbidden thing! He takes it, and carries it away to his tent, and - here is worse, - he hides it. And at length he must die for the awful crime. Oh! take heed of those small beginnings of sin. Beginnings of sin are like the letting out of water: first, there is an ooze; then a drip; then a slender stream; then a vein of water; and then, at last, a flood: and a rampart is swept before it, a continent is drowned. Take heed of small beginnings, for they lead to worse. There was never a man yet that came to the gallows but confessed that he began with small thefts; - the stealing of a book at school - the pilfering, afterwards, from his master's till leading to the joining of the gang of robbers, - the joining of the gang of robbers leading to worse crimes and, at last, the deed was done, the murder was committed, which brought him to an ignominious death. Little sins often act as burglars do; - burglars sometimes take with them a little child; they put the little child into a window that is too small for them to enter, and then he goes and opens the door to let in the thieves. So do little sins act. They are but little ones, but they creep in, and they open the door for great ones. A traitor inside the camp may be but a dwarf, and may go and open the gates of the city and let in a whole army. Dread sin; though it be never so small, dread it. You cannot see all that is in it. It is the mother of ten thousand mischiefs. The mother of mischief, they say, is as small as a midge's egg; and certainly, the smallest sin has ten thousand mischiefs

sleeping within its bowels.

St. Augustine gives a picture of how far men will go when they once begin to sin. There was a man who in argument declared that the devil made flies; "Well," said the man with whom he was arguing, "If the devil made flies, then it is but little more to say the devil made worms!" "Well" said the other, "I believe it." "Well" said the man, "If the devil made worms, how do you know but what he made small birds?" "Well," said the other, "It is likely he did!" "Well," resumed the man with whom he was arguing, "But if he made small birds, why may he not have made big ones? And if he made big birds, why may he not have made man? And if he made man, why may he have not made the world?" "You see," says St. Augustine, "By one admission, by once permitting the devil to be thought the creator of a fly, the man came to believe that the devil was the Creator." Just get one small error into your minds, get one small evil into your thoughts, commit one small act of sin in your life, permit these things to be dandled, and fondled, favoured, petted, and treated with respect, and you cannot tell whereunto they may grow. They are small in their infancy: they will be giants when they come to their full growth. Thou little knowest how near thy soul may be to destruction, when thou wantonly indulgest in the smallest act of sin!

Another argument may be used to respond to this temptation of the devil. He says, "Is it not a little one?" "Yes," we reply, "*But little sins multiply very fast.*" Like all other little things, there is a marvellous power of multiplication in little sins. As for murder, it is a masterly sin; but we do not often hear of it compared with the multitude of minor sins. The smaller the guilt, the more frequent it becomes. The elephant hath but a small progeny and multiplieth slowly. But the aphid hath thousands springing from it within an hour. It is even so with little sins: they multiply rapidly, beyond all thought - one becomes the mother of multitudes. And, mark this, little sins are as mighty for mischief in their multitude, as if they were greater sins. Have you ever read the story of the locusts when they sweep through a land? I was reading but yesterday of a missionary who called all the people together when he heard that the locusts were coming up the valley; and kindling huge fires, they hoped to drive off the living stream. The locusts were but small; but it seemed as

if the whole of the blazing fires were quenched - they marched over the dead and burning bodies of their comrades, and on they went, one living stream. Before them everything was green, like the garden of Eden; behind them everything was dry and desert. The vines were barked, the trees had lost every leaf, and stretched their naked arms to the sky, as if winter had rent away their foliage. There was not then so much as a single blade of grass, or sprig upon the tree, that even a goat might have eaten. The locusts had done all this, and left utter devastation in their track. Why this? The locust is but a little thing! Ay, but in their number how mighty they become! Dread then a little sin, for it will be sure to multiply. It is not one, it is many of these little sins. The plague of lice, or the plague of flies in Egypt, was perhaps the most terrible that the Egyptians ever felt. Take care of those little insect sins which may be your destruction. Surely if you are led to feel them, and to groan under them, and to pray to God for deliverance from them, it may be said that in your preservation is the finger of God. But let these sins alone, let them increase and multiply, and your misery is near at hand. Listen not then to the evil voice of Satan when he cries, "Is it not a little one?"

Years ago there was not a single thistle in the whole of Australia. Some Scotchman who very much admired thistles - rather more than I do - thought it was a pity that a great island like Australia should be without that marvellous and glorious symbol of his great nation. He, therefore, collected a packet of thistle-seeds, and sent it over to one of his friends in Australia. Well, when it was landed, the officers might have said, "Oh, let it in; 'is it not a little one?' Here is but a handful of thistle-down, oh, let it come in; it will be but sown in a garden - the Scotch will grow it in their gardens; they think it a fine flower, no doubt, - let them have it, it is but meant for their amusement." Ah, yes, it was but a little one; but now whole districts of country are covered with it, and it has become the farmer's pest and plague. It was a little one; but, all the worse for that, it multiplied and grew. If it had been a great evil, all men would have set to work to crush it. This little evil is not to be eradicated, and of that country it may be said till doomsday, - "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth." Happy would it have been if the ship that brought that seed had been wrecked. No boon is it to those of our countrymen there on the other side of the earth, but a vast curse. Take heed of the thistle-seed; little sins are

like it. Take care they are not admitted into your heart. Endeavour to shun them as soon as Satan presents them. Go, seek by the grace of God and his Holy Spirit to keep them away; for if not, these little sins will multiply so fast, that they will be your ruin and destruction.

Once again; little sins, after all, if you look at them in another aspect, are great. *A little sin involves a great principle.* Suppose that to-morrow the Austrians should send a body of men into Sardinia. If they only send a dozen it would be equal to a declaration of war. It may be said, "Is it not a little one? - a very small band of soldiers that we have sent?" "Yes," it would be replied, "but it is the principle of the thing. You cannot be allowed with impunity to send your soldiers across the border. War must be proclaimed, because you have violated the frontier, and invaded the land." It is not necessary to send a hundred thousand troops into a country to break a treaty. It is true the breach of the treaty may appear to be small; but if the slightest breach be allowed, the principle is gone. There is very much more in principle than men imagine. In a sin against God, it is not so much the thing itself as the principle of the thing at which God looks; and the principle of obedience is as much broken, as much dishonoured by a little sin as by a great sin. O man! the Creator hath made thee to obey him. Thou breakest his law; thou sayst it is but a little breach. Still it is a breach. The law is broken. Thou art disobedient. His wrath abideth on thee. The principle of obedience is compromised in thy smallest transgression, and, therefore, is it great. Besides, I don't know whether the things Christian men call *little sins* are not, after all, greater than what they call *great sins*, in some respects. If you have a friend, and he does you a displeasure for the sake of ten thousand pounds, you say, "Well, he had a very great temptation. It is true he has committed a great fault, but still he has wronged me to some purpose." But suppose your friend should vex and grieve your mind for the sake of a farthing; what would you think of that? "This is wanton," you would say. "This man has done it out of sheer malevolence toward me." Now, if Adam had been denied by his Maker the whole of Paradise, and had been put into a stony desert, I do not think that, had he taken all Paradise to himself, there would have been more sin in that act, than when placed in the midst of the garden, he simply stole one fruit from the forbidden tree. The transgression involved a great principle, because he did it wantonly.

He had so little to gain, he had so much to lose when he dishonored God. It has been said, that to sin without temptation is to sin like the devil, for the devil was not tempted when he sinned; and to sin with but little temptation is to sin like the devil. When there is great temptation offered, I do not say there is any excuse, but when there is none, where the deed is but little, bringing but little pleasure, and involving but a small consequence, there is a wantonness about the sin which makes it greater in moral obliquity, than many other iniquities that men commit. Ay, you cry out against a great felon, when he is discovered; see of how much he robbed men; see how he wronged the widow and robbed the fatherless! I know it. God forbid that I should make any excuse for him; but that man had a name to maintain. He had thousands of temptations before him to get immensely rich. He thought he never should be discovered. He had a family to keep. He had got involved in expensive habits, and there are many things to be said for his extenuation. But you, if you indulge in some slight sin which brings you no pleasure, which involves no important interests, by which you have nothing to get, I say you sin wantonly. You have committed an act which has in it the very virus and bitterness of wilful obstinate, designing disobedience, because there is not even the extenuation, or excuse, or apology, that you should gain something thereby. Little sins are, after all, tremendous sins, viewed in the light of God's law. Looked upon as involving a breach of that inviolable standard of right, and considered as having been committed wantonly, I say they are great, and I know not that those sins men conceive to be gross and great, are greater and grosser in reality than these.

Thus I have given you several arguments with which to answer that temptation, "Is it not a little one?"

Now I am about to speak to the child of God only, and I say to him, "Brother if Satan tempts thee to say, 'Is it not a little one?'" reply to him, "Ah, Satan but little though it be, it may mar my fellowship with Christ. Sin cannot destroy but it will annoy; it cannot ruin my soul, but it will soon ruin my peace. Thou sayest it is a little one, Satan, but my Saviour had to die for it, or otherwise I should have been shut out from heaven. 'That little one' may be like a little thorn in my flesh, to prick my heart

and wound my soul. I cannot, I dare not indulge in this little sin, for I have been greatly forgiven, and I must greatly love. A little sin in others would be a great sin for me - ' How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.'"

Is it a little one, Satan? But a little stone in the shoe will make a traveller limp. A little thorn may breed a fester. A little cloud may hide the sun. A cloud of the size of a man's hand may bring a deluge of rain. Avaunt Satan! I can have nought to do with thee; for since I know that Jesus bled for little sins, I cannot wound his heart by indulging in them afresh. A little sin, Satan! Hath not my Master said, "Take us the foxes, *the little* foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Lo! these little things do mischief to my tender heart. These little sins burrow in my soul, and soon make it to become a very den and hole of the wild beasts that Jesus hates, soon drive him away from my spirit so that he will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with me. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with his people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." There are very many Christians in the world that do not see their Saviour's face by the month together, and seem to be quite content without his company. I understand you not, nor do I wish to know how it is, that you can reconcile your souls to the absence of your Lord. A loving wife, without her husband for months and years, seems to me to be sorely tried. Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. We know that in our childhood it was always so, and we looked forward to our return home with joy. And art thou a child of God, yet happy without seeing thy Father's face? What! thou the spouse of Christ, and yet content without his company! Surely, surely, surely, thou hast fallen into a sad state. Thou must have gone astray, if such be thy experience, for the true chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when he has left her. Ask, then, the question, what has driven Christ from you? He hides his face behind the wall of your sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops, the rocks are made of grains; and ah! surely the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins; and the rock which is

to wreck thy barque, may have been made by daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins. Therefore, take heed thereunto; for if thou wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed, I pray thee, of the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.

And now, leaving the child of God thus awhile, I turn myself to address others of you who have some thought with regard to your souls, but who could not yet be ranked among those that fear God with a true heart. To you, I know, Satan often offers this temptation - "Is it not a little one?" May God help you to answer him whenever he thus attacks you. "Is it not a little one?" And so, young man, the devil has tempted thee to commit the first petty theft. "Is it not a little one?" And so he has bidden thee, young man, for the first time in thy life to spend the day of rest in foolish pleasure. It was but a little one, he said, and thou hast taken him at his word, and thou hast committed it. It was but a little one, and so you have told a lie. It was but a little one, and you have gone into the assembly of the frivolous and mixed in the society of scorners. It was but a little one, there could not be much hurt in it, it could not do much mischief to your soul. Ah! stop awhile. Dost thou know that a little sin, if wantonly indulged, will prevent thy salvation? "The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Christ will reveal salvation from all his sins to the man who hates all his sins; but if thou keepest one sin to thyself, thou shalt never have mercy at his hands. If thou wilt forsake all thy ways, and turn with full purpose of heart to Christ, the biggest sin thou hast ever committed shall not destroy thy soul; but if a little sin be harboured, thy prayers will be unheard, thy sighs disregarded, and thy earnest cries shall return into thy bosom without a blessing. You have been in prayer lately, you have been seeking Christ, you have been praying with all your might that God would meet with you. Now months have rolled over your head, you are not yet saved, not yet have you received the comfortable assurance of your pardon. Young man, is it not likely that some little known sin is still harboured in your heart? Mark, then, God will never be at one with thee till thou and thy sins are twain. Part with thy sins, or else part with all hope, though thou hide but so much as a grain of sin back from God. He will not, he cannot have any

mercy on thee. Come to him just as thou art, but renounce thy sins. Ask him to set thee free from every lust, from every false way, from every evil thing, or else, mark thee, thou shalt never find grace and favour at his hands. The greatest sin in the world, repented of, shall be forgiven, but the least unrepented sin shall sink thy soul lower than the lowest hell. Mark then, again, sinner, thou who indulgest in little sins sometimes. These little sins show that thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Rowland Hill tells a curious tale of one of his hearers who sometimes visited the theatre. He was a member of the church. So going to see him, he said, I understand Mr. So-and-so, you are very fond of frequenting the theatre. No, sir, he said, that's false. I go now and then just for a great treat, still I don't go because I like it; it is not a habit of mine. Well, said Rowland Hill, suppose some one should say to me, Mr. Hill, I understand you eat carrion, and I should say, no, no, I don't eat carrion. It is true, I now and then have a piece of stinking carrion for a great treat. Why, he would say, you have convicted yourself, it shows that you like it better than most people, because you save it up for a special treat. Other men only take it as common daily food, but you keep it by way of a treat. It shows the deceitfulness of your heart, and manifests that you still love the ways and wages of sin.

Ah, my friends, those men that say little sins have no vice in them whatever, they do but give indications of their own character; they show which way the stream runs. A straw may let you know which way the wind blows, or even a floating feather; and so may some little sin be an indication of the prevailing tendency of the heart. My hearer, if thou lovest sin, though it be but a little one, thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Thou art still a stranger to divine grace. The wrath of God abideth on thee. Thou art a lost soul unless God change thy heart.

And yet, another remark here. Sinner, thou sayest it is but a little one. But dost thou know that God will damn thee for thy little sins? Look angry now, and say the minister is harsh. But wilt thou look angry at thy God in the day when he shalt condemn thee for ever? If there were a good man in a prison to-day and you did not go to see him, would you think that a great sin? Certainly not, you say, I should not think of doing such a thing. If you saw a man hungry and you did not feed him, would you think that

a great sin? No, you say, I should not. Nevertheless, these are the very things for which men are sent to hell. What said the Judge? "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Forasmuch as ye have not done this unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have not done it unto me." Now, if these things, which we only consider to be little sins, actually send myriads to hell, ought we not to stop and tremble ere we talk lightly of sin, since little sins may be our eternal destroyers. Ah, man, the pit of hell is digged for little sins. An eternity of woe is prepared for what men call little sins. It is not alone the murderer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, that shall be sent to hell. The wicked, it is true, shall be sent there, but the little sinner with all the nations that forget God shall have his portion there also. Tremble, therefore, on account of little sins.

When I was a little lad, I one day read at family prayer the chapter in the Revelations concerning the "bottomless pit." Stopping in the midst of it, I said to my grandfather, "Grandfather, what does this mean - 'the bottomless pit?'" He said, "Go on child, go on." So I read that chapter, but I took great care to read it the next morning also. Stopping again I said, "Bottomless pit, what does this mean?" "Go on," he said, "Go on." Well it came the next morning, and so on for a fortnight; there was nothing to be read by me of a morning but this same chapter, for explained it should be if I read it a month. And I can remember the horror of my mind when he told me what the idea was. There is a deep pit, and the soul is falling down, - oh how fast it is falling! There! the last ray of light at the top has disappeared, and it falls on - on - on, and so it goes on falling - on - on - on - for a thousand years! "Is it not getting near the bottom yet? won't it stop?" No, no - the cry is, on - on - on, "I have been falling a million years, is it not near the bottom yet?" No, you are no nearer the bottom yet: it is the "bottomless pit;" it is on - on - on, and so the soul goes on falling, perpetually, into a deeper depth still, falling for ever into the "bottomless pit" - on - on - on, into the pit that has no bottom! Woe without termination, without hope of it's coming to a conclusion. The same dreadful idea is contained in those words, "The wrath to come." Mark, hell is always "the wrath to come." If a man has been in hell a thousand years, it is still "to come." As to what you have suffered in the past it is as nothing, in the dread account, for still the wrath is "to come." And when

the world has grown grey with age, and the fires of the sun are quenched in darkness, it is still "the wrath to come." And when other worlds have sprung up, and have turned into their palsied age, it is still "the wrath to come." And when your soul, burnt through and through with anguish, sighs at last to be annihilated, even then this awful thunder shall be heard, "the wrath to come - to come - to come." Oh, what an idea! I know not how to utter it! And yet for little sins, remember you incur "the wrath to come." Oh, if I am to be damned, I would be damned for something; but to be delivered up to the executioner and sent into "the wrath to come" for little sins which do not even make me famous as a rebel, this is to be damned indeed. Oh that ye would arise, that ye would flee from the wrath to come, that ye would forsake the little sins, and fly to the great cross of Christ to have little sins blotted out, and little offences washed away. For oh, - again I warn you, - if ye die with little sins unforgiven, with little sins unrepented of, there shall be no little hell; the great wrath of the great king is ever to come, in a pit without a bottom, in a hell the fire of which never shall be quenched, and the worm of which ne'er shall die. Oh, "the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" It is enough to make one's heart ache to think of it. God help you to flee from it. May you escape from it now, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Living, Loving, Lasting Union

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones - Ephesians 5:30

Before the funeral, at Norwood Cemetery, of the late Mr. William Olney,

senior deacon of the church at the metropolitan Tabernacle, a service was held in the Tabernacle. The building was crowded with sympathizing friends, who came to testify the affection they bore to the beloved deacon who had been so suddenly called from their midst. The senior Pastor presided.

The hymn, "They are gathering homeward one by one," was sung, and Pastor James A. Spurgeon offered prayer. The hymn "why do we mourn departing friends?" followed, and C.H. Spurgeon then read and expounded 1 Corinthians xv. The Rev. Burman Cassin, Rector of St. George's. Southwark, briefly engaged in prayer, and the assembly sang the thirty-fourth Psalm, in the version beginning—

"Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ."

The hymn commencing, "For ever with the Lord!" was sung, and a concluding prayer was offered by Mr. James Spurgeon.

Pastor C.H. Spurgeon then rose, and said:—As I am in a very unfit condition to speak to you this morning, I shall try for once to keep away from my subject; for if I dwell upon it; it will master me, and I shall not be able to speak to you at all. I am trying to suppress my feelings, that I may be able to find words.

I am going to speak about the favorite expression of my brother William Olney, which he frequently used in prayer. I wonder whether you will agree with me as to what it was. As my memory serves me, I have heard him a score of times, at least, use the following sentence when he drew very near to the Lord his God in prayer. He said, "Lord Jesus, we are one with thee. We feel that we have a living, loving, lasting union with thee." I think that you must remember that gem of his. Those three words have stuck by me; and ever since he has gone, I have found myself repeating them to myself quite involuntarily—"a living, loving, lasting union." He owed everything to that. He consciously enjoyed a living, loving, lasting

union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you and I have that, we have all that we want for time and for eternity. If we have it not, we have nothing. Take any one of us by himself alone; he is lost, ruined, and undone. Take that same person linked with Christ by a living, loving, lasting union, and he is a saint—saved, sanctified, and sure to be glorified.

I have taken for my text the words which occur in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the thirtieth verse. Concerning our Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul says, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

"We", that is his believing people, "are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones." He is our Head, and we are the members of the body, and so we are joined to him by a living, loving, lasting union.

I am not going beyond those three words; they shall be my three points, but at the same time I will keep to my text.

I. BETWEEN THE BELIEVER AND CHRIST THERE IS A LIVING UNION. There was just that between my brother William Olney and his Lord. A living union! When he joined the church of Christ, he did not offer it the distinguished honour of his name, and then slip away, and give his life to politics, or to business, or to amusement; but when the church has his name on its roll, it receive the whole of the man, body, soul, and spirit; and this because there was life in him.

His union to Christ was not nominal, but actual. He was not merely covered with the Christian name, but he had the Christian spirit and the Christian life within him. Yes, his union to Christ was a living union; not merely that of reliance, by which the stone leans upon the foundation; though he had that, for never man, understood more clearly the doctrine of faith in Christ. Christ was his only trust and confidence, and he came to him as the stones come home to the foundation stone. But it was a living union in his case, for the fruits of life were produced. It was the union of the branch to the stem in that blessed vine which Christ himself, even as he says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

Now what does this living union to Christ mean?

It means, first of all, Christ's life laying hold of us. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." He is full of life, and when he takes hold of us, and raises our life into his, there is truly a living union between him and us.

But, further, this living union is Christ's life in us. It is given to him, not only to take us in our feebleness; but it is his divine prerogative to impart life to us, and to call dead men, and to make them live. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." This is how we come to have life in connection with him. His life flows into us, as out of the tree into the branches: so that we can truly say, with the apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith to the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The living union begins with our Lord's life, and then that life flows into us, and we begin to live also.

It was so with our friend, whom we so sadly miss from our midst to-day. A new life, a life of holiness, a life of service, a life of communion with God, began in him, by oneness with Christ, and it was continued in him by the same means. There was a living union: the life of Christ had begotten life in him, and this was seen continually in the fruit that he bore. I should not know, if I had to describe my departed brother, which word to associate most fully with him, "life" or "love." He was as full of life as ever he could be. He used to amaze me by his energy—I mean not merely physical or even mental energy, but his never-ceasing, overflowing spiritual energy. If any of us were dull, he never was; and he would not let us be dull for long. He would often tell us, when we were not well, that he thought we looked amazingly well, and he would try to cheer us up somehow or other, for he himself never seemed to lack for life, or fire, or force. I might almost say that, up to the last moment, he was energetic; he died full of life. He was intense in the very highest degree until struck down; and he was thus intense, not because of mere mental activity, but because of the burning zeal for God that was in his soul, and this zeal was the result of his living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of this life of Christ which was in him, he bore suffering without flinching. If there was anything that could equal the industry of his work; it was the heroism of his patience. He has often amazed us by his fortitude. We have admired the way in which he has triumphed in Christ in spite of his sufferings; but we have felt that we could scarcely hope to imitate him to the letter. He went as far in the way of bearing pain with patience as he went in the direction of serving Christ with enthusiasm; and this is saying a very great deal for any man. Therefore I do not say it for the man; but in praise of the grace of God which helped him, whether he was active or passive, still to be buoyant and bright because of the living union which subsisted between him and Christ. A verse of the Psalms we have just sung, which was a great favorite of his, truly describes the resolution of his life:—

"Of his deliverance I will boast,
Till all that are distress'd,
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest."

Christ dwelling in him in fulness could both work and suffer. The fact that Christ lives in the believer is as real as that he once lived on earth in a human body. He came then with a double-handed blessing. He came both to do his Father's will and to bear the burden of the souls of men. He was active in doing good; and when the appointed time came, he as willingly bore the burden of the sins of men, and suffered to the death without complaint. In like manner Christ lived in our dear friend, making him strong both to do and to suffer. God grant also to you and to me to have such a living union to Christ!

Do you know anything of this experience, my dear friends? Many of you do; it is your life to be one with Christ. But to some of you I must be talking an unmeaning jargon. O souls, if the life of Christ is not in you, you are dead while you live, and you will die for ever when you die! Unless you get linked to Christ, you will be driven from the presence of God, and away from all that makes true life and joy. Lay hold on Christ, and you will "lay hold on eternal life"; for he is "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us," and living contact with

him is our only hope either for the present or for the future. If you are vitally joined to Christ, it is well with your soul; but if you are divided from Immanuel, and have no living union to Christ, there is no eternal life for you. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

"Living or dying, Lord,
I ask but to be thine,
My life in thee, thy life in me,
Makes heaven for ever mine."

II. The next word to "living", in my dear brother's frequent use, was "loving." BETWEEN THE TRUE BELIEVER AND CHRIST THERE IS A LOVING UNION. And oh, the union of a soul to Christ is made so sweet because it is as loving as it is living! My brother William Olney truly loved. He seemed to have a love to everybody. He never was so pleased as when he was pleasing other people; and he would go a long way, sometimes, to try and please people who would not be pleased. But still, his great ambition in life was to love others, and to make others love Christ. Love ruled supreme in his actions. His union to Christ was not cold, and formal, stiff and narrow; he had a union to Christ that was warm, human, intense, fervent, loving. There was fire in that man, and the fire was the ardent flame of great affection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to have a talk about this loving union to Christ on some other occasion, when I could trust myself more than I can do now at this very solemn service.* Still, there are a few things that may be said upon this subject even now.

Christ's love to us begins this loving union. Its source is not in ourselves; but in love eternal, love immeasurable, love which caused itself, free-grace love, love to the unworthy, love to enemies, love to those who had no life, no strength, and no hope apart from him. Christ loved us so that he deigned to join himself to us in eternal union. The great Artesian well from which we drink, and which has tapped the divine fountains, is the love of Christ. This is where all our hope, and our joy, and our love begin.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." In connection with this same truth of union with Christ, and fruitbearing as the result of it, our Lord himself says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." When this love thus made choice of us, he entered into covenant with his Father concerning his people; and before we were born he identified himself with us, so that in the purpose of God from all eternity we were accepted in him. But union with us meant union with our sins; and though the Son of God could never be overcome of evil, or become a sharer in human guilt, yet by the blessed mystery of his unity with his people, he could take their sin upon himself, and bear it in his own body on the tree. Thus, as there is no past or future to the eyes of him before whom all events are spread out in one eternal "now", the Son of God was able to atone for the iniquities of those who, through all the ages, would be truly joined to him. His love that chose us did not shrink back from the awful payment which our debt rendered necessary: it was stronger than death, and mightier than the grave. Many waters could not quench it; many floods could not drown it; nor will it cease to exert its blessed influence over us until it shall bring us home to the mansions above; and not even then, for Christ's love is everlasting. By this loving union Christ brings us safely through all the temptations of life; the ransomed spirits of such as are joined to him are taken to be with Christ the instant they are absent from the body; and at last out of the tomb that same love shall call the body, and on the glad day of resurrection it shall be clearly seen how wonderful is the love which made our Lord so one with us. This, then, is the way in which we came to a loving union with Christ; he began to love us with a love that had no beginning, which has no measure, and which shall know no change nor end, and therefore he united himself to us for ever. Well might Kent praise the name of the Lord for the wonders wrought by such love as this as he sang:—

"Heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus,
Long ere time its race begun;
To his name eternal praises!
Oh! What wonders love hath done!
One with Jesus
By eternal union one."

Our love to Christ completes this loving union. We first learn of his love to us, and then as the result of that, we are brought to love him. Ours is a poor little love, not worthy of his acceptance; but, such as it is, we give it all to him; and he will not refuse it, or despise it. Oh, that we all might be joined to Christ in love now! I am sure that my brother, who has gone from us, knew this union more than most of us. When we once got upon this glorious theme in private conversation, or when he touched upon it himself in his own public prayers, how his spirit seemed to burn and glow! He was always at home when speaking of the love of Christ, or of the love of Christ's people to their Lord. He could truly say, as I trust many of us will truly say now,—

"I give my heart to thee,
O Jesus, most desired!
And heart for heart the gift shall be,
For thou my soul hast fired:
Thou hearts alone would'st move,
Thou only hearts dost love;
I would love thee as thou lov'st me,
O Jesus most desired!"

In this loving union, Christ's love to us and our love to Christ flow in the same channel. Together they make a stream of love of a glorious kind. We love one another for Christ's sake; we love sinners for Christ's sake. We love the truth as Christ loves the truth. We love the Father in the same manner that Christ loves the Father, though not to the same degree. There is, in fact, but one love in the Head and in all the members. What the Head loves all the body loves. As one man we go with Christ. Being united to him, his desires and longings become our desires and longings too; we grow into his likeness, and "are changes into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Do you know anything about loving union to Christ? I feel sure that the great mass of those assembled here both know it and rejoice in it. Oh, to know it more! Oh, that his love were shed abroad more richly in our hearts! Now, by the Holy Ghost that is given to us, may we experience, not only the tiny rivulets of love that some of us have had in the past days,

but may we get to the torrents of love, may we be swept away by it, till, like a mighty ocean, it covers all our nature, and becomes to us a very heaven begun below!

III. Our third part is that, BETWEEN THE TRUE BELIEVERS AND CHRIST THERE IS A LASTING UNION. The whole phrase which our dear departed friend used so frequently was "living, loving, lasting union." O friends, what a sad thing it would be for anyone to have only a temporary union with Christ! If I am speaking to any who were members of this church years ago, but who are not even professors now—if I am addressing some who seemed to be earnest Christians once, but who have gone back from following Christ—I would earnestly remind you that no union with Christ is living and loving unless it is also lasting.

The man who is truly united to Christ does not become apostate. It is all in vain to seem to put on Christ for a time, and then, after a little while, to put him off again. That is the religion of the hypocrite, or of the merely temporary professor. But not so was it with our dear brother who is sleeping yonder. When he joined the church—I think that it is rather more than fifty-four years ago—he gave himself to the Lord, and he has been kept and sustained and upheld until now. Why, there are some of you who have been members of four or five denominations during that time! You have changed your views with the varying seasons, and have altered oftener than we care to remember, while here was he, keeping steadfast and immovable all the time, remaining ever a member of the same church, and going on steadily with his work. It seems to me that some of you build for a year, and pull down, then build again, and pull down once more. Why, you are not building at all unless your building stands; and you are not truly in union with Christ unless the union is lasting union; and it will not be unless it is a living union! Your profession of Christ will be a lie, and will help to sink you lower than the lowest hell unless you endure to the end. Make sure work with what you do in religion. Do not play at being a Christian. If you are converted, be converted with your whole heart. If you have faith in Christ, have vital faith, or do not pretend to have any. Be real; be true to the core. Be satisfied with nothing short of that union which the Spirit of God works in the hearts of those who, without reserve, yield to his power; else that

which you seem to have will not be a lasting thing with you, and at the end you will be utterly cast off.

Now think of the joy of this fact. Our union with Christ is not only lasting, it is everlasting. With great boldness we utter the challenge. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" It is true that we hold Christ, and that we will hold him tighter still; but the greater mercy is that he holds us, and he will never let us go. Does he not say concerning his sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"? And will he not be true to his word? You may take Christ from our hand, but you cannot take us from Christ's hand; he holdeth us fast; he is married to us, and he himself declares, "The Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." He will have no divorce between our soul and himself. This living, loving, lasting union, which we have already found to be such a glorious reality, is to last for ever and ever, blessed be the name of the Lord!

I want you, beloved friends, to draw much comfort from this truth, and then I will have done. Christ will not lose his members. My head would not willingly lose a little finger, and Christ our Head will not lose one of us if "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Think you that Christ can be mutilated? Think you that he will lose even the least joint of the least finger? Never shall that be true. The word written of his body of flesh is equally true concerning his mystical body, which is his church. "A bone of him shall not be broken." Not even the smallest and most insignificant believer in Christ shall be lost, else would his body be incomplete. He is a perfect Christ, and you that are members of his body shall never be cut away from his by the wounds of Satan's sword, the surgery of infidelity, or any earthly accident or diabolical temptation. If you are one with him, you will be one with him for ever, for the union between you and your Lord is an eternal union, and to break it would be to disfigure and mutilate the Christ of God.

Furthermore, in that we are one with Christ, he will raise our bodies. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" and, though I do not insist upon it, this verse has to me a kind of ring about it, which

would lead us to believe that if we are members of his body, he will taken even our bodies to be members of himself. Christ will not leave our brother in the grave. His body will see corruption; but the tomb shall only be like a refining pot, to separate the precious from the vile. When Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, he said, "There shall not a hoof be left behind;" and when that One who is greater than Moses shall bring forth his people from their graves, there shall not a bone or a piece of a bone of his redeemed be left in the region of death. When the angel brought Peter out of prison, he told him to put his shoes on. "Bind on thy sandals," was the angelic direction. He would not leave even an old pair of slippers in the prison when he brought Peter out. The deliverance was to be absolutely complete. Thus, too, when Christ shall bid us put on our garments which he shall prepare for us in the resurrection, no integral part of the man shall be left behind. O grave, thou must give up thy prey! O death, thou must yield up thy spoils! Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore they as well as our souls must be set free from the power of the last enemy. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words," whether it be concerning your own death, or the death of this dear friend, on whose coffin we look just now.

Beloved, we are parting with our brother, William Olney, for a while; but we shall meet again. We are so one with each other in truth and experience, that we cannot be separated. He was a member of Christ's body, and of his flesh, and of his bones; so am I; and so are you, my fellow-believer. The members of one body must be one. And we shall meet our departed friend again before long. Perhaps another week, some of us may see his face. I wonder what he has been doing already in that land of light and liberty. Mr. Fullerton writes me, saying that he would not wonder if he spent last Sunday telling the spirits above how he had spent the Sunday previous, and making them all wonder at what the grace of God had done among poor sinners down here on earth. He could tell the tale of Haddon Hall, and of this Tabernacle, recounting the story of what the Lord has done in saving men and women; and I do not think the angels and the redeemed could be better occupied than in hearing what the Lord has been doing in his new creation here below. Very probably the conjecture is right, for the grace of God reaches us "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places

might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." When they hear the story yonder, they will take down their harps, and raise new hallelujahs to God, and to the Lamb. Think not that I talk strangely. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, and they will yet more rejoice when one messenger. Newly come from the midst to God's salvation—work, shall tell the, of scores that have been brought to the Saviour's feet.

Beloved friends, eternity is ours; and a joyous eternity it will be to those who are one with Jesus Christ, in "living, loving, lasting union." We shall ascend to "the realms of the blest" soon. There is a ladder waiting for us to climb; and when we mount it, we shall have no reason to mourn. It is but for a little time that we shall have to keep the night-watches. The watchman of the night doth cry, "The morning cometh." The night of weeping will soon be past. "Until the day beaks, and the shadows flee away," be of good courage. Patiently hope, "and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." He will surely come again; and even the tears of to-day shall be recompensed to you abundantly.

I pray that every blessing may rest upon every mourner this day. Indeed, dear friends, while we mourn with you, we cannot but congratulate you that you have had such a husband, such a father, such a brother, as our friend who is now taken home. I will not say that you have lost him, for that would not be true. God lent him to you for a long time, and now he has taken him back. I think that it is about fifteen years ago, since, in the ordinary course of things, he might have been expected to have died; at least, so it seemed at the time he was so sick; yet with many tears and intercessions we prayed him back, and God has given him something like Hezekiah's extra portion of life. We ought to be very thankful for that. In those fifteen years, how much has he done? How much has God done by him for us all! Wherefore we will not sorrow so as to complain, but we will sorrow only so as to submit. The Lord be with you evermore! Amen.

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Lo I Come: Application

Then said I, Lo, I come. - Psalm 40:7

To my great sorrow, last Sunday night I was unable to preach. I had prepared a sermon upon this text, with much hope of its usefulness; for I intended it to be a supplement to the morning sermon, which was a doctrinal exposition. The evening sermon was intended to be practical, and to commend the whole subject to the attention of enquiring sinners. I came here feeling quite fit to preach, when an overpowering nervousness oppressed me, and I lost all self-control, and left the pulpit in anguish. I come hither this morning with the same subject. I have been turning it over, and wondering why it was so. Peradventure, this sermon was not to be preached on that occasion, because God would teach the preacher more of his own feebleness, and cast him more fully upon the divine strength. That has certainly been the effect upon my own heart. Perhaps, also, there are some here this morning who were not here last Lord's-day evening, whom God intends to bless by the sermon. The people were not here, peradventure, for whom the eternal decree of God had designed the message, and they may be here now. You that are fresh to this place, should consider the strange circumstance, which never happened to me before in the forty years of my ministry; and you may be led to enquire whether my bow was then unstrung that the arrow might find its ordained target in your heart. The two sermons will now go forth together from the press; and perhaps, going together, they may prove like two hands of love wherewith to embrace lost souls, and draw them to the Savior, who herein saith, Lo, I come." God grant it may be so!

The times when our Lord says, "Lo, I come," have all a family likeness. There are certain crystals, which assume a regular shape, and if you break them, each fragment will show the same conformation; if you were to dash them to shivers, every particle of the crystal would be still of the same form. Now the goings forth of Christ which were of old, and his coming at Calvary, and that great advent when he shall come a second

time to judge the earth in righteousness, all these have a likeness the one to the other. But there is a coming of what I may call a lesser sort, when Jesus cries "Lo, I come" to each individual sinner, and brings a revelation of pardon and salvation, and this has about it much which is similar to the great ones. My one desire this morning is to set forth the Lord Jesus as saying to you, as once he did to me, "Lo, I come." Still he cries to the weak, destitute, forlorn, hopeless sinner, "Lo, I come." I shall talk about that coming, and hope that you will experience it now, and thus be able to follow me in what I say. I speak to the unconverted mainly; but while I do so I shall hope to be refreshing the grateful memories of those already saved; but this will all depend upon the working of the Spirit of God. To him, then, lift up your hearts in prayer.

I. I will commence with this observation: THE LORD CHRIST HAS TIMES OF HIS FIRST COMINGS TO MEN; "Then said I, Lo, I come."

What are these times? Mayhap some here present have reached this season, and this very day is the time of blessing when the text shall be fulfilled: "Then said I, Lo, I come." Go with me to the first record in the volume of the Book, when it was said that he should come. You will find it in the early chapters of Genesis.

Jesus said, "Lo, I come" when man's probation was a failure. Man in the Garden of Eden had every advantage for obedience and life. He had a perfect nature, created without bias towards evil, and he was surrounded with every inducement to continue loyal to his Maker. He was placed under no burdensome law. The precept was simple and plain: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Only one tree was reserved: all the rest were given up to be freely enjoyed. In a very short time—some think it was on the first day, but that we do not know—our mother Eve ate of the fruit, and father Adam followed her, and thus human probation ended in total failure. They were weighed in the balances, and found wanting: "Adam being in honor continued not." At that point we read in the volume of the Book that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Then our Redeemer said, "Lo, I come." Harken to me,

my friend: you also have had your probation, as you have thought it to be. You quitted your father's roof with every hope, your mother judged you to be of a most amiable character, and your friends expected to see in you one whose life would honor the family. You thought so yourself. Your probation has reversed that hope: you have turned out far other than you should have been; and looking back upon the whole of your life to this moment, you ought to be ashamed. It has been a terrible breaking down for you, and for all who know you; and you are sitting in this place feeling, "Yes, it is so; the tests have proved me to be as a broken reed. I am under condemnation by reason of my transgressions against God." How rejoiced I am to tell you that, at such a time when you are conscious that you are a dead failure, Jesus says, "Lo, I come!" If you had not been a failure you would not have wanted him, and he never comes as a superfluity; but now in your complete break-down you must have him or perish, and in infinite pity he cries, "Lo, I come." Is not this good news for you? Believe it and live.

That also was a time when man's clever dealings with the devil had turned out a great failure. The serpent came and said, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." How craftily he put it! How cunningly he insinuated that God was jealous of what man might become, and was keeping him back from a nobler destiny! He even dared to say, "Ye shall not surely die," thus giving the Lord the lie direct. He seemed to say—His threat is a mere bugbear, a thing to scare you from a great advance in knowledge and position. "Ye shall not surely die." Eve, in her supposed wisdom, was not able to cope with the serpent's subtlety. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." The devil had played his cards so well that man was left bankrupt of virtue, bankrupt of happiness, bankrupt of hope. Then, in the volume of the Book, it was written, "I said, Lo, I come." Yes, in the hour when hellish falsehood had robbed man of everything. No man hath yet dealt with the devil without being a loser. The arch-deceiver promises very fairly; but he lies from beginning to end. I know he promised you pleasure unbounded, and liberty unrestrained. Now, the pleasure is burnt

out, and the ashes of that which once blazed and crackled, are terrible to look upon. As for liberty, where is it? You have become the bond-slave of sin. You were to enjoy life, and lo, you are plunged in death! It may be, there are in this house persons who bear in their bodies the marks, not of the Lord Jesus, but of the devil's temptations. He has made you so to sin that your bones are filled with the sins of your youth; and you know it. He needs a long spoon who eats out of the same dish as the devil, and your spoon has not been long enough. Sin has overreached and betrayed you; and you stand trembling before God as the result of having listened to the falsehoods of hell, and having rejected the commands of heaven. Supposing such a person to be present—and I feel sure he is—I pray that he may hear my text as from the Lord Jesus himself. "Then said I, Lo, I come." The devil has trodden you down, but Jesus comes to raise you up. Your paradise is lost, and by him it is to be restored. Jesus has come to give repentance and remission of sins. That crafty head which deceived you, the Lord Jesus has broken; he came for this purpose. If you had not been betrayed, you would not have needed a deliverer; but your misery has made room for his mercy. Not while Adam is perfect in paradise is there any news of the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head; but after the serpent has done his deceitful work, and has ruined the race, then we hear that ancient gospel of God, and see the sole hope of fallen man. Here is good cheer for you who look with shame upon your foolish yielding to Satan's deceits. You are caught as silly birds in a snare; you have been as foolish as the fish of the sea which are taken in a net; but when you are captives, Christ comes to be your Liberator, and God commends his love towards you in that while you are yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly.

Further than this, when we find the first promise of our Lord's coming, "in the volume of the Book," we find that man's covering was a failure. The guilty pair had gathered the leaves of the fig-tree, and had made themselves aprons, for they know that they were naked. This was the first fruit of that boasted tree of knowledge, and it is the principal one to this day. Their scant coverlet contented them for a little while; but when the voice of the Lord God was heard in the garden they confessed that their aprons were good for nothing; for Adam owned that he was afraid because he was naked, and that therefore he had hidden himself in the

thick groves of the garden. It is easy to make a covering which pleases us for a season; but self-righteousness, presumption, pretended infidelity, and fancied natural excellence—all those things are like green fig-leaves, which shrivel up before long, lose their freshness, and are rather an exposure than a covering. It may be that my hearer has found his imaginary virtues failing him. It was when our first parents knew that they were naked that the Savior said, "Lo, I come." My downcast hearer, if you are no longer in your own esteem as good as you used to be; if you can no longer hide the fact that you have broken God's law, and deserve his wrath; if you no longer believe the devil's lie that you shall suffer no penalty, but may even be the better for sin, then the Lord the Savior says to you, "Lo, I come." To you, O naked sinner, shivering in your own shame, blushing scarlet with conviction—to you he comes. When you have nothing left of your own, he comes to be your robe of righteousness, wherein you may stand accepted with God.

That first news of the coming Champion came at a time when all man's pleas were failures. Adam had thrown the blame on Eve—"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Eve had also thrown the blame on the serpent; but the Lord God had silenced all such excuses, and driven them from their refuges. He had made them feel their guilt, and had pronounced upon them the inevitable sentence; and then it was that he spake of the "Seed of the woman." Here was man's first, and last, and best hope. So too, my friend, when you dare no longer plead your innocence, nor mention extenuations and excuses, then Jesus comes in. If conscience oppresses you so sorely that you cannot escape from it; if it be so that all you can say is "Guilty, Wilfully Guilty," then Jesus comes. If you neither blame your surroundings, nor your companions, nor the providence of God, nor our physical weakness, nor anything else, but just take all the blame to yourself because you cannot help doing so, then Jesus comes in. Verily you have sinned against God, against your parents, against your fellowmen, against light, against knowledge, against conscience, and against the Holy Ghost; no wonder, therefore, that you stand speechless, unable to offer any plea by way of self-justification. It is in that moment of shame and confusion that the Savior says, "Lo, I come." For such as you are he is an Advocate. When a sinner cannot plead for himself, Christ pleads for him; when his excuses

have come to an end, then will the Lord put away his sin, through his own great sacrifice. Is not this a precious gospel word?

When our Lord did actually arrive, fulfilling the text by being born of a woman, it was when man's religion had proved a failure. Sacrifices and offerings had ceased to be of any value: God had put them away as a weariness to him. The scribes and the Pharisees, with all their phylacteries and wide-bordered garments, were a mere sham. There seemed to be no true religion left upon the earth. Then said Christ, "Lo, I come." There was never a darker thirty years than when Herod slew the innocents, and the chief priests and scribes pursued the Son of God, and at last nailed him to the tree. It was then that Jesus came to us to redeem us by his death. Do I speak to any man here whose religion has broken down? You have observed a host of rites and ceremonies: you were christened in your infancy, you were duly confirmed, you have taken what you call "the blessed sacrament"; or it may be you have sat always in the most plain of meeting-houses, and listened to the most orthodox of preachers, and you have been amongst the most religious of religious people; but now, at length, the Spirit of God has shown you that all these performances and attendances are worthless cobwebs which avail you nothing. You see now that—

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to heaven."

You are just now driven to despair, because the palace of your imaginary excellence has vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision. If I had told you that your religiousness was of no value, you would have been very angry with me, and perhaps you would have said, "That is a bigoted remark, and you ought to be ashamed of making it." But now the Spirit of God has told it you, and you feel its force: he is great at convincing of sin. When the Spirit of truth comes to deal with the religiousness of the flesh, he withers it in a moment. All religion which is not spiritual is worthless. All religion which is not the supernatural product of the Holy Ghost is a fiction. One breath from the Spirit of God withers all the beauty of our

pride, and destroys the comeliness of our conceit; and then, when our own religion is dashed to shivers, the Lord Jesus comes in, saying, "Lo, I come." He delights to come in his glorious personality, when the Pharisee can no longer say, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men"; and when the once bold fisherman is crying, "Lord, save, or I perish." If you feel that you need something infinitely better than Churchianity, or Dissenterism, or Methodism—in fact, that you need Christ himself to be formed in you—then to you, even to you, Jesus says, "Lo, I come." When man is at his worst, Christ is seen at his best. The Lord walks to us on the sea in the middle watch of the night. He draws nigh to those souls which draw nigh to death. When you part with self you meet with Christ. When no shred of hope remains, then Jesus says, "Lo, I come."

Once more. The Lord Jesus is to come a second time; and when will he come? He will come when man's hope is a failure. He will come when iniquity abounds, and the love of many hath waxed cold. He will come when dreams of a golden age shall be turned into the dread reality of abounding evil. Do not dream that the world will go on improving and improving, and that the improvement will naturally culminate in the millennium. No such thing. It may grow better for a while, better under certain aspects; but, afterwards the power of the better element will ebb out like the sea, even though each wave should look like an advance. That day shall not come except there be a falling away first. Even the wise virgins will sleep, and the men of the world will be, as in the days of Noah, eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage. On a sudden, the Lord will come as a thief in the night. The deluge of fire will find men as unprepared as did the deluge of water. He will come taking vengeance on his adversaries. When things wax worse and worse we see the tokens of his speedy coming. He will shortly appear, for the sky is darkening. When every hope will seem blotted out, and nothing but grim ages of anarchy and ungodliness are to be expected, then our Deliverer will come. When the tale of bricks was doubled in Egypt, Moses came; and when the world attains to its utmost unbelief and iniquity, Jesus will come. So at this moment my hearer may be saying, "I cannot be worse than I am; if I am not actually in hell already, yet I feel a fire within which tortures my soul. The sword of vengeance hangs over my head suspended by a single hair. I tremble to live, and I fear to die. Lost! Lost! Lost! I am

past hope! "This is the time for my text: "Then said I, Lo, I come." He who is able to save to the uttermost appears to the soul when every other hope disappears. In your deep distress I see a token for good. You are now reduced to spiritual death, and now I trust the eternal life will visit you.

Now all this I put before you in simple language, believing what I say, and trusting that if I describe your case, you will know that I mean it for you. I have heard of a preacher who was so fearful lest he should be thought personal, that he said to his congregation, "Lest any of you should think that what I have said was meant for you, I would observe that the sermon I am preaching was prepared for a congregation in Massachusetts." I can plead nothing of the sort. I refer to you, my hearer, in the most pointed manner. I will attend to Massachusetts, if ever the Lord sends me there; but just now I mean you. Oh, that you may have grace to take home these thoughts to yourselves; for if you do so, they will by the Spirit's power bring the light of hope into your souls!

II. Secondly, I would remark that CHRIST COMES TO SINNERS IN THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON: "Then said I, Lo, I come." Note that glorious I! Have you not seen people engaged in urgent work who did not understand their business Apprentices, and other unskilful people, are muddling time away. They are making bad worse, and running great risk. Perhaps a great calamity will occur if the work is not done well and quickly. A first-rate worker is sent for. See, the man has come who understands the business. He cries, "Let me come! Stand out of my way! You are on the wrong tack: let me do it myself!" You have not blamed him for egotism, for the thing needed to be done, and he could do it, and the others could not. Everybody recognized the master workman, and gave place to him. The announcement of his coming was the end of the muddle, and the signal of hope. Even so Jesus comes to you sinners, and his presence is your salvation. He says, "Lo, I come." What does he mean?

He means, the setting of all else on one side. There is the priest—he has not helped you much; he may go, for Jesus says, "Lo, I come." There are your own efforts and doings; there are your feelings and thinkings; there are your ceremonies and austerities; there are your prayers and tears; there are your hearings and readings—all these must be laid aside as

grounds of confidence, and Jesus alone must be your trust. He can do for you what none of these can. You are trying to work yourself up to repentance and faith, and you cannot succeed. Let him come, and he will bring every good thing with him. It is glorious to see our Lord throwing down all our bowing walls and tottering fences, and to hear him cry, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation." Everything else vanishes before his perfect salvation.

Before him there is a setting of self aside. You have been your own confidence. What you could feel, or do, or think, or resolve, had become the ground of your confidence; but now Jesus puts self down, and he is himself exalted. By working yourself to death, you cannot effect our own salvation. Lo, Jesus comes to save you. You cannot weave yourself a garment. Lo, he comes to clothe you from head to foot with his own seamless robe of righteousness. He annihilates self that he may fill all things.

Here is a glorious setting of himself at our side and in our place. Mr. Moody tells a story, which I would fain hope may be true; for one would like to hear something good about a Czar of Russia, and especially about our once enemy, the Emperor Nicholas. The story concerns a soldier in the barracks who was much distressed by his heavy debts. He was in despair, for he owed a great deal of money, and could not tell where to get it. He took a piece of paper, and made a list of his debts, and underneath the list he wrote, "Who will pay these debts?" He then lay down on the barrack bed, and fell asleep, with the paper before him. The Emperor of Russia passed by, and, taking up the paper, read it, and being in a gracious mood signed at the bottom, "NICHOLAS." Was not that a splendid answer to the question? When the soldier woke up and read it, he could scarcely believe his own eyes. "Who will pay these debts?" was the despairing question. "Nicholas" was the all-sufficient answer. So are we answered, Who will bear our sins? The grand reply is "JESUS." He puts his own name to our liabilities, and in effect, that he may meet them, he says, "Lo, I come." Your debt of sin is discharged when you believe in Christ Jesus. "Without shedding of blood is no remission;" but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. You are not now to bear your own sins. Behold the scape-goat, who carries them away

into the wilderness! Yea, Jesus says, "Lo, I come!" He takes our sins upon himself, he bears their penalty, and we go free. Blessed word—"Lo, I come": I come to take your weight of sin, your burden of punishment. I come to be made a curse for you, that you may be made the righteousness of God in me. Sinner, stand out of the way, and let Jesus appear for you, and fill your place! He sets you on one side, and then he sets himself where you have been. Jesus is now the one pillar on which to lean, the one foundation on which to build, the one and only rest of our weary souls.

He sets himself where we can see him; for he cries, "Lo, I come"; that is to say, "See me come." He comes openly, that we may see him clearly. How I wish the Lord would reveal himself at this moment to each one of those who are weary of earth, of self, of sin, and possibly even weary of life itself! Oh, if you could but see Jesus standing in your room and stead, you would have faith to stand in his place, and so become "accepted in the Beloved"! O Lord, hear my prayer, and cause poor hearts to see thee descending from the skies, to uplift sinners from the dark abyss! Holy Spirit, touch that young man's eyes with heavenly salve, that he may see where salvation lies. Deal with that poor woman's dim eyes also, that she may perceive the Lord Christ, and find peace in him. Jesus cries, "Lo, I come! Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee.
Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—
Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."

Should you even lie in all the despair and desolation which I described, I would persuade you to believe in Jesus. Trust him, and you shall find him all that you want.

Our lord sets himself to be permanently our all in all. When he came on earth, he did not leave his work till he had finished it. Even when he rose to glory, he continued his service for his chosen, living to intercede for them. Jesus was a Savior nineteen hundred years ago, and he is a Savior still; and he will be a Savior until all the chosen race shall have been

gathered home. He tells us, "I said, Lo, I come"; but he does not say, "I said, I will go away, and quit the work." Our Lord's ear is bored, and he goes out no more from the service of salvation. It is not written of any penitent souls, "Ye shall seek me, but shall not find me"; but it is written, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." O my hearer, you are now in the place where the gospel is preached to you—yes, to you, for we are sent to preach the gospel to every creature; and though you should be the worst, and most benighted, and most guilty of all the creatures out of hell, yet you are a creature, and we preach Christ to you. O poor heart, may the Lord Jesus say to you "Lo, I come!" for he comes to stay,—to stay until he has worked salvation in you as he has worked out salvation for you. He will not leave a believer till he has presented him spotless before the throne of God with exceeding joy. I wish I could make all this most clear and plain. You are altogether ruined by your own fault, and you cannot undo the evil. You have done all you can, and it has come to nothing. You are steeped in sin up to your throat; yea the filth has gone over your head: you are as one drowned in black waters. Despairing one, cast not your eyes around to seek for a friend, for you will look in vain to men. No arm can rescue you, save one; and that is the arm of Jesus, who now cries "Lo, I come." Set everything else on one side, and trust yourself with the Savior, Christ the Lord.

III. Oh, that many may be comforted while I dwell on a third head!
CHRIST IN HIS COMING IS HIS OWN INTRODUCTION.

Here our Lord is his own herald, "Lo, I come." He does not wait for an eloquent preacher to act as master of the ceremonies to him: he introduces himself. Therefore even I, the simplest talker on earth, may prove quite sufficient for my Lord's purpose if he will graciously condescend to bless these plain words of mine. It is not I that say that Jesus comes, but in the text our Lord himself declares, "Then said I, Lo, I come." You need not do anything to draw Christ's attention to you; it is Christ who draws your attention to himself. Do you see this? You are the blind bat; and he is all eye towards you, and bids you look on him. I hear you cry, "Lord, remember me," and I hear him answer, "Soul, remember me." He bids you look on him when you beseech him to look on you.

He comes when quite unsought, or sought for in a wrong way. To many men and women Christ has come though they had not even desired him. Yea, he has come even to those who hated him. Saul of Tarsus was on his way to worry the saints at Damascus, but Jesus said, "Lo, I come"; and when he looked out of heaven he turned Saul, the persecutor, into Paul, the apostle. The promise is fulfilled, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Herein is the glorious sovereignty of his love fully exercised, and grace reigns supreme. "Lo, I come," is the announcement of majestic grace which waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men.

Our Lord Jesus is the way to himself. Did you ever notice that? He comes himself to us, and so he is the way by which we meet him. He is our rest, and the way to our rest; he says, "I am the way." You want to know how to get to Christ? You have not to get to Christ, for he has come to you. It is well for you to come to Christ; but that is only possible because Christ has come to you. Jesus is near you: near you now. Backslider, he comes to you! Wandering soul, roving to the very brink of perdition, the good Shepherd cries, "Lo, I come." He is the way to himself.

Remember, also, that he is the blessing which he brings. Jesus not only gives life and resurrection, but he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Christ is salvation, and everything needful to salvation is in him. If he comes, all good comes with him, or rather in him. An enquirer once said to a minister, "The next step for me is to get a deeper conviction of sin." The minister said, "No such thing, my friend: the next step is to trust in Jesus, for he says, Come unto me." To come to Jesus, or rather to receive Jesus who has come to us, is the one essential step into eternal salvation. Though our Lord does say, "Come unto me," he has preceded it with this other word, "Lo, I come." Poor cripple, if you cannot come to Jesus, ask him to come to you; and he will. Here you lie, and you have been for years in this case; you have no man to put you into the pool, and it would do you no good if he did; but Jesus can make you whole, and he is here. You cannot stir hand or foot because of spiritual paralysis; but your case is not hopeless. Listen to my Lord in the text, "Then said I, Lo, I come." He has no paralysis. He can come, leaping over the mountains of division. I know my Lord came to me, or I should never have come to

him: why should he not come to you? I came to him because he came to me.

"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

Why should he not draw us also Is he not doing so? Yield to the pressure of his love.

"Then said I, Lo, I come." You see our Lord is his own spokesman. He says to me, "Go and tell those people about my coming"; and I gladly do so; but you will forget my words, and refuse to accept the Coming One. Your consciences will be unawakened, your hearts unmoved: I fear it will be so. But if this text be fulfilled concerning our Lord this day—"Then said I, Lo, I come"—you will hear HIM. If he speaks he is himself the Almighty Word, and his voice will reach your hearts, and accomplish his purpose. Dear Christian people, join with me in this prayer: Lord, speak to thy chosen ones that lie here in their death-like despair, far off from thee, and say to each one of them, "Lo, I come." O downcast soul, this is your morning: this is the set time to favor you: this day is salvation come to your house and to your heart. Make haste and come down from the tree of your frivolity or your self-righteousness. Receive the Lord Jesus, for to-day he must abide in your house and in your heart: the hour for the imperial "must" of the eternal purpose has arrived. God grant it may be so! May this be an hour of which Jesus shall declare,—"Then said I, Lo, I come!"

IV. Our next point is this—CHRIST, TO CHEER US, REVEALS HIS REASONS FOR COMING. Only a few words on this. Note the rest of the verse: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly, because it was the due time according to covenant purposes. Christ comes to a guilty sinner, just as he once came to a manger and a stable, because so it was appointed. There is nothing for him to get, but everything for him to give; but he comes because so it is written in the volume of the divine decrees—

"Thus the eternal counsel ran,—
Almighty grace, arrest that man."

Therefore in love the Savior appears to the sinner, and by grace arrests him in his mad career.

It is his Father's will. Christ's coming to save a soul is with his Father's full consent and aid. The Father wills that you who believe in him, lost though you be, should now be saved, and Jesus comes to do the will of the Father.

He comes because his heart is set on you. He loves you, and so he hastens to your rescue. Your salvation is his delight. Though your soul is sunk in a sea of need, and you are in despair because of that need, Jesus loves you, and comes to meet your case. The best of all is that Jesus loves you. One asked an old man of ninety, "Do you love Jesus?" and the old man answered with a smile, "I do, indeed; but I can tell you something better than that." His friend said, "Something better than loving Jesus! What is that?" The old disciple replied, "He loves me." O soul, I wish you could see this fact, which is indeed better than your love to Jesus, namely, his love to you! Because he loved his redeemed from before the foundation of the world, therefore in due time he says, "Lo, I come."

The fact is, you have need, and he has love, and so he comes. There is no hope for you unless he does come, and that is why he comes. If you had a penny of your own, he would not give you his purse; if you had a rag of your own, he would not give you his robe; if you had a breath of your own, he would not give you his life. But now you are naked, and poor, and miserable, and lost, and dead, Jesus reveals himself, and you read concerning him, "Then said I, Lo, I come." He gives you his reasons—reasons not in yourself, but all in his grace. There is no good in you; there is no reason in you why the Lord should save you; but because of his free, spontaneous, rich, sovereign, almighty grace, he leaps out of heaven, he descends to earth, he plunges into the grave to pluck his beloved from destruction.

V. Here is my last word: CHRIST'S COMING IS THE BEST PLEA FOR

OUR RECEIVING HIM, and receiving him now. O sirs, remember you have not to raise the question whether he will come or not. He is come. You have not to say, How can I come to him? He comes to you. You do want a Mediator between your soul and God; but you do not want any mediator between yourself and Jesus; for he says, "Lo, I come." To you in all your filthiness, in all your condemnation, in all your hopelessness, he comes. Wait not for anybody to introduce you to him, or him to you; he has introduced himself, and here is his card—"Then said I, Lo, I come." No pleas are needed to persuade him to come to you, for he says, "Lo, I come." Though you cannot think of a single argument why he should appear to you in mercy, he does so appear. It is written, "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." O words of wondrous grace! Our gracious Lord does not wait for our entreaties; but of his own accord he says, "Lo, I come." Without asking you, and without your asking him, he puts in an appearance in the sovereignty of his grace.

No search is needed to find the Lord, for he comes in manifested grace, and calls upon us to see him. "I have long been searching for Christ" murmurs one. What! seeking for the sun at noonday? Jesus is not lost. It is you that are lost, and he is searching for you. He says, "Lo, I come": it is you that will not come. Still one declares that he has been seeking the Lord Jesus for many a day. This is sadly strange, for Jesus is near. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that if thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved. Searching after Christ? Nay, verily he saith, "Lo, I come."

Moreover, no waiting is needed, and no preparation is to be made by you. Why do you wait? HE does not wait, but cries, "Lo, I come!" "I will get ready for Christ", say you; but it is too late to talk so, when he cries, "Lo, I am come." Receive him! If you are in yourself sadly unready, yet he himself will make everything ready for himself. Only open wide the door, and let him in. Do you say, "But I am ashamed"? Be ashamed. He bids

you be ashamed, and be confounded, while he declares, "I do not this for your sakes." Yet be not so ashamed as to commit another shameful deed by shutting the door in your Redeemer's face. Shut not out your own mercy. A pastor in Edinburgh, in going round his district, knocked at the door of a poor woman, for whom he had brought some needed help; but he received no answer. When next he met her, he said to her, "I called on Tuesday at your house." She asked, "At what time?" "About eleven o'clock; I knocked, and you did not answer. I was disappointed, for I called to give you help." "Ah, sir!" said she, "I am very sorry. I thought it was the man coming for the rent, and I could not pay it, and therefore I did not dare to go to the door." Many a troubled soul thinks that Jesus is one who comes to ask of us what we cannot give; but indeed he comes to give us all things. His errand is not to condemn, but to forgive. Miss not the charity of God through unbelief. Run to the door, and say to your loving Redeemer, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but as thou hast come to me, I welcome thee with all my heart."

No assistance is wanted by Christ on your part. He does not come with half a salvation, and look to you to complete it. He does not come to bring you a robe half woven, which you are to finish. How could you finish it? Could the best saint in the world add anything to Christ's righteousness? No good man would even dream of adding his home-spun to that raiment which is of wrought gold. What! are you to make up the deficient ransom price? Is it deficient? Would you bring your clods of mud into the royal treasury, and lay them down side by side with sapphires? Would you help Christ? Go, yoke a mouse with an elephant! Go harness a fly side by side with an archangel. But dream not of yoking yourself with Christ.

He says, "Lo, I come", and I trust you will reply, "My Lord, if thou art come, all is come, and I am complete in thee."

"Thou, O Christ art all I want,
More than all in thee I find."

Receive him: receive him at once. Dear children of God, and sinners that have begun to feel after him, say with one accord, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." If he says, "Lo, I come," and the Spirit and the bride say,

Come; and he that heareth says, Come, and he that is athirst comes, and whosoever will is bidden to come and take the water of life freely; then let us join the chorus of comes, and come to Christ ourselves. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go you out to meet him!" Ye who most of all need him, be among the first and gladdest, as you hear him say, "Lo, I come."

All that I have said will be good for nothing as to saving results unless the Holy Ghost shall apply it with power to your hearts. Join with me in prayer that many may see Jesus just now, and may at once behold and accept the present salvation which is in him.

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Lo I Come: Exposition

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. - Psalm 40:6-8

Explained to us by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:5-7:

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come in (the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

We have, in the use made of the passage by the inspired apostle, sufficient authority for applying the quotation from the fortieth psalm to our divine Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With such a commentary, we are sure of our way and our whereabouts. We might have been perplexed as to its meaning had it not have been for this; although, I think, even

without the guidance of the New Testament passage, those who are familiar with Holy Writ would have felt that the words could not be fulfilled in David, but must belong to a greater than he, even to the divine Messiah, who in the fullness of time would come into the world. We rejoice that the Lord Jesus himself here speaks of himself. Who but he can declare his own generation? Here he is both the subject of the words and the speaker also. The word is from himself and of himself, and so we have double reason for devout attention. He tells us what he said long ago. He declares, "Then I said, Lo, I come." Because he has come to us, we gladly come to him; and now we reverently wait upon him to hear what our Lord shall speak; for, doubtless, he will speak peace to us, and will cause us to learn, through his Spirit, the meaning of his words. O Savior, say to each of our hearts, "Lo, I come"!

I. Without further preface, I call upon you to notice, first, THE SWEEPING AWAY OF THE SHADOW. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire . . . : burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required."

When the Son of God is born into the world, there is an end of all types by which he was formerly prefigured. The symbols end when the truth itself is made fully manifest. The sacrifices of the law had their times and place, their teaching and their influence. Blessed were those in Israel whose spiritual minds saw beneath the outward sign, and discerned the inward truth! To them the sacrifices of the holy place were a standing means of fellowship with God. Day after day they saw the Great Propitiation as they beheld the morning and the evening lamb: so often as they looked upon a sacrifice, they beheld the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. In the Paschal supper they were instructed by the slaying of the unblemished victim, the roasting with fire, the sprinkling of the blood upon the door without, and the feasting upon the sacrifice within. Spiritual men could have found in the rites and ceremonies of the old law a very library of gospel literature; but, alas! the people were carnal, sensual, and unbelieving, and therefore they often forgot even to celebrate the appointed sacrifices: the Passover itself ceased for long periods, and when the festivals were maintained, there was no life or reality in them. After they had been chastened for their neglect, and made to wander in exile because of the wandering of their hearts after their

idols, they were restored from captivity, and were led to keep the ceremonial law; but they did it as a heartless, meaningless formality, and thus missed all spiritual benefit: with the unlighted candle in their hand they blindly groped in the dark. They slew the sacrifices, and presented their peace-offerings; but the soul had gone out of the service, and at last their God grew weary of their formal worship, and said, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me." We read, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burns offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" When once the life is gone out of the best symbolism, the Lord abhors the carcass; and even a divinely ordained ritual becomes a species of idolatry. When the heart is gone out of the externals of worship, they are as shells without the kernel. Habitations without living tenants soon become desolations, and so do forms and ceremonies without their spiritual meaning. Toward the time of our Lord's coming, the outward worship of Judaism became more and more dead: it was time that it was buried. It had decayed and waxed old, and was ready to vanish away, and vanish away it did; for our Lord set aside the first, or old, that he might establish the second, or new. The stars were no longer seen with their twinklings, for the sun had arisen.

The removal of these things was wholesale. We have four sorts of sacrifice mentioned here, but I need not go into details. Sacrifices in which blood was shed were abolished when the Son of God offered himself without spot unto God. Bloodless offerings, such as fine flour, and wine, and oil, and sweet cane bought with money, and precious incense—which were tokens of gratitude and consecration—these also were no longer laid upon the altar. Sacrifice and offering both were not desired; and burnt-offerings, which signified the delight of God in the great Sacrifice, were ended by the Lord's actual acceptance of that Sacrifice itself. Even the sin-offering, which was burned without the camp as a thing accursed, altogether ceased. It represented sin laid upon the victim, and the victim's being made a curse on that account. It might have seemed always useful as a reminder, for they were always sinning, and always needing a sin-offering; but even this was not required. Nothing of the old ceremonial

law was spared. Now we have no ark of the covenant, with its shekinah light between the wings of the cherubim. Now we have no brazen laver, no table of shewbread, no brazen altar, and no sacred veil: the holy of holies itself is gone. Tabernacle and temple are both removed. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father"; but the time is come when "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." A clean sweep has been made of all the ancient rites, from circumcision up to the garment with its fringe of blue. These were for the childhood of the church, the pictures of her first school-books; but we are no longer minors, and we have grace given us to read with opened eyes that everlasting classic of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now hath the brightness of the former dispensation been quite eclipsed by the glory which excelleth.

As these outward things vanish, they go away with God's mark of non-esteem upon them: they are such things as he did not desire. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire." The Lord God had no desire for matters so trivial and unsatisfactory. They were good for the people, to instruct them, if they had been willing to learn; but they fulfilled no desire of the heart of God. He says, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" By the prophet Micah he asks, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil." These furnish no delight for the great Spirit, and give no pleasure to the thrice holy Jehovah. The formal worshipper supposed that his offerings were, in and of themselves, pleasing to God, and therefore brought his "burnt offerings, with calves of a year old." So far as they believingly understood the meaning of a sacrifice, and presented it in faith, their offerings were acceptable; but in themselves considered these were far from being what the Lord desired. He that filleth heaven and earth saith, "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof." The spiritual, the infinite, the almighty Jehovah could not desire merely outward ritual, however it might appear glorious to men. The sweetest music is not for his ear, nor

the most splendid roses of priests for his eye. He desired something infinitely more precious than these, and he puts them away with this note of dissatisfaction.

And more, these sacrifices passed away with the mark upon them that they were not what God required. "Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." What did God require of man? Obedience. He said by Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." He saith in another place, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The requirement of the law was love to God and love to men. This has always been God's great requirement. He seeks spiritual worship, obedient thought, holy living, grateful praise, devout prayer—these are the requirements of the Creator and Benefactor of men. Ritualistic matters were so far required as they might minister to the good of the people, and while they stood they could not neglect them without loss; but they were not the grand requirement of a just and holy God, and therefore men might fulfill these without stint or omission, and yet God would not have of them what he required. Yes, he asks, "Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" To see his law magnified, his justice vindicated, his sovereignty acknowledged, and his holiness imitated, is more to his mind. Absolute conformity to the standard of moral and spiritual rectitude which he has set up is his demand, and he can be content with nothing less. These things are not found in sacrifice and offering, neither do they always go therewith, and therefore the outward sacrifice was not what God required.

They were so to be put always as never to be followed by the same kind of things. Shadows are not replaced by other shadows. The ceremonials of Aaron are not to be followed by another set of carnal ordinances. There are some who seem to think that they are so to be. Instead of Aaron, whom God ordained, we have a so-called priesthood among us at this day, claiming an apostolical succession, which is impossible if they are priests, since no apostle was a priest. Instead of rites which God has ordained we have rites of man's invention. The blessed ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, have been

prostituted from their instructive and memorial intent into a kind of witchcraft; so that by what is called baptism children are said to be born again, and made members of Christ and children of God, while in the second, or what they call Holy Communion, the sacrifice of Christ is profanely said to be repeated or continued, even in the unbloody sacrifice of the mass. Ah, friends! our Lord did not put away that grand, magnificent system of Mosaic rites to introduce the masquerade in which Rome delights, which certain Anglicans would set up among us. No, no; we have done with the symbolic system, and have now but the two outward ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are meant only for believers who know what it is to be buried with Christ, and to feed on him. You have no right to bring in your own forms and ceremonies, and place them in the church of Christ. Beyond what God has ordained we may not dare to go; and even in those things we may not rest as though there were anything in them of their own operation, apart from their sacred teaching. These are instructive to you if you have a mind to be instructed, and if you know the truths which they set forth; but do not imagine that men have come under another kind of ceremonialism, another system of ritual and rubric, for it is not so. The rites appropriate to priests are abolished with the Aaronic priesthood, and can never be restored: "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." When he cometh into the world these carnal ordinances must go out of the world. Sacrifice and offering, burnt offering and sin offering, and all other patterns of heavenly things, are swept away when the heavenly things themselves appear.

II. Thus much upon the shadows being swept away; and now, secondly, let us view THE REVELATION OF THE SUBSTANCE. We find the Son of God himself appearing. We read here, and we hear him say—"Mine ears hast thou opened." The Lord himself comes, even he who is all that these things foreshadowed.

When he comes he has a prepared ear. The margin hath it, "Mine ears hast thou digged." Our ears often need digging; for they are blocked up by sin. The passage to the heart seems to be sealed in the cave of fallen man. But when the Savior came, his ear was not as ours, but was attentive to the divine voice. He says, "He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are

taught. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." Our Lord was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord: he knew what the will of the Lord was, and he could say, "I do always the thing that pleases him." As man, he had a divine instinct of holiness, which made him to know and love the Father's will, and caused him always to translate that will into his own life. You see he came with an opened ear, and some think that here we have an allusion to the boring of the ear in the case of the servant who had a right to liberty, but refused to quit his servitude, because he loved his master, and wished to remain with him for ever. It is not certain that there is any such reference; but it is certain that our Lord was bound for ever to the service which he had undertaken for his Father, and that he would not go back from it. He pledged himself to redeem us, and he set his face like a flint to do it. He loved his Father, and he loved his chosen so much that he vowed to execute the Father's work, even to what I might call "the bitter end," if I did not know that it was a sweet and blessed end to him. His ear was prepared for his service.

But our Lord came also with a prepared body: hence, the apostle Paul, when he quoted this passage, probably taking the words from the Septuagint translation, writes, "A body hast thou prepared me." You will wonder how, in one passage, it should speak of the ear, and the next should speak of the body; and yet there is small difference in the sense. We do not think of an ear without a body—that would be a sorry business. The reading in the Hebrews is involved in the text as it stands in the Psalm. If the ear is there, a body is there; you cannot even dream of an ear hearing if separate from the rest of the body. The apostle gives us the sense of the text rather than the words; and, at the same time, dealing as he was with Jews by whom the Septuagint was prized, he quoted from the version which they would be sure to acknowledge—and very properly and wisely so—because that version was perfectly accurate as to the meaning of the Hebrew. Any way, he was inspired to read it—"A body hast thou prepared me." There was fashioned by the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the blessed Virgin, a body fitted to embody the Son of God. Wrought mysteriously, by means into which we must not inquire—for what God hath veiled must remain covered—that body was suited to set forth the great mystery, "God manifest in the flesh."

The whole body of Christ was prepared for him and for his great work. To begin with, it was a sinless body, without taint of original sin, else God could not have dwelt therein. It was a body made highly vital and sensitive, probably far beyond what ours are; for sin has a blunting and hardening effect even upon flesh, and his flesh, though it was in the "likeness of sinful flesh," was not sinful flesh, but flesh which yielded prompt obedience to his spirit, even as his whole human nature was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. His body was capable of great endurance, so as to know the griefs and agonies and unspeakable sorrows of a delicate, holy, and tender kind which it was necessary for him to bear. "A body hast thou prepared me." In the fullness of time he came into that body, which was admirably adapted to enshrine the Godhead. Wondrous mystery, that the infant of Bethlehem should be linked with the Infinite; and that the weary man by the shores of Galilee should be very God of very God, revealed in a body prepared for him! "A body hast thou prepared me": he had a prepared ear and a prepared body.

He who assumed that body was existent before that body was prepared. He says, "A body hast thou prepared me. Lo, I come." He from old eternity dwelt with God: the Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God. We could not any one of us have said that a body was prepared for us, and therefore we would come to it; for we had had no existence before our bodies were fashioned. From everlasting to everlasting our Lord is God, and he comes out of eternity into time—the Father bringing him into the world. He was before all worlds, and was before he came into the world to dwell in his prepared body.

Beloved, the human nature of Christ was taken on him in order that he might be able to do for us that which God desired and required. God desired to see an obedient man, a man who would keep his law to the full; and he sees him in Christ. God desired to see one who would vindicate the eternal justice, and show that sin is no trifle; and behold our Lord, the eternal Son of God, entering into that prepared body, was ready to do all this mighty work, by rendering to the law a full recompense for our dishonor of it! An absolutely perfect righteousness he renders unto God: as the second Adam, he presents it for all whom he represents. He bows

his head a victim beneath Jehovah's sword, that the truth, and justice, and honor of God might suffer no detriment. His body was prepared to this end. Incarnation is a means to atonement. Only a man could vindicate the law, and therefore the Son of God became a man. This is a wonderful being, this God in our nature. "Emmanuel" is a glorious word. Surely for the incarnation and the atonement the world was made from the first. Was this the reason why the morning stars sang together when they saw the cornerstone of the world, because they had an inkling that here God would be manifest as nowhere else beside, and the Creator would be wedded to the creature? That God might be manifested in the Christ, it may even be that sin was permitted. Assuredly, there could have been no sacrifice on Calvary if there had not first of all been sin in Eden. The whole scheme, the whole of God's decrees and acts, worked up to an atoning Savior. Of the pyramid of creation and of providence Christ is the apex: he is the flower of all that God hath made. His diving nature in strange union with humanity constitutes a peerless personage, such as never was before, and can never be again. God in our nature one Being, and yet wearing two natures, is altogether unique. He saith, "A body hast thou prepared me. Lo, I come." Think of this: it is a truth fitter for meditation than for sermonizing. The Lord give us to know it well by faith!

III. But now, thirdly, I call your attention to THE DECLARATION OF THE CHRIST, made in the text: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. Then said I, Lo, I come." Observe when he says this. It is in the time of failure. All the sacrifices had failed. The candle flickered, and was dying out, and then the great light arose, even the eternal light, and like a trumpet the words rung out, "Lo, I come." All this has been of no avail; now I come. It is in the time of failure that Christ always does appear. The last of man is the first of God; and when we have come to the end of all our power and hope, then the eternal power and Godhead appears with its "Lo, I come."

When our Lord comes, it is with the view of filling up the vacuum which had now been sorrowfully seen. God does not desire these things; God does not require these things; but he does desire and he does require something better: and lo, the Christ has come to bring that something.

That awful gap which was seen in human hope when Moses had passed away, and the Aaronic priesthood, and all the ordinances of it were gone, Christ was born to fill. It looked as if the light of ages had been quenched, and God's glorious revelation had been for ever withdrawn; and then, in the dark hour, Jesus cries, "Lo, I come!" He fills the blank abyss: he gives to man in reality what he had lost in the shadow.

When he appears, it is as the personal Lord. Lay the stress upon the pronoun, "Lo, I come." The infinite Ego appears. "Lo, I come." No mere man could talk thus, and be sane. No servant or prophet of God would ever say, "Lo, I come." Saintly men talk not so. God's prophets and apostles have a modest sense of their true position: they never magnify themselves, though they magnify their office. It is for God to say, "Lo, I come." He who says it takes the body prepared for him, and comes in his own proper personality as the I AM. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He comes forth from the ivory palaces to inhabit the tents of manhood. He takes upon himself the body prepared for him of the Lord God, and he stands forth in his matchless personality ready to do the will of God. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Everything is stored up in his blessed person, and we are complete in him.

Observe the joyful avowal that he makes—"Lo, I come." This is no dirge: I think I hear a silver trumpet ring out—"Lo, I come." Here is a joyful alacrity and intense eagerness. The coming of the Savior was to him a thing of exceeding willingness. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame."

He comes with a word calling attention to it; for he is not ashamed to be made partaker of our flesh. "Lo," saith he, "I come. Behold, behold, I come." This is no clandestine union; he bids heaven behold him come into our nature. Earth is bidden to gaze upon it. O ye sinners, listen to this inviting "Lo!" Others have cried to you, "Lo, here! and Lo, there"; but Jesus looks on you, and cries, "Lo, I come." Look hither: turn all your thoughts this way, and behold your God in your nature ready to save you. Verily, the incarnate God is a subject meet for the loftiest thoughts of sages, and for the lowliest thoughts of children. Blessed are the children

of grace who can sit at the feet of the incarnate God and look up, forgetting all the wisdom of the Greeks, and all the sign-seeking of the Jews in the satisfaction which they find in Jesus.

I think, too, I hear in this declaration of the coming One a note of finality. He takes away the sacrifice from Aaron's altar; but he says, "Lo, I come." There is an end of it. "Lo, I come." Is there anything after this? Can anything supersede this—"Lo, I come." "Lo, I come" has been the perpetual music of the ages. Read it, "Lo, I am come"; for it is in the present tense, and how sweet the sound! Christ is come, and joy with him. Read it as well in the future, if you will, "Lo, I come," for he comes "the second time without sin unto salvation"; here is our chief hope! "Lo, I come." He himself is the last word of God. "In the beginning was the Word"; and so he was God's first word. But he is the end as well as the beginning: God's last word to man; Christ is God's ultimatum. Look for no new revelation—"Lo, I am come," shines on for ever. Do not ask, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" He has come; look for no other. Behold, he came to give what God desires, what God requires; what would you more? Let him be all your salvation and all your desire. Let him be "the desire of all nations." He is the fulfillment of all the requirements of the human race, as well as the full amount of what God requires.

IV. Next, I beg you to note THE REFERENCE TO PRECEDING WRITINGS. He says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." If I preached from the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, I might fairly declare that in the whole volume of Holy Scripture much is written of our Lord and prescribed for him as Messiah. The page of inspiration is fragrant with the name of Jesus. He is the top line of the entire volume, and in the Greek word I see a half allusion to this. He is the head-line of contents to every chapter of Scripture. He is of all Scripture the sum. "In the beginning was the word." Everything speaks of him. The Pentateuch, and the books of the prophets, and the Psalms, and the gospels, and the epistles all speak of him. "In the volume of the book it is written of me."

Preaching as I am from the Psalms, I cannot take so long a range. I must

look back and find what was written in David's day, and within the Pentateuch certainly; and where do I find it written concerning his coming? The Pentateuch drips with prophecies of Christ as a honeycomb overflowing with its honey. Chiefly is he to be found in the head and front of the book: so early as the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve had sinned, and we were lost, behold he is spoken of in the volume of the book in these terms: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." So early was it written that the Redeemer would be born in our nature to vanquish our foe.

But I confess I do not feel shut out from another interpretation. I conceive that our Lord here refers to another book, the book of the divine purposes, the volume of the eternal covenant. There was a time before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days, when all that existed was the Lord, who is all in all: then the sacred Three entered into covenant, in mutual agreement, for a sublime end. Man sinning, the Son of God shall be the surety. Christ shall bear the result of man's offense; he shall vindicate the law of God, and make Jehovah's name more glorious than ever it has been. The second person of the divine Unity was pledged to come, and take up the nature of men, and so become the firstborn among many brethren to lift up a fallen race, and to save a number that no man can number, elect of God the Father, and given to the Son to be his heritage, his portion, his bride. Then did the Well-beloved strike hands with the eternal God, and enter into covenant engagements on our behalf: "In the volume of the book it is written." That sealed book, upon whose secrets no angel's eye has looked, a book written by the finger of God long before he wrote the Book of the law upon tables of stone, that book of God may be spoken of in the Psalm, "And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Our Lord came to carry out all his suretyship engagements: his work is the exact fulfillment of his engagements recorded in the eternal covenant, "ordered in all things and sure." He acts out every mysterious line and syllable, even to the full. Then he said, "A body hast thou prepared me. Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." It is ever a pleasing study to see our Lord, both in the written Word, and in the eternal covenant of grace.

V. I must close with the fifth point, THE DELIGHT OF HIM THAT COMETH. He said, "Lo, I come." As I have already told you, there is wonderful delight in that exclamation—"Lo, I come"; but lest we should mistake our Lord, he adds, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." There can be no denial of his joy in his service.

Note well, that he came in complete subserviency to his Father, God. "I delight to do"—what? "Thy will." His own will was absorbed in the divine will. His pleasure it was to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." It was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. Though he was Lord and God, he became a lowly servant for our sakes. Though high as the highest, he stooped low as the lowest. The King of kings was the servant of servants, that he might save his people. He took upon him the form of a servant, and girded himself, and stood obediently at his Father's call.

He had a prospective delight as to his work. Before he came, he delighted in the thought of his incarnation. The Supreme Wisdom saith, "My delights were with the sons of men." Happy in his Father's courts, he yet looked forward to an access of happiness in becoming man. "Can that be?" saith one. Could the Son of God be happier than he was? As God, he was infinitely blessed; but he knew nothing by experience of the life of man, and into that sphere he desired to enter. To the Godhead there can be no enlargement, for it is infinite; but still there can be an addition; our Lord was to add the nature of man to that of God. He would live as man, suffer as man, and triumph as man, and yet remain God: and to this he looked forward with a strange delight, inexplicable except upon the knowledge of the great love he bore to us. He had given his heart so entirely to his dear bride, whom he saw in the glass of predestination, that for her he would endure all things.

"Yea, saith the Lord, for her I'll go
Through all the depths of care and woe,
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear."

It was wondrous love. Our Lord's love surpasses all language and even

thought. I am talking prodigies and miracles at every word I utter. It was delightful to our Lord to come hither.

"What did he delight in?" saith one. Evidently he delighted in God's law. "Thy law is within my heart." He resolved that the beauties of the law of the Lord should be displayed by being embodied in his own life, and that its claims should be vindicated by his own death. To achieve this, he delighted to come and keep it and honor it by an obedience both active and passive. He delighted in God's will also, and that is somewhat more; for law is the expression of will, and this may be altered; but the will of the great King never changes. Our Lord delighted to carry out all the purposes and desires of the Most High God. He so delighted in the will of God that he came to do it, and to bear it, "by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

He delighted also in God. He took an intense delight in glorifying the Father. He came to reveal the Father, and make him to be beloved of men. He did all things to please God. Moreover, he took a delight in us; and here, though the object of his love is less, the love itself is heightened by the conspicuous condescension. The Lord Jesus took a deep delight in his people, whose names were written on his heart, and graven on the palms of his hands. His heart was fixed on their redemption, and therefore he would present himself as a sacrifice on their behalf. The people whom the Father gave him from before the foundation of the world lay on his very soul; for them he had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened till it was accomplished. He gave himself no rest till he had left both joy and rest to ransom his own.

May I go a step further and say that he had an actual delight in his coming among men? "I delight to do thy will, O my God"—not merely to think of doing it. When our Lord was here, he was the most blessed of men. Do you start? Do you remind me that he was "a man of sorrows"? I grant you that none was more afflicted; but I still stand to it, that within him dwelt a joy of the highest order. To him it was joy to be in sorrow, and honor to be put to shame. Do you think that lightens our estimate of his self-denial and disinterestedness? Nay, it adds weight to it. Some people fancy that there is no credit in doing a thing unless you are

miserable in doing it. Nay, brethren, that is the very reverse. Obedience which is unwillingly offered and causes no joy in the soul, is not acceptable. We must serve God with our heart, or we do not serve him. Obedience rendered without delight in rendering it is only half obedience. You shall say what you will about the greatness of my Lord's agonies. You shall never go too far in your estimate of his unfathomable griefs; but going with you to the full in it all, I shall take liberty still to say that he had within himself a fountain of joy, which enabled him to endure the cross, and even to despise the shame. Blessed among men was he, even when he was made a curse for us! With delight he gave himself for us, and made a cheerful surrender of himself, that he might be the ransom for many. The text is express upon that fact.

And all this because our Lord came with such intense heartiness. He says, "Yea, thy law is within my heart." Our Lord is most thorough in all that he does. His work is never slovenly, nor in a half-hearted way. He does not even sit on the well and talk to a poor woman, but what his heart is there. He does not go into a fisherman's hut, but what his heart is there, and he heals the sick one. He does not sit down to supper with his followers, but what his heart is there, and he reveals his love. I wish we were always at home when the Lord calls for us! Sometimes we are all abroad, and our heart is away from the service of our Father; but he loved the Lord with all his heart, and mind, and strength. For us he gave his whole being, rejoicing to redeem us. He was always intense. Whether he preached or practiced, Jesus was all there and always there. Hence his delight; for what a man does with his heart he delights to do. These two sentences are melodious of joy to my ear. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Hear this one other word. It is all done now. Jesus has fulfilled the Father's will in the salvation in the midst of his ransomed ones. And shall I tell you, need I tell you, what must be the delight, the heavenly joy of our lord, now that the work is finished? He is now the focus, the center, the source of bliss. What must be his own delight! We often say of the angels that they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. I doubt not that they do, but the Bible does not say so. The Bible says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." What

means the presence of the angels? Why, that the angels see the joy of Christ when sinners repent. Hear them say to one another, "Behold the Father's face! How he rejoices! Gaze on the countenance of the Son! What a heaven of delight shines in those eyes of his! Jesus wept for these sinners, but now he rejoices over them. How resplendent are the nail-prints to-day, for the redeemed of the Lord's death are believing and repenting! That blessed countenance which is always as a sun, shineth in the fullness of its strength, now that he sees of the travail of his soul." He who suffered feels a joy unsearchable,

"The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see:
They cannot read the mystery—
The length, the breadth, the height."

Oh, the joy of triumphant love! The joy of the crucified, whose prepared body is the body of his glory as once it was the body of his humiliation! In that manhood he still rejoices, and delights to do the will of the Father.

My time has fled, and yet I am expected to say something about missions. What shall I say? My brothers, sisters, all of you, do you know anything about the truths I have spoken? Then go and tell the heathen that the Lord is come. Here is a message worth the telling. Mary Magdalene, and the other Maries, haste to tell the disciples that the Lord had risen; will you not go and tell them that he has come down to save? "Lo, I come," saith he. Will you not take up his words, and go to the people who have never heard of him, and say, "Lo, he has come." Tell the Ethiopians, the Chinese, the Hindoos, and all the islands of the sea that God has come hither to save men, and has taken a prepared body, that he might give to God all he required, and all that he desired, that sinful men might be accepted in the Beloved, with whom God the Father is well pleased. Go, and take to the heathen this sacred Book. "In the volume of the book it is written of him." Do not begin to doubt the Book yourself. Why should you send missionaries to teach them about a book in which you do not yourself believe? Tell the nations that "In the volume of the book it is written of him." Believe this Book, and spread it. Help Bible societies, and all such efforts; and aid missionary societies, which carry the Book and

proclaim the Savior. The men of the Book of God are the men of God, such as the world needs. Bid such men go and open the Book of God, and teach the nations its blessed news. Go, dear friends, and assure the heathen that there is happiness in obedience to God. So the Savior found it. He delighted in God's will, even to the death, and they will also know delight as in their measures they bow before the authority of the Word and the will of the one living and true God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Jehovah, the I AM, must be worshipped, for beside him there is none else. Give glory unto God, whom our Lord Jesus has come to glorify. Amen.

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Looking Unto Jesus

They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. - Psalm 34:5

From the connection we are to understand the pronoun "him" as referring to the word "Lord" in the preceding verse. "They looked unto the Lord Jehovah, and were lightened." But no man ever yet looked to Jehovah God, as he is in himself, and found any comfort in him, for "our God is a consuming fire." An absolute God, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, can afford no comfort whatever to a troubled heart. We *may* look to him, and we shall be blinded, for the light of Godhead is insufferable, and as mortal eye cannot fix its gaze upon the sun, no human intellect could ever look unto God, and find light, for the brightness of God would strike the eye of the mind with eternal blindness. The only way in which we can see God is through the Mediator Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find, - "

God shrouded and veiled in the manhood, - there we can with steady gaze behold him, for so he cometh down to us, and our poor finite intelligence can understand and lay hold upon him. I shall therefore use my text this morning, and I think very legitimately, in reference to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ - "They looked unto *him*, and were lightened;" for when we look at God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, and behold the Godhead as it is apparent in the Incarnate Man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified by Pontius Pilate, we do see that which enlightens the mind, and casts rays of comfort into our awakened heart.

And now this morning, I shall first invite you, in order to illustrate my text, to *look to Jesus Christ in his life on earth*, and I hope there are some of you who will be lightened by that. We shall then *look to him on his cross*. Afterwards we shall *look to him in his resurrection*. We shall *look*

to him in his intercession; and lastly, we shall look to him in his second coming; and it may be, as with faithful eye we look upon him, the verse shall be fulfilled in our experience, which is the best proof of a truth, when we prove it to be true in our own hearts, We shall "look unto him" and we shall "be lightened."

I. First, then, we shall LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE. And here the troubled saint will find the most to enlighten him. In the example, in the patience, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, there are stars of glory to cheer the midnight darkness of the sky of your tribulation. Come hither, ye children of God and whatever now are your distresses, whether they be temporal or spiritual, you shall, in the life of Jesus Christ and his sufferings, find sufficient to cheer and comfort you, if the Holy Spirit shall now open your eyes to look unto him. Perhaps I have among my congregation, indeed I am sure I have, some who are plunged in the depths of poverty. You are the children of toil; with much sweat of your brow you eat your bread; the heavy yoke of oppression galls your neck; perhaps at this time you are suffering the very extremity of hunger; you are pinched with famine, and though in the house of God, your body complains, for you feel that you are brought very low. Look unto Him, thou poor distressed brother in Jesus; look unto Him, and be lightened.

"Why dost thou complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? - he told thee no less;
The heirs of salvation, we know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

See him there! Forty days he fasts and he hungers. See him again, he treads the weary way, and at last all athirst he sits upon the curb of the well of Sychar and he the Lord of glory, he who holds the clouds in the hollow of his hand, said to a woman, "Give me to drink." And shall the servant be above his master, and the disciple above his Lord? If he suffered hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, O heir of poverty, be of good cheer; in all these thou hast fellowship with Jesus; therefore be comforted, and look unto him and be lightened.

Perhaps your trouble is of another caste. You have come here to-day

smarting from the forked tongue of that adder - slander. Your character, though pure and spotless before God, seems to be lost before man; for that foul slanderous thing hath sought to take away that which is dearer to you than life itself, your character, your good fame; and you are this day filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, because you have been accused of crimes which your soul loathes. Come, thou child of mourning, this indeed is a heavy blow; poverty is like Solomon's whip, but slander is like the scorpion of Rehoboam, to fall into the depths of poverty is to have it on thy little finger, but to be slandered is to have it on thy loins. But in all this thou mayest have comfort from Christ. Come and look unto him and be lightened. The King of kings was called a Samaritan; they said of him that he had a devil and was mad; and yet infinite wisdom dwelt in him, though he was charged with madness. And was he not ever pure and holy? And did they not call him a drunken man and a wine-bibber? He was his father's glorious Son and yet they said he did cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Come! poor slandered one; wipe that tear away! "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" If they had honored him, then might you have expected that they would honor you, but inasmuch as they mocked him and took away his glory and his character blush not to bear the reproach and the shame, for he is with you, carrying his cross before you, and that cross was heavier than yours. Look, then, unto him and be lightened.

But I hear another say, "Ah! but my trouble is worse than either of those. I am not to-day smarting from slander, nor am I burdened with penury; but, sir, the hand of God lies heavy upon me, he hath brought my sins to my remembrance; he hath taken away the bright shining of his countenance; once I did believe in him, and could 'read my title clear to mansions in the skies,' but to-day I am brought very low; he hath lifted me up and cast me down; like a wrestler, he has elevated me that he might dash me to the ground with the greater force, my bones are sore vexed, and my spirit within me is melted with anguish." Come, my tried brother, "look unto him and be lightened." No longer groan over thine own miseries, but come thou with me and look unto him, if thou canst. Seest thou the garden of Olives? It is a cold night, and the ground is crisp beneath thy feet for the frost is hard; and there in the gloom of the olive

garden, kneels thy Lord. Listen to him. Canst thou understand the music of his groans, the meaning of his sighs? Sure, thy griefs are not so heavy as his were, when drops of blood were forced through his skin, and a bloody sweat did stain the ground! Say, are thy wrestlings greater than his? If; then, he had to combat with the powers of darkness, expect to do so also; and look thou to him in the last solemn hour of his extremity, and hear him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when thou hast heard that, murmur not, as though some strange thing had happened to thee as if thou hast to join in his "lama subbacthani," and hast to sweat some few drops of his bloody sweat. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

But, possibly I may have here some one who is much persecuted by man. "Ah!" saith one, "I cannot practice my religion with comfort. My friends have turned against me; I am mocked, and jeered, and reviled, for Christ's sake." Come, Christian, be not afraid of all this, but, "look unto him, and be lightened." Remember how they persecuted him. Oh! think thou of the shame and spitting, the plucking off the hair, the reviling of the soldiers; think thou of that fearful march through the streets, when every man did hoot him, and when even they that were crucified with him did revile him. Hast thou been worse treated than he? Methinks this is enough to make you gird your armor on once more. Why need you blush to be as much dishonored as your Master? It was this thought that cheered the martyrs of old. They that fought the bloody fight, knew they should win the blood-red crown - that ruby crown of martyrdom; therefore they did endure, as seeing him who is invisible; for this ever cheered and comforted them. They remembered him who had "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that they might not be weary or faint in their minds." They "resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" for they knew their Master had done the same, and his example did comfort them. I am persuaded beloved brothers and sisters, that if we looked more to Christ, our troubles would not become anything like so black. In the darkest night, looking to Christ will clear the ebony sky; when the darkness seems thick, like that of Egypt, darkness that might be felt, like solid pillars of ebony, even then, like a bright lightning flash, as bright but not as transient, will a look to Jesus prove. One glimpse at him, may well suffice for all our toils, while on the road. Cheered by his voice,

nerved by his strength, we are prepared to do and suffer, even as he did, to the death, if he will be with us, even unto the end. This, then, is our first point. We trust that those of you, who are weary Christians, will not forget to "look unto him, and be lightened."

II. And now I have to invite you to a more dreary sight; but, strange it is just as the sight becomes more black, so to us, does it grow more bright. The more deeply the Saviour dived into the depths of misery, the brighter were the pearls which he brought up - the greater his griefs, the greater our joys, and the deeper his dishonor, the brighter our glories. Come, then - and this time I shall ask poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints, to come with me, - come ye now to Calvary's cross. There, on the summit of that little hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, where common criminals were ordinarily put to death - the Tyburn of Jerusalem, the Old Bailey of that city, where criminals were executed - there stand three crosses; the center one is reserved for one who is reputed to be the greatest of criminals. See there! They have nailed him to the cross. It is the Lord of life and glory, before whose feet angels delight to pour full vials of glory They have nailed him to the cross: he hangs there in mid-heaven, dying, bleeding; he is thirsty, and he cries. They bring him vinegar and thrust it into his mouth. He is in suffering, and he needs sympathy, but they mock at him, and they say, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." They misquote his words, they challenge him now to destroy the temple, and build it in three days; while the very thing was being fulfilled, they taunt him with his powerlessness to accomplish it. How see him, ere the veil is drawn over agonies too black for eye to behold. See him now! Was ever face marred like that face? Was ever heart so big with agony? And did eyes ever seem so pregnant with the fire of suffering, as those great wells of fiery agony? Come and behold him, come and look to him now. The sun is eclipsed, refusing to behold him! earth quakes; the dead rise; the horrors of his sufferings have startled earth itself,

"He dies! the friend of sinners dies;"

And we invite you to look to this scene that you may be lightened. What are your doubts this morning? Whatever they be, they can find a kind and

fond solution here, by looking at Christ on the cross. You have come here, perhaps, doubting God's mercy; look to Christ upon the cross, and can you doubt it then? If God were not full of mercy, and plenteous in his compassion, would he have given his Son to bleed and die? Think you, that a Father would rend his darling from his heart and nail him to a tree, that he might suffer an ignominious death for our sakes, and yet be hard, merciless, and without pity? God forbid the impious thought! There must be mercy in the heart of God, or else there had never been a cross on Calvary.

But do you doubt God's power to save! Are you saying in yourself this morning, "How can he forgive so great a sinner as I am?" Oh! look there, sinner, look there, to the great atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid. Dost thou think that that blood has not an efficacy to pardon and to justify. True, without that cross it had been an unanswerable question, - "How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" But see there the bleeding substitute! and know that God has accepted his sufferings as an equivalent for the woes of all believers; and then thy spirit dare to think, if it can, that there is not sufficient in the blood of Christ, to enable God to vindicate his justice, and yet to have mercy upon sinners.

But I know you say, "My doubt is not of his general mercy, nor of his power to forgive, but of his willingness to forgive *me*." Now I beseech you, by him that liveth and was dead, do not this morning look into your own heart in order to find an answer to that difficulty; do not now sit down and look at your sins; they have brought you into the danger - they cannot bring you out of it. The best answer you will ever get, is at the foot of the cross. Sit down, when you get home this morning, for half-an-hour, in quiet contemplation, sit at the foot of the cross, and contemplate the dying Saviour, and I will defy you then to say, "I doubt his love to me." Looking at Christ begets faith. You cannot believe on Christ except as you see him, and if you look to him you will learn that he is able to save; you will learn his loving-kindness; and you cannot doubt him after having once beheld him. Dr. Watts says,

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would *love* him too;"

and I am sure it is quite true if I read it another way -

"His worth, if all the nations knew
Sure the whole world would *trust* him too."

Oh, that you would look to him now, and your doubts would soon be removed; for there is nothing that so speedily kills all doubt and fear, as a look into the loving eye of the bleeding, dying Lord. "Ah," says one, "but my doubts are concerning my own salvation in this respect; I cannot be so holy as I want to be." "I have tried very much," says one, "to get rid of all my sins, and I cannot; I have labored to live without wicked thoughts, and without unholy acts, and I still find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things;' and I wander from God. Surely I cannot be saved, while I am like this?" Stay! Look to him, and be lightened. What business have you to be looking to yourself? The first business of a sinner is not with himself, but with Christ. Your business is to come to Christ, sick, weary, and soul-diseased, and ask Christ to cure you. You are not to be your own physician, and then go to Christ, but just as you are; the only salvation for you is to trust implicitly, simply, nakedly, on Christ. As I sometimes put it - make Christ the only pillar of your hope, and never seek to buttress or prop him up. "He is able, he is willing." All he asks of you is just to trust him. As for your good works, they shall come afterwards. They are after-fruit of the Spirit: but your first business is not to do, but to believe. Look to Jesus, and put your only trust in him. "Oh," another cries, "Sir, I am afraid I do not feel my need of a Saviour as I ought." Looking to yourselves again! all looking to yourselves you see! This is all wrong. Our doubts and fears all arise from this cause - we will turn our eyes the wrong way just look to the cross again, just as the poor thief did when he was dying; he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Do the same. You may tell him if you please, that you do not feel your need of him as you ought; you may put this among your other sins, that you fear you have not a right sense of your great and enormous guilt. You may add to all your confessions, this cry "Lord help me to confess my sins better; help me to feel them more penitently." But recollect, it is not your repentance that saves you; it is just the blood of Christ, streaming from his hands, and feet, and side. Oh! I beseech you by

him whose servant I am, this morning turn your eyes to the cross of Christ. There he hangs this day; he is lifted up in your midst. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up to-day in your eyes, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

And you children of God, I turn to you, for you have your doubts too. Would you get rid of them? Would you rejoice in the Lord with faith unmoved and confidence unshaken? Then look to Jesus; look again to him and you shall be lightened. I know not how it is with you my beloved friends, but I very often find myself in a doubting frame of mind; and it seems to be a question whether I have any love to Christ or not. And despite the fact that some laugh at the hymn, It is a hymn that I am forced to sing: -

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought!
Do I love the Lord or not
Am I his, or am I not?"

And really I am convinced that every Christian has his doubts at times, and that the people who do not doubt are just the people that ought to doubt; for he who never doubts about his state perhaps may do so when it is too late. I knew a man who said he never had a doubt for thirty years. I told him that I knew a person who never had a doubt about him for thirty years. "How is that?" said he "that is strange." He thought it a compliment. I said, "I knew a man who never had a doubt about you for thirty years. He knew you were always the most confounded hypocrite he ever met; he had no doubt about you." But this man had no doubt about himself: he was a chosen child of God, a great favourite of the Most High; he loved the doctrine of Election, wrote it on his very brow; and yet he was the hardest driver and the most cruel oppressor to the poor I ever met with, and when brought to poverty himself, he might very frequently be seen rolling through the streets. And this man had not a doubt for thirty years; and yet the best people are always doubting. Some of those who are just living outside the gates of heaven, are afraid of being cast into hell after all; while those people who are on the high road to the pit

are not the least afraid. However, if you would get rid of your doubts once more, turn to Christ. You know what Dr. Carey had put on his tomb-stone - just these words, for they were his comfort; -

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
Into Christ's arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Remember what that eminent Scotch divine said, when he was dying. Some one said to him, "What, are you dying now?" Said he, "I am just gathering all my good works up together, and I am throwing them all overboard; and I am lashing myself to the plank of free grace, and I hope to swim to glory on it." So do you do; every day keep your eye only on Christ; and so long as your eye is single, your whole body must and shall be full of light. But if you once look cross-eyed, first to yourself and then to Christ, your whole body shall be full of darkness. Remember, then, Christian, to hie away to the cross. When that great black dog of hell is after you, away to the cross! Go where the sheep goes when he is molested by the dog; go to the shepherd. The dog is afraid of the shepherd's crook; you need not be afraid of it, it is one of the things that shall comfort you. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Away to the cross, my brothers! away to the cross, if thou wouldst get rid of thy doubts. Certain I am, that if we lived more with Jesus, were more like Jesus, and trusted more to Jesus, doubts and fears would be very scarce and rare things, and we should have as little to complain of them as the first emigrants in Australia had to complain of thistles; for they found none there, and none would have been there if they had not been carried there. If we live simply by faith on the cross of Christ, we live in a land where there are no thistles, but if we will live on self, we shall have plenty of thistles and thorns, and briers, and nettles growing there. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

III. And now I invite you to a glorious scene - CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. Come you here, and look at him, as the old serpent bruises his heel!

"He dies! the friend of sinners dies,
And Salem's daughters weep around."

He was wrapped in his grave-clothes and put into his grave, and there he slept three days and nights. And on the first day of the week, he, who could not be holden by the bands of death, and whose flesh did not see corruption, neither did his soul abide in Hades - he arose from the dead. In vain the bands that swaddled him; he unfolded them by himself, and by his own living power wrapped them in perfect order, and laid them in their place. In vain the stone and the seal; the angel appeared and rolled away the stone, and forth the Saviour came. In vain the guards and watchmen; for in terror they fled far away, and he rose the conqueror over death - the firstfruits of them that slept. By his own power and might, he came again to life. I see among my congregation, not a few wearing the black weeds of sorrow. You have lost, some of you, the dearest of your earthly relatives. There are others here, who, I doubt not, are under the constant fear of death. You are all your lifetime subject to bondage, because you are thinking upon the groans, and dying strife, which fall upon men, when they near the river Jordan. Come, come, I beseech you, ye weeping and timid spirits, behold Jesus Christ risen! For remember, this is a great truth - "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." And the verse of our song just embodies it: -

"What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

There widow; weep no longer for your husband, if he died in Jesus. See the Master; he is risen from the dead; no spectre is he. In the presence of his disciples he eats a piece of broiled fish and part of an honeycomb. No spirit is he; for he saith, "Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." That was a real resurrection. And learn then, beloved, when you weep, to restrain your sorrows; for thy loved ones *shall* live again. Not only shall their spirits live, but their bodies too.

"Corruption, earth, and worms,
Do but refine this flesh;
At the archangel's sounding trump,
We put it on afresh."

Oh! think not that the worm has eaten up your children, your friends, your husband, your father, your aged parents - true, the worms seem to have devoured them. Oh! what is the worm after all, but the filter through which our poor filthy flesh must go? For in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed, you shall see the eye that just now has been closed, and you shall look on it again, you shall again grasp the hand that just now fell motionless at the side. You shall kiss the lips that just now were clay-cold, and white, and you shall hear again the voice that is silent in the tomb. They shall live again. And you that fear death - why fear to die? Jesus died before you, and he passed through the iron gates, and as he passed through them before you, he will come and meet you. Jesus who lives can

"Make the dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Why should you weep? for Jesus rose from the dead; so shall you. Be of good cheer and confidence. You are not lost when you are put into the tomb; you are but seed sown to ripen against the eternal harvest. Your spirit mounts to God; your body slumbers for awhile to be quickened into eternal life. It cannot be quickened except it die; but when it dies it shall receive a new life; it shall not be destroyed. "they looked to him, and were lightened." Oh! this is a precious thing to look to - a risen Saviour. I know of nothing that can lift our spirits higher than a true view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have not lost any friends then; they have gone before. We shall not die ourselves; we shall seem to die, but are shall begin to live; for it is written

"He lives to die; he dies to live;
He lives to die no more."

May that be the lot of each one of us!

IV. And with the greatest possible brevity, I invite you to LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN. After forty days, he takes his disciples to the hill, and while he discourses with them, on a sudden he mounts upward; and he is separated from them, and a cloud receives him into glory. Perhaps I may be allowed a little poetical license if I try to picture that which occurred after he ascended into the clouds. The angels came from heaven -

"They brought his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."

I doubt not, that with matchless triumph he ascended the hill of light and went to the celestial city, and when he neared the portals of that great metropolis of the universe, the angels shouted, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors," and the bright spirits from burning battlements, cried out, "Who is this King of Glory - who?" And the answer came, "the Lord mighty in battle, and the Lord of Hosts; he is the King of Glory." And then both they upon the walls, and they who walk with the chariot join the song once more, and with one mighty sea of music, beating its melodious waves against the gates of heaven and forcing them open, the strain is heard, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in" - and in he went. And at his feet the angelic hosts all cast their crowns, and forth came the blood-washed and met him, not casting roses at his feet, as are do at the feet of conquerors in our streets, but casting immortal flowers, imperishable wreaths of honor that never can decay; while again, again, again, the heavens did ring with this melody, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father - unto him be glory forever and ever. And all the saints and all the angels said, "Amen." Now look here ye Christians, here is your comfort; Jesus Christ won wrestling with spiritual enemies, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; you are at war today, and mayhap the enemy has thrust sore at you, and you have been ready to fall; it is a marvel to

you, that you have not turned your back in the day of battle, for you have often feared lest you should be made to fly like a coward from the field. But tremble not, your Master was more than conqueror, and so shall you be. The day is coming when with splendor less than his, but yet the same in its measure, you too shall pass the gates of bliss; when you are dying, angels shall meet you in the mid-stream, and when your blood is cooling with the cold current, then shall your heart be warming with another stream, a stream of light and heat from the great fountain of all joy, and you shall stand on the other side of Jordan, and angels shall meet you clothed in their immaculate garments, they shall attend you up the hill of light, and they shall chant the praise of Jesus, and hail you as another trophy of his power. And when you enter the gates of heaven, you shall be met with Christ your Master, who will say to you - "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord." Then will you feel that you are sharing in his victory, as once you shared in his struggles and his war. Fight on, Christian, your glorious Captain has won a great victory, and has secured for you in one and the same victory, a standard that never yet was stained with defeat, though often dipped in the blood of the slain.

V. And now once more "Look unto him, and be lightened." See there he sits is, heaven, he has led captivity captive, and now sits at the right hand of God, for ever making intercession for us. Can your faith picture him today? Like a great high priest of old, he stands with outstretched arms: there is majesty in his mien, for he is no mean cringing suppliant. He does not beat his breast, nor cast his eyes upon the ground, but with authority he pleads enthroned in glory now. There on his head is the bright shining mitre of his priesthood, and look you, on his breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of his elect are everlastingly engraved; hear him as he pleads, hear you not what it is? - is that your prayer that he is mentioning before the throne? The prayer that this morning you offered ere you came to the house of God, Christ is now offering before his Father's throne. The vow which just now you uttered when you said, "Have pity and have mercy," - he is now uttering there. He is the Altar and the Priest, and with his own sacrifice he perfumes our prayers. And yet, mayhap, you have been at prayer many a day, and had no answer; poor weeping suppliant, thou hast sought the Lord and he

hath not heard thee, or at least not answered thee to thy soul's delight; thou hast cried unto him, but the heavens have been as brass, and he hath shut out thy prayer, thou art full of darkness and heaviness on account of this," Look to him, and be lightened." If thou dost not succeed, he will; if thy intercession be unnoticed, his cannot be passed away; if thy prayers can be like water spilt on a rock which cannot be gathered up, yet his prayers are not like that, he is God's Son, he pleads and must prevail; God cannot refuse his own Son what he now asks, he who once bought mercies with his blood. Oh! be of good cheer, continue still thy supplication. "Look unto him, and be lightened."

VI. In the last place, there are some of you here, weary with this world's din and clamor, and with this world's iniquity and vice. You have been striving all your life long, to put an end to the reign of sin, and it seems as if your efforts have been fruitless; the pillars of hell stand as fast as ever and the black palace of evil is not laid in ruins; you have brought against it all the battering-rams of prayer, and the might of God, you have thought, - and yet the world still sins, its rivers still roll with blood, its plains are still defiled with the lascivious dance, and its ear is still polluted with the filthy song and profane oath. God is not honored; man is still vile; and perhaps you are saying, "It is vain for us to fight on, we have undertaken a task which cannot be accomplished. the kingdoms of this world never can become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." But, Christian, "Look unto him, and be lightened." Lo! he cometh, he cometh, he cometh quickly; and what we cannot do in six thousand years, he can do in an instant. Lo! he comes, he comes to reign; we may try to build his throne, but we shall not accomplish it. But when he comes, he shall build his throne himself, on solid pillars of light and sit and judge in Jerusalem, amidst his saints, gloriously. Perhaps to-day, the hour we are assembled, Christ may come - "For of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven." Christ Jesus may, while I yet speak, appear in the clouds of glory. We have no reason to be guessing at the time of his appearing, he will come as a thief in the night; and whether it shall be at cock-crowing, or broadday, or at midnight, we are not allowed to guess; it is left entirely in the dark, and vain are the prophecies of men, vain your "Apocalyptic Sketches," or ought of that. No man knoweth anything of it, except that it is certain he will come; but when he comes,

no spirit in heaven or on earth should pretend to know. Oh! it is my joyous hope, that he may come whilst yet I live. Perhaps there may be some of us here who shall be alive, and remain at the coming of the Son of Man. Oh, glorious hope! we shall have to sleep, but we shall all be changed. He may come now, and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall be for ever with him. But if you die, Christian, this is your hope. "I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." And this is to be your duty, "Watch, therefore, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Oh, will I not work on, for Christ is at the door! Oh! I will not give up toiling never so hard, for my Master cometh, and his reward is with him, and his work before him, giving unto every man according as his work shall be. Oh, I will not lie down in despair, for the trump is sounding now. Methinks I hear the trampling of the conquering legion, the last of God's mighty heroes are even now, perhaps, born into the world. The hour of this revival is the hour of the turning of the battle; thick has been the fight. and hot and furious the struggle, but the trump of the Conqueror is beginning to sound, the angel is lifting it now to his lips. The first blast has been heard across the sea, and we shall hear it yet again; or if we hear it not in these our days, yet still it is our hope. He comes, he comes, and every eye shall see him, and they that have crucified him shall weep and wail before him, but the righteous shall rejoice, and shall magnify him exceedingly. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

I remember I concluded preaching at Exeter Hall with these three words, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" and I think I will conclude my sermon of this morning with the same words, but not till I have spoken to one poor forlorn soul who is standing over there, wondering whether there is mercy for him. He says, "It is well enough, sir, to say, 'Look to Jesus,' but suppose you cannot look? If your eye is blind - what then?" Oh I my poor brother, turn your restless eyeballs to the cross, and that light which gives light to them that see, shall give eyesight to them that are blind. Oh! if thou canst not believe this morning, look and consider, and weigh the matter, and in weighing and reflecting thou shalt be helped to believe. He asks nothing of thee; he bids thee now believe that he died for thee. If to-day thou feelest thyself a lost, guilty sinner, all he asks is that thou

wouldest believe on him; that is to say, trust him, confide in him. Is it not little he asks? And yet it is more than any of us are prepared to give, except the Spirit hath made us willing. Come, cast yourselves upon him; fall flat on his promise; sink or swim, confide in him, and you cannot guess the joy that you shall feel in that one instant that you believe on him. Were there not some of you impressed last Sabbath day, and you have been anxious all the week? Oh! I hope I have brought a good message to you this morning for your comfort. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," saith Christ, "for I am God, and beside me there is none else." Look ye now, and looking ye shall live. May every blessing rest upon you, and may each go away to think of that one person whom we love, even Jesus - Jesus - Jesus!

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The Lord - The Liberator

The Lord looseth the prisoners. - Psalm 146:7

When preaching last Tuesday in Dover, the mayor of the town very courteously lent the ancient town-hall for the service, and in passing along to reach a private entrance, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level than the great hall. These belonged to the prison cells where persons committed for offenses within the jurisdiction of the borough were confined. It at once struck me as a singular combination, that we should be preaching the gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the law beneath us. Perhaps when we sang praises to God, the prisoners, like those who were in the same jail with Paul and Silas, heard us; but the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loose their bonds. Alas! what a picture is this of many in our congregations. We preach liberty to the captives; we proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; but how many remain year after year in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin. We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas! their hearts are unused to

gratitude. Some of them are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others of them are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found. Let us breathe a prayer at the commencement of the sermon this morning, "Lord, break the fetters, and set free the captives. Glorify thyself this morning by proving thyself to be Jehovah, who looseth the prisoners."

The little circumstance which I have mentioned, fixed itself in my mind, and in my private meditations it thrust itself upon me. My thoughts ran somewhat in an allegory, until I gave imagination its full rein and bid her bear me at her will. In my day-dream I thought that some angelic warder was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison, and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me ever and anon as I looked sorrowful, that "Jehovah looseth the prisoners." What I thought of, I will now tell out to you. The dress of the sermon may be metaphorical; but my only aim is to utter comforting, substantial truth, and may the Master grant that some of you who have been in these prisons, as I have been, may this day come out of them, and rejoice that the Lord has loosed you.

I. The first cell to which I went, and to which I shall conduct you, is called the common prison. In this common prison, innumerable souls are shut up. It were useless to attempt to count them; they are legion; their number is ten thousand times ten thousand. This is the ward of SIN. All the human race have been prisoners here; and those who this day are perfectly at liberty, once wore the heavy chain, and were immured within the black walls of this enormous prison. I stepped into it, and to my surprise, instead of hearing, as I had expected, notes of mourning and lament, I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter. The mirth was boisterous and obstreperous. The profane were cursing and blaspheming; others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals, and saw sparkling gaiety: their aspect was rather that of wedding-guests than prisoners. Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free, and when I spoke to them of their prison-house, and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, "We were born free, and were never in bondage unto any man." They bade me prove my words; and when I pointed to the irons on

their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved; it was only my dull and sombre mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains. There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free-livers, while others whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks, cried out to me, that they were freethinkers. Truly, I had never seen such bond-slaves in my life before, nor any so fast manacled as these; but ever did I mark as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free, and those who were in the darkest part of the dungeon, thought they had most light, and those whom I considered to be the most wretched, and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth. I looked with sorrow but as I looked, I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the shining one. He went out, and I knew, for I had read the text—"The Lord looseth the prisoners," I knew that the prisoner had been loosed from the house of bondage. But I noted that as he went forth his late bond-fellows laughed and pointed with the finger, and called him sniveller, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all ill names, until the prison walls rang and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched, and saw the mysterious visitant touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared. The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad; that they were become slaves, or miserable fanatics, whereas I knew that they were gone to be free for ever; emancipated from every bond. What struck me most was, that the prisoners who were touched with the finger of delivering love were frequently the worst of the whole crew. I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all, but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken, and I remembered that I had somewhere in an old book read these words—"The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you." As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress

which they had worn before, but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures. They began to talk with their fellow prisoners; and, oh! how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had; that yonder door would open, and that they might escape. They pleaded with their fellow-men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake. At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, "Let us be free." But no; the more these men pleaded the harder the others seemed to grow, and, indeed, I found it so when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. Wherever the finger of the shining one was felt our pleadings easily prevailed; but save and except in those who were thus touched by the heavenly messenger all our exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and we left that den of iniquity crying, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then I was cast into a muse, as I considered what a marvel of mercy it was that I myself should be free; for well do I remember when I spurned every invitation of love; when hugged my chains, dreamed my prison garb to be a royal robe, and took the meals of the prison, called the pleasures of sin, and relished them as sweet, yea, dainty morsels, fit for princes. How it came to pass that sovereign grace should have set me free I cannot tell; only this I know, I will sing for ever, while I live and when I die, that "The Lord looseth the prisoners." Our gracious God knoweth how to bring us up out from among the captives of sin, set our feet in the way of righteousness and liberty, make us his people, and keep us so for ever. Alas! how many have I now before me who are prisoners in this common prison?

"Oh! sovereign grace, their hearts subdue;
May they be freed from bondage too;
As willing followers of the Lord,
Brought forth to freedom by his word."

II. I asked the guide where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free perfectly free; but that before their complete gaol deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led

me thither. It was called the solitary cell. I had heard much of the solitary system, and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—"PENITENCE," and when I opened it I found it so clean and white, and withal so sweet and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a house of prayer than a prison, and my guide told me that indeed so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast made it a prison at all. When once that door was open the place became so dear an oratory, that those who were once prisoners therein were wont to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long. He even told me that one was heard to say when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was, that in heaven there would be no cell of penitence. Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms; Peter also wept bitterly here; and the woman who was a sinner here washed the feet of her Lord. But this time I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation; but he learned that he must be saved alone if saved at all. He had been accustomed aforetime to go up to the house of God in company, and thought that going there was enough; but now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threatening smote his conscience. I remembered to have read a passage in the same old book I quoted just now—"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned full oft, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances some words of unbelief. Alas! were it not for these, that heavy door would long

ago have been taken from its hinges. 'Twas unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell I say it had been an oratory for heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation. As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophesied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly, and destroyed his soul eternally. How foolish his fears were all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it there was a shining one standing ready outside who would open the door at once; yea, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called faith, and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open. Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts thereof the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open, and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin, and cleansed him for ever from all iniquity. So I spoke to this penitent, and bade him trust in the blood, and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner; but this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, 'tis the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

III. I passed away from that cell, though I would have been content to linger there, and I halted at another; this, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as heavy and as ponderous as the former. I heard the warder coming, and when he opened the door for me it grated horribly upon its hinges, and disturbed the silence, for this time I was come into the silent cell. The wretch confined here was one who said he could not pray. If he could pray he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, weeping because he could not pray. All he could tell me, as his eyeballs rolled in agony, was this—"I would, but cannot, pray; I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word, my guilt has smitten me dumb." Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing; all was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary miserere of sighs and groans. Verily thought I this is a sad and singular

case, yet I remember when I was in that cell myself I did not think it strange. I thought that the heavens were brass above me, and that if I cried never so earnestly the Lord would shut out my prayer. I durst not pray, I was too guilty, and when I did dare to pray 'twas hardly prayer, for I had no hope of being heard. "No," I said, "it is presumption; I must not plead with him;" and when at times I would have prayed, I could not; something choked all utterance, and the spirit could only lament, and long, and pant, and sigh to be able to pray. I know that some of you have been in this prison, and while I am talking to you this morning you will remember it, and bless God for deliverance. Perhaps some of you are in it now, and though I say I think your case is very strange, it will not seem so to you. But do you know, there was a little table in this cell, and on the table lay a key of promise, inscribed with choice words. I am sure the key would unlock the prison-door, and if the prisoner had possessed skill to use it; he might have made his escape at once. This was the key, and these were the words thereon—"The Lord looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans; if he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from heaven, with this purpose, that he may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man's broken heart and set him free; for though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it has prayed, and it shall prevail. I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and I talked to him, though he would not speak with me. I reminded him that the book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus had taught to speak, and I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly too. I turned to the book of Jonah, and read him these words,— "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me."

I quoted the words of Elias, "Go again seven times." I told him that the Lord needed no fine language, for misery is the best argument for mercy, and our wounds the best mouths to speak to God's ear. Besides, I told him we have an Advocate with the Father who openeth his mouth for the dumb, so that those who cannot speak for themselves have one to speak for them. I told the man that whether he could pray or not he was bidden to look at the blood-marks over his door; that the publican was justified

by the blood, though he could only cry "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I pleaded with him to receive the Lord's own testimony, that the Lord Jesus is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him," that he waited to be gracious, and was a God ready to pardon; but after all, I felt that the Lord alone must loose his prisoners. O, gracious God, loose them now!

IV. We had not time to stay long at any one place, so we hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! 'Twas dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called the cell of ignorance. I groped as a blind man gropeth for the wall. I was guided by my ear by sobs and moans to a spot where there knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light, but I marvelled why this place should be darker than the rest, only I recollected to have read of some that sat "in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light to him. I felt for one of the ancient lightholes, but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness; I touched it with my hand and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the doctrines of grace which had greatly perplexed him; it was called Election. He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine, but since God had chosen his people, and he felt persuaded that he had not chosen him, he was lost for ever, since if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy. I went up to that window and pulled out some handfuls of rags; filthy rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening; caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of divine sovereignty. As I pulled out these rags, light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, "It is a mercy for thee that there is such a doctrine as election, for if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for thee; salvation must either be by God's will or by man's merit; if it were by man's merit, thou wouldest never be saved, but since it is by

God's will, and he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, there is no reason why he should not have mercy on thee, even though thou mayest be the chief of sinners. Meanwhile he bids thee believe in his Son Jesus, and gives thee his divine word for it, that "Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." The little light thus shed upon the poor man led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called—The Fall—or Human Depravity. The man said, "Oh, there is no hope for me for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceeding vile; there is no hope for me." I pulled the rags out of this window too, and I said to him, "Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you are lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty." He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through and seen my Master's glory by its means; it was the doctrine of Particular Redemption. "Ah!" said he, "suppose Christ has not redeemed me with his precious blood! Suppose he has never bought me with his death!" I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskilful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Ah!" he said, "but suppose I am not one of the 'us!'" I told him that he that believeth and trusteth Christ, is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved. I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence; but a ransom which did redeem all believers, who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them; that the truth had been misrepresented to him, and he had heard the doctrines of grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide who had led him into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened and the man could see, he saw written over the door, "Believe and live!" and in the new light which he had found he trusted his Lord and Savior, and walked out free, and marvelled that he had been so long a slave. I marvelled not, but I thought in my heart how accursed are those teachers who hide the light from the eyes of men so that they understand not the way of life. Ignorant souls, who know not

the plan of salvation, will have many sorrows, which they might escape by instruction. Study your Bibles well; be diligent in attending upon a free-grace ministry; labor after a clear apprehension of the plan of salvation, and it will often please God that when you come to understand his truth your spirits will receive comfort, for it is by the truth that "the Lord looseth the prisoners."

V. I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle, and a huge cannon-ball fixed to it—a military punishment they said for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This clog of habit troubled the prisoner much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavoring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence thereon; but these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warder told me that this was the chain of Habit, and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off, and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison; the door of unbelief must be opened, and they must trust in the one great deliverer the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors; after that, upon the anvil of grace with the hammer of love, their fetters could be broken off. I stayed awhile, and I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning grace. He had aforetime labored to escape from his drunkenness, but some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood and he became a Christian, and becoming a Christian he could no more love his cups; at one stroke of the hammer the ball was gone for ever. Another was a swearer; he knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ, and then he never blasphemed again, for that foul thing was abhorred. I noticed some, and methinks I am one of them myself, although they had the ball taken away, yet on their hands there were the remains of old chains. Like Paul, in another case, when we rejoice in all things we have to say, "Except these bonds." Once we were chained both hands together; the divine hammer has smitten off the connecting links, but still some one or

two are left hanging there. Ah! often has that link made me cry out—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Though I am free, yet still the iron clings to its hold, and will hang there till I die. "When I would do good evil is present with me." O that old Adam nature, the corrupt flesh, would God we were rid of it! Blessed be the Lord, as the pulse begins to beat high with heaven's glory, the band will burst, and we shall be perfect for ever. There is no way of getting rid of the links of old habits but by leaving the prison of unbelief and coming to Christ, then the evil habits are renounced as a necessary consequence though the temptation will remain. Though sometimes we have to feel a link of the chain, it is a subject of unbounded thankfulness that the link is not fastened to the staple. We may sometimes feel it dragging behind, enough to trip us up, so that we cannot run in the path of obedience as swiftly as we would, but it is not in the staple now. The bird can fly; though there be a remnant of its cord about its foot it mounts up to heaven, singing its song of praise. The Lord must loose prisoners from their evil habits. He can do it; a drop of Jesu's blood can eat the iron all away, and the file of his agonies can cut through the chain of long-acquired sins, and make us free. "The Lord looseth the prisoners."

VI. I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labor for them. In the prison I went to see in my reverie there was a hard-labor room. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people; they held their heads very high, and would not bend; they were birds with fine feathers, and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined, but being in durance vile, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty. They had saved up a few old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could by-and-bye set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing, and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a tread-wheel; they were going to the stars they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might; but though they had been laboring for years, and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies. Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs; they were turning

wheels, and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing they wrought on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place a company labored to build houses of sand, and when they had built up to some height the foundation always yielded, but they renewed their efforts, for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavoring to make wedding garments out of fig-leaves, by sewing them together, but the fig-leaves were of a sort that were shrivelled every night, so that they had to begin the next morning their hopeless toil. Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well, the veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked amain without result. As they labored, like Samson when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thonged whip called the Law, the terrible Law—each lash being a commandment, and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners; yet still they kept on work, work, work, and would not turn to the door of grace to find escape. I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies; and there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die, but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more, and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit; then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a shining spirit, and carried out of the prison and made free for ever. Then I thought within myself, 'Surely, surely, these are proud self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by grace, therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.'" I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison-house to bring them to Jesus; yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage and would not escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words—"By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified;" and to these other words, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." I had seen

enough of that prison-house, for I recollect being there myself, and I have some of the scars upon my spirit now. I desire not to go back to it, but as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord so would I walk in Him, knowing that if the Son make me free I shall be free indeed.

VII. We must not leave these corridors till we have peered into all the cells; for we may not come here again. As I passed along, there was another cell, called The Low Dungeon of Despondency. I had read of this in the book of Jeremiah—a pit wherein there was no water, of which the prophet said, "He hath led me and brought me into darkness and not into light." I looked down. It was a deep, dark, doleful place; down in it I saw by the gloomy light of the warder's lantern a poor soul in very deep distress, and I bade him speak to me, and tell me his case. He said he had been a great offender, and he knew it; he had been convinced of sin; he had heard the gospel preached, and sometimes he thought it was for him, but at other times he felt sure it was not; there were seasons when his spirit could lay hold of Christ, but there were times when he dared not hope. Now and then, he said, some gleams of light did come; once a week when he had his provision sent down, a little fresh bread and water, he did feel a little encouraged, but by the time the Monday came—for his provision was always sent down on Sunday—he felt himself as low and miserable as ever. I called out to him that there was a ladder up the side of the prison and if he would but climb it, he might escape, but the poor soul could not feel the steps. I reminded him that he need not be where he was, for a divine hand had let down ropes to draw him up, with soft cushions for his armholes; but I seemed as one that mocked him, and I heard some that tormented him bid him call me "liar." These were two villains called Mistrust and Timorous, who were bent upon keeping him here, even though they knew that he was an heir of heaven, and had a right to liberty. Finding myself powerless, I thus learned the more fully that the Lord must loose these prisoners or else they must be prisoners for many a-day; yet it was a great comfort to recollect that no soul ever died in that dungeon if it had really felt its need of Christ, and cried for mercy through his blood. No soul ever utterly perished while it called upon the name of the Lord; it might lie in the hold till it seemed as if the moss would grow on its eye-lids, and the worms eat its mildewed corpse, but it never did perish, for in due time it was brought by simple faith to

believe that Christ is "able to save, even to the uttermost," and then they come up, O how quickly, from their low dungeon, and they sing more sweetly than others—"He hath brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; he hath set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, and established my going."

VIII. Shudder not at the clinging damps, for I must take you to another dungeon deeper than this last; it is called the inner prison. Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, yet they sang in their prison; but in this dungeon no singing was ever heard. It is the hold of despair. I need not enlarge much in my description. I hope you have never been there; and I pray you never may. Ah! when a spirit once gets into that inner prison, comforts are turned at once into miseries, and the very promises of God appear to be in league for the destruction of the soul. John Bunyan describes old Giant Despair and his crab-tree cudgel better than I can do it. Sorrowful is that ear which has heard the grating of the huge iron door, and full of terror is the heart which has felt the chilly damps of that horrible pit. Are any of you in that dungeon to-day? Do you say, "I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; my day of grace is over; I have sinned against light and knowledge; I am lost?" O man, where are you? I must have you free. What a splendid trophy of grace you will make! My Master loves to find such great sinners as you are, that he may exhibit his power to save. Oh! what a platform for my Lord to rear the standard of his love upon, when he shall have fought with you and overcome you by his love. What a victory this shall be. How will the angels sing unto him that loved the vilest of the vile, and ransomed the despairing one out of the hand of cruel foes. I have more hope of you than I have of others; for when the surgeon enters the hospital after an accident, he always goes to the worse case first. If there be a man who has broken his finger only, "Oh! let him be," say they, "he can wait;" but if there be a Poor fellow who is much mangled, "Ah!" says the surgeon, "I must see to this case at once." So is it with you; but the Lord must loose you; I cannot. Only this I know, if you would but believe me, there is a key which will fit the lock of your door of unbelief. Come, look over this bunch of keys: "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He

that believeth on him is not condemned." "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Brother, this inner dungeon can be opened by the Lord Jesus.

"The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield."

IX. I am getting to the end of this dark story now, but tarry a moment at the grating of the Devil's Torture Chamber, for I have been in it; yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream; I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I do know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan's "Grace abounding," if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God; the truth of Scripture; the manhood of Christ; then his deity; and once, he says, he tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah! I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphem in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God, till I put my hand to my mouth lest they should be uttered, and I was cast down, and cried to the merciful God that he would save me from them. Oh! the foul things which the fiend will inject into the spirit; the awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den, which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts in such hosts, and so quickly the one after the other, that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle, and though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison. Ah! well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those, for if we hate them they are none of ours; if we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan's and God will in due time bring us to be free from these horrors. Though the hosts of hell may have ridden over our heads, yet, let us cry "Rejoice not over me O mine enemy, though I fall yet shall I rise again." Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. "It is written"—"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Give your foe a deadly stab; tell him that "God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and you may yet see him spread his

dragon wings and fly away. This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner, and the Lord himself must loose these prisoners.

X. Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined therein have called the condemned cell. I was in it once. In that room the man writes bitter things against himself; he feels absolutely sure that the wrath of God abideth on him; he wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up; he is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness; he marvels that he has his breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame. His spirit is in a dreadful state; he not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now. The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the putting-up of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the lair as piece after piece was put together! It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away for ever. Oh! that condemned cell! Next to Tophet, there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience he shall never be condemned. When he is once brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out, but not to execution; led out, but not to perish, "he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, just so does God deal with poor souls; when they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God's sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain, it is then that sovereign mercy steps in and cries, "I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins; thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee."

And now, thou glorious Jehovah, the Liberator, unto thee be praises! All thy redeemed bless thee, and those who are to-day in their dungeons cry unto thee! Stretch out thy bare arm, thou mighty Deliverer! Thou who didst send thy Son Jesus to redeem by blood, send now thy Spirit to set free by power, and this day, even this day, let multitudes rejoice in the liberty wherewith thou makest free; and unto Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Israel's one Redeemer, be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

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The Lord And The Leper

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. and Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. - Mark 1:40-42

Beloved, we saw in the reading, that our Lord had been engaged in special prayer. He had gone alone on the mountain-side to have communion with God. Simon and the rest search for him, and he comes away in the early morning with the burrs from the hill-side upon his garments, the smell of the field upon him, even of a field that the Lord God had blessed; he comes forth among the people, charged with power which he had received in communion with the Father; and now we may expect to see wonders. And we do see them; for devils fear and fly when he speaks the word; and by-and-by, there comes to him one, an extraordinary being, condemned to live apart from the rest of men, lest he should spread defilement all around. A leper comes to him, and kneels before him, and expresses his confident faith in him, that he can make him whole. Now is the Son of Man glorious in his power to save.

The Lord Jesus Christ at this day has all power in heaven and in earth. He

is charged with a divine energy to bless all who come to him for healing. Oh, that we may see today some great wonder of his power and grace! Oh, for one of the days of the Son of Man here and now! To that end it is absolutely needful that we should find a case for his spiritual power to work upon. Is there not one here in whom his grace may prove its omnipotence? Not you, ye good, ye self-righteous! You yield him no space to work in. You that are whole have no need of a physician: in you there is no opportunity for him to display his miraculous force. But yonder are the men we seek for. Forlorn, and lost, full of evil, and self-condemned, you are the characters we seek. You that feel as if you were possessed with evil spirits, and you that are leprous with sin, you are the persons in whom Jesus will find ample room and verge enough for the display of his holy skill. Of you I might say, as he once said of the man born blind: you are here that the works of God may be manifest in you. You, with your guilt and your depravity, you furnish the empty vessels into which his grace may be poured, the sick souls upon whom he may display his matchless power to bless and save. Be hopeful, then, ye sinful ones! Look up this morning for the Lord's approach, and expect that even in you he will work great marvels. This leper shall be a picture-yea, I hope a mirror- in whom you will see yourselves. I do pray that as I go over the details of this miracle many here may put themselves in the leper's place, and do just as the leper did, and receive, just as the leper received, cleansing from the hand of Christ. O Spirit of the living God, the thousands of our Israel now entreat thee to work, that Jesus, the Son of God, may be glorified here and now!

I. I will begin my rehearsal of the gospel narrative by remarking, first, that **THIS LEPER'S FAITH MADE HIM EAGER TO BE HEALED**. He was a leper; I will not stay just now to describe what horrors are compacted into that single word; but he believed that Jesus could cleanse him, and his belief stirred him to an anxious desire to be healed at once.

Alas! we have to deal with spiritual lepers eaten up with the foul disease of sin; but some of them do not believe that they ever can be healed, and the consequence is that despair makes them sin most greedily. "I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," is the inward impression of many a sinner when he fears that there is no mercy and no help for him.

Because there is no hope, therefore they plunge deeper and yet deeper into the slough of iniquity. Oh, that you might be delivered from that false idea! Mercy still rules the hour. There is hope while Jesus sends his gospel to you, and bids you repent. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins": this is a sweet sentence of a true creed. I believe also in the renewal of men's hearts; for the Lord can give new hearts and right spirits to the evil and unthankful. I would that you believed it; for if you did, I trust it would quicken you into seeking that your sins might be forgiven and your minds might be renewed. Do you believe it? Then come to Jesus and receive the blessings of free grace.

We have a number of lepers who come in among us whose disease is white upon their brows, and visible to all beholders, and yet they are indifferent: they do not mourn their wickedness, nor wish to be cleansed from it. They sit among God's people, and they listen to the doctrine of a new birth, and the news of pardon, and they hear the teaching as though it had nothing to do with them. If now and then they half wish that salvation would come to them, it is too languid a wish to last. They have not yet so perceived their disease and their danger as to pray to be delivered from them. They sleep on upon the bed of sloth, and care neither for heaven nor hell. Indifference to spiritual things is the sin of the age. Men are stolid of heart about eternal realities. An awful apathy is upon the multitude. The leper in our text was not so foolish as this. He eagerly desired to be delivered from his dreadful malady: with heart and soul he pined to be cleansed from its terrible defilement. Oh that it were so with you! May the Lord make you feel how depraved your heart is, and how diseased with sin are all the faculties of your soul! Alas, dear friends, —there are some that even love their leprosy! Is it not a sad thing to have to speak thus? Surely, madness is in men's hearts. Men do not wish to be saved from doing evil. They love the ways and wages of iniquity. They would like to go to heaven, but they must have their drunken frolics on the road; they would very well like to be saved from hell, but not from the sin which is the cause of it. Their notion of salvation is not to be saved from the love of evil, and to be made pure and clean; but that is God's meaning when he speaks of salvation. How can they hope to be the slaves of sin, and yet at the same time be free? Our first necessity is to be saved from sinning. The very name of Jesus tells us that: he is called Jesus

because "he shall save his people from their sins." These persons do not care for a salvation which would mean self-denial and the giving up of ungodly lusts. O wretched lepers, that count their leprosy to be a beauty, and take pleasure in sin which in the sight of God is far more loathsome than the worst disease of the body! Oh, that Christ Jesus would come and change their views of things until they were of the same mind as God towards sin; and you know he calls it "that abominable thing which I hate." Oh, if men could see their love to wrong things to be a disease more sickening than leprosy, they would fain be saved, and saved at once! Holy Spirit, convince of sin, that sinners may be eager to be cleansed!

Lepers were obliged to consort together: lepers associated with lepers, and they must have made up a dreadful confraternity. How glad they would have been to escape from it! But I know spiritual lepers who love the company of their fellow lepers. Yes, and the more leprous a man becomes, the more do they admire him. A bold sinner is often the idol of his comrades. Though foul is his life, others cling to him for that very reason. Such persons like to learn some new bit of wickedness, they are eager to be initiated into a yet darker form of impure pleasure. Oh, how they long to hear that last lascivious song, to read that last impure novel! It seems to be the desire of many to know as much evil as they can. They flock together, and take a dreadful pleasure in talk and action which is the horror of all pure minds. Strange lepers, that heap up leprosy as a treasure! Even those who do not go into gross open sin, yet are pleased with infidel notions and skeptical opinions, which are a wretched form of mental leprosy. O horrible malady, which makes men doubt the word of the living God!

Lepers were not allowed to associate with healthy persons except under severe restrictions. Thus were they separated from their nearest and dearest friends. What a sorrow! Alas! I know persons thus separated, who do not wish to associate with the godly: to them holy company is dull and wearisome; they do not feel free and easy in such society, and therefore they avoid it as much as decency allows. How can they hope to live with saints for ever, when they shun them now as dull and moping acquaintances?

O my hearers, I have come hither this morning in the hope that God would bless the word to some poor sinner who feels he is a sinner, and would fain be cleansed: such is the leper I am seeking with my whole heart. I pray God to bless the word to those who wish to escape from evil company, who would no longer sit in the assembly of the mockers, nor run in the paths of the unholy. To those who have grown weary of their sinful companions, and would escape from them, lest they should be bound up in bundles with them to burn at the last great day—to such I speak at this time with a loving desire for their salvation. I hope my word will come with divine application to some poor heart here that is crying, "I wish I might be numbered with the people of God. I wish I were fit to be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord. Oh, that my dreadful sinfulness were conquered, so that I could have fellowship with the godly, and be myself one of them!" I hope my Lord has brought to this place just such lost ones, that he may find them. I am looking out for them with tearful eyes. But my feeble eyes cannot read inward character; and it is well that the loving Saviour, who discerns the secrets of all hearts, and reads all inward desire, is looking from the watch-towers of heaven, that he may discover those who are coming to him, even though as yet they are a great way off. Oh that sinners may now beg and pray to be rescued from their sins! May those who have become habituated to evil long to break off their evil habits! Happy will the preacher be if he finds himself surrounded with penitents who hate their sins, and guilty ones who cry to be forgiven, and to be so changed that they shall go and sin no more.

II. In the second place, let us remark that **THIS LEPER'S FAITH WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT HE COULD BE HEALED OF HIS HIDEOUS DISEASE.** Leprosy was an unutterably loathsome disease. As it exists even now, it is described by those who have seen it in such a way that I will not harrow your feelings by repeating all the sickening details. The following quotation may be more than sufficient. Dr. Thomson in his famous work, "The Land and the Book," speaks of lepers in the East, and says, "The hair falls from the head and eye-brows; the nails loosen, decay and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up and slowly fall away. The gums are absorbed, and the teeth disappear. The nose, the eyes, the tongue and the palate are slowly consumed." This disease turns a man into a mass of

loathsomeness, a walking pile of pests. Leprosy is nothing better than a horrible and lingering death. The leper in the narrative before us had sad personal experience of this, and yet he believed that Jesus could cleanse him. Splendid faith! Oh that you who are afflicted with moral and spiritual leprosy could believe in this fashion! Jesus Christ of Nazareth can heal even you. Over the horror of leprosy faith triumphed. Oh that in your case it would overcome the terribleness of sin!

Leprosy was known to be incurable. There was no case of a man being cured of real leprosy by any medical or surgical treatment. This made the cure of Naaman in former ages so noteworthy. Observe, moreover, that our Saviour himself, so far as I can see, had never healed a leper up to the moment when this poor wretch appeared upon the scene. He had cured fever, and had cast out devils, but the cure of leprosy was in the Saviour's life as yet an unexampled thing. Yet this man, putting this and that together, and understanding something of the nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, believed that he could cure him of his incurable disease. He felt that even if the great Lord had not yet healed leprosy, he was assuredly capable of doing so great a deed, and he determined to apply to him. Was not this grand faith? Oh that such faith could be found among my hearers at this hour! Here me, O trembling sinner: if thou be as full of sin this morning as an egg is full of meat, Jesus can remove it all. If thy propensities to sin be as untamable as the wild boar of the wood, yet Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, can subdue thine iniquities, and make thee the obedient servant of his love. Jesus can turn the lion into a lamb, and he can do it now. He can transform thee where thou art sitting, saving thee in yonder pew while I am speaking the word. All things are possible to the Saviour God; and all things are possible to him that believeth. I would thou hadst such a faith as this leper had, although if it were even less it might serve thy turn, since thou hast not all his difficulties to contend with, since Jesus has already saved many sinners like thyself, and changed many hearts as hard as thine. If he shall regenerate thee, he will be doing for thee no strange thing, but only one of the daily miracles of his grace. He has now healed thousands of thy fellow lepers: canst thou not believe that he can heal the leprosy in thee?

This man had a marvelous faith, thus to believe while he was personally

the victim of the mortal malady. It is one thing to trust a doctor when you are well, but quite another to confide in him when your body is rotting away. For a real, conscious sinner to trust the Saviour is no mean thing. When you hope that there is some good thing in you, it is easy to be confident; but to be conscious of total ruin and yet to believe in the divine remedy—this is real faith. To see in the sunshine is mere natural vision; but to see in the dark needs the eye of faith: to believe that Jesus has saved you when you see the signs of it, is the result of reason; but to trust him to cleanse you while you are still defiled with sin—this is the essence of saving faith.

The leprosy was firmly seated and fully developed in this man. Luke says that he was "full of leprosy": he had as much of the poison in him as one poor body could contain, it had come to its worst stage in him; and yet he believed that Jesus of Nazareth could make him clean. Glorious confidence! O my hearer, if thou art full of sin, if thy propensities and habits have become as bad as bad can be, I pray the Holy spirit to give thee and renew thee, and do it at once. With one word of his mouth Jesus can turn your death into life, your corruption into comeliness. Changes which we cannot work in others, much less in ourselves, Jesus, by his invincible Spirit, can work in the hearts of the ungodly. Of these stones he can raise up children unto Abraham. His moral and spiritual miracles are often wrought upon cases which seem beyond all hope, cases which pity itself endeavours to forget because her efforts have been so long in vain.

I like best about this man's faith the fact that he did not merely believe that Jesus Christ could cleanse a leper, but that he could cleanse him! He said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." It is very easy to believe for other people. There is really no faith in such impersonal, proxy confidence. The true faith believes for itself first, and then for others. Oh, I know some of you are saying, "I believe that Jesus can save my brother. I believe that he can save the vilest of the vile. If I heard that he had saved the biggest drunkard in Southward I should not wonder." Canst thou believe all this, and yet fear that he cannot save thee? This is strange inconsistency. If he heals another man's leprosy, can he not heal thy leprosy? If one drunkard is saved, why not another? If in one man a passionate temper is subdued, why not in another? If lust, and

covetousness, and lying, and pride have been cured in many men, why not in thee? Even if thou art a blasphemer, blasphemy has been cured; why should it not be so in thy case? He can heal thee of that particular form of sin which possesses thee, however high a degree its power may have reached; for nothing is too hard for the Lord. Jesus can change and cleanse thee now. In a moment he can impart a new life and commence a new character. Canst thou believe this? This is the faith which glorified Jesus, and brought healing to this leper; and it is the faith which will save you at once if you now exercise it. O Spirit of the living God, work this faith in the minds of my dear hearers, that they may thus win their suit with the Lord Jesus, and go their way healed of the plague of sin!

III. Now, notice, thirdly, that this man's faith WAS FIXED ON JESUS CHRIST ALONE. Let me read the man's words again. He said unto Jesus, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Throw the emphasis upon the pronouns. See him kneeling before the Lord Jesus and hear him say, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He has no idea of looking to the disciples; no, not to one of them or to all of them. He had no notion of trusting in a measure to the medicine which physicians would prescribe for him. All that is gone. No dream of other hope remains; but with his eye fully fixed on the blessed Miracle-worker of Nazareth, he cries, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." In himself he had no shade of confidence; every delusion of that kind had been banished by a fierce experience of his disease. He knew that none on earth could deliver him, and that by no innate power of constitution could he throw out the poison; but he confidently believed that the Son of God could by himself effect the cure. This was God-given faith—the faith of God's elect, and Jesus was its sole object.

How came this man to have such faith? I cannot tell you the outward means, but I think we may guess without presumption. Had he not heard our Lord preach? Matthew puts this story immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, and says, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Had this man managed to stand at the edge of the crowd and hear Jesus speak, and did those wondrous words convince him that the great

Teacher was something more than man? As he noted the style, and manner, and matter of that marvelous sermon, did he say within himself, "never man spake like this man. Truly he is the Son of God. I believe in him. I trust him. he can cleanse me"? May God bless the preaching of Christ crucified to you who hear me this day! Is not this used of the Lord, and made to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?

Perhaps this man had seen our Lord's miracles. I feel sure he had. He had seen the devils cast out, and had heard of Peter's wife's mother, who had lain sick of a fever, and had been instantaneously recovered. The leper might very properly argue—To do this requires omnipotence; and once granted that omnipotence is at work, then omnipotence can as well deal with leprosy as with fever. Did he not reason well if he argued thus—What the Lord has done, he can do again: if in one case he has displayed almighty power, he can display that same power in another case? Thus would the acts of the Lord corroborate his words, and furnish a sure foundation for the leper's hope. My hearer, have you not seen Jesus save others? Have you not at least read of his miracles of grace? Believe him, then, for his works' sake, and say to him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Besides, I think this man may have heard something of the story of Christ, and may have been familiar with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. We cannot tell but some disciple may have informed him of John's witness concerning the Christ, and of the signs and tokens which supported John's testimony. He may thus have discerned in the Son of Man the Messiah of God, the Incarnate Deity. At any rate, as knowledge must come before faith, he had received knowledge enough to feel that he could trust this glorious personage, and to believe that, if he willed it, Jesus could make him clean. O my dear hearers, cannot you trust the Lord Jesus Christ in this way? Do you not believe—I hope you do—that he is the Son of God; and if so, why not trust him? He that was born of Mary at Bethlehem was God over all, blessed forever! Do you not believe this? Why, then, do you not rely upon God in our nature? You believe in his consecrated life, his suffering death, his resurrection, his ascension, his sitting in power at the right hand of the

Father; why do you not trust him? God hath highly exalted him, and caused all fullness to dwell in him: he is able to save unto the uttermost, why do you not come to him? Believe that he is able, and then with all thy sins before thee, red like scarlet—and with all thy sinful habits, and thy evil propensities before thee, ingrained like the leopard's spots—believe that the Saviour of men can at once make thee whiter than snow as to past guilt, and free from the present and future tyranny of evil. A divine Saviour must be able to cleanse thee from all sin. Only Jesus can do it, but he can do it—do it himself alone, do it now, do it in thee, do it with a word. If Jesus wills to do it, it is all that is wanted; for his will is the will of the Almighty Lord. Say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Faith must be fixed alone on Jesus. None other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. I do pray the Lord to give that faith to all my dear friends present this morning who as yet have not received cleansing at the Lord's hands. Jesus is God's ultimatum of salvation: the unique hope of guilty men both as to pardon and renewal. Accept him even now.

IV. Now let me go a step further: THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD RESPECT TO A REAL MATTER-OF-FACT CURE. He did not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as a priest who would perform certain ceremonies over him, and formally say, "Thou art clean"; for that would not have been true. He wanted really to be delivered from the leprosy; to have those dry scales, into which his skin kept turning, taken all away, that his flesh might become as the flesh of a little child; he wanted that the rottenness, which was eating up his body, should be stayed, and that health should be actually restored. Friends, it is easy enough to believe in a mere priestly absolution if you have enough credulity; but we need more than this. It is very easy to believe in Baptismal Regeneration, but what is the good of it? What practical result does it produce? A child remains the same after it has been baptismally regenerated as it was before, and it grows up to prove it. It is easy to believe in Sacramentarianism if you are foolish enough; but there is nothing in it when you believe in it. No sanctifying power comes with outward ceremonials in and of themselves. To believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can make us love the good things which once we despised, and shun those evil things in which we once took pleasure—this is to believe in him indeed and of a truth. Jesus can totally change the nature, and make a sinner into a saint. This is faith of a practical kind; this

is a faith worth having.

None of us would imagine that this leper meant that the Lord Jesus could make him feel comfortable in remaining a leper. Some seem to fancy that Jesus came to let us go on in our sins with a quiet conscience; but he did nothing of the kind. His salvation is cleansing from sin, and if we love sin we are not saved from it. We cannot have justification without sanctification. There is no use in quibbling about it; there must be a change, a radical change, a change of heart, or else we are not saved. I put it now to you, Do you desire a moral and a spiritual change, a change of life, thought and motive? This is what Jesus gives. Just as this leper needed a thorough physical change, so do you need an entire renewal of your spiritual nature, so as to become a new creature in Jesus Christ. Oh that many here would desire this, for it would be a cheering sign. The man who desires to be pure is beginning to be pure; the man who sincerely longs to conquer sin has struck the first blow already. The power of sin is shaken in that man who looks to Jesus for deliverance from it. The man who frets under the yoke of sin will not long be a slave to it; if he can believe that Jesus Christ is able to set him free, he shall soon quit his bondage. Some sins which have hardened down into habits, will yet disappear in a moment when Jesus Christ looks upon a man in love. I have known many instances of persons who, for many years, had never spoken without an oath, or a filthy expression, who, being converted, have never been known to use such language again, and have scarcely ever been tempted in that direction. This is one of the sins which seem to die at the first shot, and it is a very wonderful thing it should be so. Others I have known so altered at once that the very propensity which was strongest in them has been the last to annoy them afterwards: they have had such a reversion of the mind's action that, while other sins have worried them for years, and they have had to set a strict watch against them, yet their favourite and dominant sin has never again had the slightest influence over them, except to excite an outburst of horror and deep repentance. Oh, that you had faith in Jesus that he could thus cast down and cast out your reigning sins! Believe in the conquering arm of the Lord Jesus, and he will do it. Conversion is the standing miracle of the church. Where it is genuine, it is as clear a proof of divine power going with the gospel, as was the casting out of devils, or even the raising

of the dead in our Lord's day. We see these conversions still; and have proof that Jesus is able to work great moral marvels still. O my hearer, where art thou? Canst thou not believe that Jesus is able to make a new man of thee? O brethren, who have been saved, I entreat you to breathe a prayer at this time for those who are not yet cleansed from the foul disease of sin. Pray that they may have grace to believe in the Lord Jesus for purification of heart, pardon of sin, and the implantation of eternal life. Then when faith is given, the Lord Jesus will work their sanctification, and none shall effectually hinder. In silence let us pray for a moment. (Here there was a pause, and silent prayer went up to heaven.)

V. And now we will go another step: THIS MAN'S FAITH WAS ATTENDED WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE A HESITANCY. But after thinking it over a good deal, I am hardly inclined to think it such a hesitancy as many have judged it to be. He said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." There was an "if" in this speech, and that "if" has aroused the suspicions of many preachers. Some think it supposes that he doubted our Lord's willingness. I hardly think that the language justly bears so harsh a construction. What he meant may have been this—"Lord, I do not know yet that thou art sent to heal lepers; I have not seen that thou hast ever done so; but, still, if it be within the compass of thy commission, I believe thou wilt do it, and assuredly thou canst if thou wilt. Thou canst heal not only some lepers, but me in particular; thou canst make me clean." Now, I think this was a legitimate thing for him to say, as he had not seen a leper healed—"If it be within the compass of thy commission, I believe thou canst make me whole."

Moreover, I admire in this text the deference which the leper pays to the sovereignty of Christ's will as to the bestowal of his gifts. "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean";—as much as to say, "I know thou hast a right to distribute these great favours exactly as thou pleasest. I have no claim upon thee; I cannot say that thou art bound to make me clean; I appeal to thy pity and free favour. The matter remains with thy will." The man had never read the text which saith, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," for it was not yet written; but he had in his mind the humble spirit suggested by that grand truth. He owned that grace must come as a free gift of God's good pleasure

when he said "Lord, if thou wilt." Beloved, we need never raise a question as to the Lord's will to give grace when we have the will to receive it; but still, I would have every sinner feel that he has no claim upon God for anything. O sinner, if the Lord should give thee up, as he did the heathen described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, thou deservest it. If he should never look upon thee with an eye of love, what couldst thou say against his righteous sentence? Thou hast wilfully sinned, and thou deservest to be left in thy sin. Confessing all this, we still cling to our firm belief in the power of grace, and cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." We appeal to our Saviour's pitying love, relying upon his boundless power.

See, also, how the leper, to my mind, really speaks without any hesitancy, if you understand him. He does not say, "Lord, if thou puttest out thy hand, thou canst make me clean"; nor, "Lord, if thou speakest, thou canst make me clean"; but only, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean": thy mere will can do it. Oh, splendid faith! If you are inclined to spy a little halting in it, I would have you admire it for running so well with a lame foot. If there was a weakness anywhere in his faith, still it was so strong that the weakness only manifests its strength. Sinner, it is so; and I pray God that thy heart may grasp it—if the Lord wills it he can make thee clean. Believest thou this? If so, carry out practically what thy faith will suggest to thee—namely, that thou come to Jesus and plead with him, and get from him the cleansing which thou needest. To that end I am hoping to lead thee, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

VI. In the sixth place, notice that **THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD EARNEST ACTION FLOWING OUT OF IT.** Believing that, if Jesus willed, he could make him clean, what did the leper do? At once he came to Jesus. I know not from what distance, but he came as near to Jesus as he could. Then we read that he besought him; that is to say, he pleaded, and pleaded, and pleaded again. He cried, "Lord, cleanse me! Lord heal my leprosy!" Nor was this all; he fell on his knees and worshipped; for we read, "Kneeling down to him." He not only knelt, but knelt to Jesus. He had no difficulty as to paying him divine honour. He worshipped the Lord Christ, paying him reverent homage. He then went on to honour him by an open acknowledgment of his power, his marvelous power, his infinite power,

by saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I should not wonder if some that stood by began to smile at what they thought the poor man's fanatical credulity. They murmured, "What a poor fool as this leper is, to think that Jesus of Nazareth can cure him of his leprosy!" Such a confession of faith had seldom been heard. But whatever critics and skeptics might think, this brave man boldly declared, "Lord, this is my confession of faith: I believe that if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Now, poor soul, thou that art full of guilt, and hardened in sin, and yet anxious to be healed, look straight away to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is here now. In the preaching of the gospel he is with us always. With the eyes of thy mind behold him, for he beholdeth thee. Thou knowest that he lives, even though thou seest him not. Believe in this living Jesus; believe for perfect cleansing. Cry to him, worship him, adore him, trust him. He is very God of very God; bow before him, and cast thyself upon his mercy. Go home, and on thy knees say, "Lord, I believe that thou canst make me clean." He will hear your cry, and will save you. There will be no interval between your prayer and the gracious reward of faith, of which I am now to speak.

VII. Lastly, HIS FAITH HAD ITS REWARD. Have patience with me just a minute. The reward of this man's faith was, first, that his very words were treasured up. Matthew, Mark, Luke, all three of them record the precise words which this man used: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." They evidently did not see so much to find fault with in them as some have done; on the contrary, they thought them gems to be placed in the setting of their gospels. Three times over are they recorded, because they are such a splendid confession of faith for a poor diseased leper to have made. I believe that God is as much glorified by that one sentence of the leper as by the song of Cherubim and Seraphim, when they continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." A sinner's lips declaring his confident faith in God's own Son can breathe sonnets unto God more sweet than those of the angelic choirs. This man's first faith- words are folded up in the fair linen of three evangels, and laid up in the treasury of the house of the Lord. God values the language of humble confidence.

His next reward was, that Jesus echoed his words. He said, "Lord, if thou

wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean." As an echo answers to the voice, so did Jesus to his supplicant. The Lord Jesus was so pleased with this man's words that he caught them as they leaped out of his mouth, and used them himself, saying, "I will; be thou clean." If you can only get, then, as far as this leper's confession, I believe that our Lord Jesus from his throne above will answer to your prayer.

So potent were the words of this leper that they moved our Lord very wonderfully. Read the forty-first verse: "And Jesus, moved with compassion." The Greek word here used, if I were to pronounce it in your hearing, would half suggest its own meaning. It expresses a stirring of the entire manhood, a commotion in all the inward parts. The heart and all the vitals of the man are in active movement. The Saviour was greatly moved. You have seen a man moved, have you not? When a strong man is unable any longer to restrain himself, and is forced to give way to his feelings, you have seen him tremble all over, and at last burst out into an evident break-down. It was just so with the Saviour: his pity moved him, his delight in the leper's faith mastered him. When he heard the man speak with such confidence in him, the Saviour was moved with a sacred passion, which, as it was in sympathy with the leper, is called "compassion." Oh, to think that a poor leper should have such power over the divine Son of God! Yet, my hearer, in all thy sin and misery, if thou canst believe in Jesus, thou canst move the heart of thy blessed Saviour. Yea, even now his bowels yearn towards thee.

No sooner was our Lord Jesus thus moved than out went his hand, and he touched the man and healed him immediately. It did not require a long time for the working of the cure; but the leper's blood was cooled and cleansed in a single second. Our Lord could work this miracle, and make all things new in the man; for "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He restored the poor, decaying, putrefying body of this man, and he was cleansed at once. To make him quite sure that he was cleansed, the Lord Jesus bade him go to the priest, and seek a certificate of health. He was so clean that he might be examined by the appointed sanitary authority, and come off without suspicion. The cure which he had received was a real and radical one, and therefore he might go away at once, and get the certificate of it.

If our converts will not bear practical tests, they are worth nothing; let even our enemies judge whether they are not better men and women when Jesus has renewed them. If Jesus saves a sinner, he does not mind all men testing the change. Jesus does not seek display, but he seeks examination from those able to judge. Our converts will bear the test. Come hither, angels! Come hither, pure intelligences, able to observe men in secret! Here is a wretch of a sinner who came hither this morning. He seemed first cousin to the devil; but the Lord Jesus Christ has converted him and changed him. Now look at him, ye angels; look at him at home in his chamber! Watch him in private life. We can read your verdict. "There is joy in presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"; and this proves what you think. It is such a wonderful change, and angels are so sure of it, that they give their certificates at once. How do they give their certificates? Why, each one manifests his joy as he sees the sinner turning from his sinful ways. Oh, that the angels might have work of this kind to do this morning! Dear hearer, may you be one over whom they rejoice! If thou believest on Jesus Christ, and if thou wilt trust him, as the sent One of God, fully and entirely with thy soul, he will make thee clean. Behold him on the cross, and see sin put away. Behold him risen from the dead, and see new life bestowed. Behold him enthroned in power, and see evil conquered. I am ready to be bound for my Lord, to be his surety, that if thou, my hearer, wilt come to him, he will make thee clean. Believe thy Saviour, and thy cure is wrought. God help thee, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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The Lost Silver Piece

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her

neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. - Luke 15:8-10

This chapter is full of grace and truth. Its three consecutive parables have been thought to be merely a repetition of the same doctrine under different metaphors, and if that were so, the truth which it teaches is so important that it could not be rehearsed too often in our hearing. Moreover, it is one which we are apt to forget, and it is well to have it again and again impressed upon our minds. The truth here taught is just this—that mercy stretches forth her hand to misery, that grace receives men as sinners, that it deals with demerit, unworthiness, and worthlessness; that those who think themselves righteous are not the objects of divine compassion, but the unrighteous, the guilty, and the undeserving, are the proper subjects for the infinite mercy of God; in a word, that salvation is not of merit but of grace. This truth I say is most important, for it encourages penitents to return to their Father; but it is very apt to be forgotten, for even those who are saved by grace too often fall into the spirit of the elder brother, and speak as if, after all, their salvation depended on the works of the law.

But, my dear friends, the three parables recorded in this chapter are not repetitions; they all declare the same main truth, but each one reveals a different phase of it. The three parables are three sides of a vast pyramid of gospel doctrine, but there is a distinct inscription upon each. Not only in the similitude, but also in the teaching covered by the similitude, there is variety, progress, enlargement, discrimination. We have only need to read attentively to discover that in this trinity of parables, we have at once unity of essential truth and distinctness of description. Each one of the parables is needful to the other, and when combined they present us with a far more complete exposition of their doctrine than could have been conveyed by any one of them. Note for a moment the first of the three which brings before us a shepherd seeking a lost sheep. To whom does this refer? Who is the shepherd of Israel? Who brings again that which has gone astray? Do we not clearly discern the ever glorious and blessed Chief Shepherd of the sheep, who lays down his life that he may save them? Beyond a question, we see in the first parable the work of our Lord

Jesus Christ. The second parable is most fitly placed where it is. It, I doubt not, represents the work of the Holy Spirit, working, through the church, for the lost but precious souls of men. The church is that woman who sweeps her house to find the lost piece of money, and in her the Spirit works his purposes of love. How the work of the Holy Spirit follows the work of Christ. As here we first see the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, and then read of the woman seeking the lost piece of money, so the great Shepherd redeems, and then the Holy Spirit restores the soul. You will perceive that each parable is thoroughly understood in its minute details when so interpreted. The shepherd seeks a sheep which has wilfully gone astray, and so far the element of sin is present; the lost piece of money does not bring up that idea, nor was it needful that it should, since the parable does not deal with the pardon of sin as the first does. The sheep, on the other hand, though stupid is not altogether senseless and dead, but the piece of money is altogether unconscious and powerless, and therefore all the fitter emblem of man as the Holy Ghost begins to deal with him, dead in trespasses and sins. The third parable evidently represents the divine Father in his abundant love receiving the lost child who comes back to him. The third parable would be likely to be misunderstood without the first and the second. We have sometimes heard it said—here is the prodigal received as soon as he comes back, no mention being made of a Savior who seeks and saves him. Is it possible to teach all truths in one single parable? Does not the first one speak of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep? Why need repeat what had been said before? It has also been said that the prodigal returned of his own free will, for there is no hint of the operation of a superior power upon his heart, it seems as if he himself spontaneously says, "I will arise, and go unto my Father." The answer is, that the Holy Spirit's work had been clearly described in the second parable, and needed not to be introduced again. If you put the three pictures in a line, they represent the whole compass of salvation, but each one apart sets forth the work in reference to one or other of the divine persons of the blessed Trinity. The shepherd, with much pain and self-sacrifice, seeks the reckless, wandering sheep; the woman diligently searches for the insensible but lost piece of money; the father receives the returning prodigal. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. The three life-sketches are one, and one truth is taught in the whole three, yet each one is distinct from the other, and by

itself instructive.

May we be taught of God while we try to discover the mind of the Spirit in this parable, which, as we believe, represents the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the church. The church is evermore represented as a woman, either the chaste bride of Christ, or the shameless courtesan of Babylon; as for good a woman sweeps the house, so for evil a woman takes the leaven and hides it in the meal till all is leavened. Towards Christ a wife and towards men a mother, the church is most fitly set forth as a woman. A woman with a house under her control is the full idea of the text, her husband away and herself in charge of the treasure: just such is the condition of the church since the departure of the Lord Jesus to the Father.

To bring each part of the text under inspection we shall notice man in three conditions—lost, sought, found.

I. First, the parable treats of man, the object of divine mercy, as lost.

Notice, first, the treasure was lost in the dust. The woman had lost her piece of silver, and in order to find it she had to sweep for it, which proves that it had fallen into a dusty place, fallen to the earth, where it might be hidden and concealed amid rubbish and dirt. Every man of Adam born is as a piece of silver lost, fallen, dishonored, and some are buried amid foulness and dust. If we should drop many pieces of money they would fall into different positions; one of them might fall into actual mire, and be lost there; another might fall upon a carpet, a cloth, or a clean, well-polished floor, and be lost there. If you have lost your money, it is equally lost into whatever place it may have fallen. So all men are alike lost, but they have not all fallen into the like condition of apparent defilement. One man from the surroundings of his childhood and the influences of education, has never indulged in the coarser and more brutalising vices; he has never been a blasphemer, perhaps never openly even a Sabbath-breaker, yet he may be lost for all that. Another, on the other hand, has fallen into great excess of riot; he is familiar with wantonness and chambering, and all manner of evil; he is lost, he is lost with an emphasis: but the more decorous sinner is lost also. There may be some here this

morning (and we wish always to apply the truth as we go on), who are lost in the very worst of corruption: I would to God that they would take hope and learn from the parable before us, that the church of God and the Spirit of God are seeking after them, and they may be among the found ones yet. Since, on the other hand, there are many here who have not dropped into such unclean places, I would affectionately remind them that they are nevertheless lost, and they need as much to be sought for by the Spirit of God as if they were among the vilest of the vile. To save the moral needs divine grace as certainly as to save the immoral. If you be lost, my dear hearer, it will be small avail to you that you perished respectably, and were accursed in decent company: if you lack but one thing, yet if the deficiency be fatal, it will be but a poor consolation that you had only one lack. If one leak sent the vessel to the bottom; it was no comfort to the crew that their ship only leaked in one place. One disease may kill a man; he may be sound everywhere else, but it will be a sorry comfort to him to know that he might have lived long had but that one organ been sound. If, dear hearer, thou shouldst have no sin whatever save only an evil heart of unbelief, if all thy external life should be lovely and amiable, yet if that one fatal sin be in thee, thou canst draw small consolation from all else that is good about thee. Thou art lost by nature, and thou must be found by grace, whoever thou mayst be.

In this parable that which was lost was altogether ignorant of its being lost. The silver coin was not a living thing, and therefore had no consciousness of its being lost or sought after. The piece of money lost was quite as content to be on the floor or in the dust, as it was to be in the purse of its owner amongst its like. It knew nothing about its being lost, and could not know. And it is just so with the sinner who is spiritually dead in sin, he is unconscious of his state, nor can we make him understand the danger and terror of his condition. When he feels that he is lost, there is already some work of grace in him. When the sinner knows that he is lost, he is no longer content with his condition, but begins to cry out for mercy, which is evidence that the finding work has already began. The unconverted sinner will confess that he is lost because he knows the statement to be scriptural, and therefore out of compliment to God's word he admits it to be true; but he has no idea of what is meant by it, else would he either deny it with proud indignation, or he would

bestir himself to pray that he might be restored to the place from which he has fallen, and be numbered with Christ's precious property. O my hearers, this it is that makes the Spirit of God so needful in all our preachings, and every other soul-saving exercise, because we have to deal with insensible souls. The man who puts the fire-escape against the window of a burning house, may readily enough rescue those who are aware of their danger, and who rush to the front and help him, or at least are submissive to him in his work of delivering them; but if a man were insane, if he played with the flames, if he were idiotic and thought that some grand illumination were going on, and knew nothing of the danger but was only "glamoured by the glare," then would it be hard work for the rescuer. Even thus it is with sinners. They know not, though they profess to know, that sin is hell, that to be an alien from God is to be condemned already, to live in sin is to be dead while you live. The insensibility of the piece of money fairly pictures the utter indifference of souls unquickened by divine grace.

The silver piece was lost but not forgotten. The woman knew that she had ten pieces of silver originally; she counted them over carefully, for they were all her little store, and she found only nine, but she well remembered that one more was hers and ought to be in her hand. This is our hope for the Lord's lost ones, they are lost but not forgotten, the heart of the Savior remembers them, and prays for them. O soul, I trust you are one whom Jesus calls his own, if so he remembers the pangs which he endured in redeeming you, and he recollects the Father's love which was reflected on you from old eternity, when the Father gave you into the hands of his beloved Son. You are not forgotten of the Holy Spirit who seeks you for the Savior. This is the minister's hope, that there is a people whom the Lord remembers and whom he never will forget, though they forget him. Strangers to him, far-off, ignorant, callous, careless, dead, yet the everlasting heart in heaven throbs towards them with love; and the mind of the Spirit, working on earth, is directed to them. These, who were numbered and reckoned up of old are still in the inventory of the divine memory; and though lost they are earnestly remembered still. In some sense this is true of every sinner here. You are lost, but that you are remembered is evident, for I am sent to-day to preach the gospel of Jesus to you. God has thoughts of love concerning you, and bids you turn unto

him and live. Have respect, I pray you, to the word of his salvation.

Next, the piece of silver was lost but still claimed. Observe that the woman called the money, "my piece which was lost." When she lost its possession she did not lose her right to it; it did not become somebody else's when it slipped out of her hand and fell upon the floor. Those for whom Christ hath died, whom he hath peculiarly redeemed, are not Satan's even when they are dead in sin. They may come under the devil's usurped dominion, but the monster shall be chased from his throne. Christ has received them of old of the Father, and he has bought them with his precious blood, and he will have them; he will chase away the intruder and claim his own. Thus saith the Lord, "Your covenant with death is disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. Jesus shall have his own, and none shall pluck them from his hold; he will defend his claim against all comers.

Further, observe that the lost piece of money was not only remembered and claimed, but it was also valued. In these three parables the value of the lost article steadily rises. This is not very clear at first sight, because it may be said that a sheep is of more value than a piece of money; but notice that the shepherd only lost one sheep out of a hundred, but the woman lost one piece out of ten, and the father one son out of two. Now, it is not the value of the thing in itself which is here set forth, for the soul of a man, as absolutely valued in comparison with the infinite God, is of small esteem; but because of his love it is of great value to him. The one piece of money to the woman was a tenth part of all she had, and it was very valuable in her esteem. To the Lord of love a lost soul is very precious: it is not because of its intrinsic value, but it has a relative value which God sets at a high rate. The Holy Spirit values souls, and therefore the church prizes them too. The church sometimes says to herself, "We have but few conversions, few members; many are called, but few chosen." She counts over her few converts, her few members, and one soul is to her all the more precious because of the few there are who in these times are in the treasury of Christ, stamped with the image of the great Being, and made of the precious genuine silver of God's own grace. O dear friend, you think yourself of small value, you who are conscious

that you have sinned, but the church does not think you of small value, and the Holy Spirit does not despise you. He sets a high price upon you, and so do his people. We value your souls, we only wish we knew how to save them; we would spare no expense or pains if we might but be the means of finding you, and bringing you once more into the great Owner's hand.

The piece of money was lost, but it was not lost hopelessly. The woman had hopes of recovering it, and therefore she did not despair, but set to work at once. It is a dreadful thing to think of those souls which are lost hopelessly. Their state reminds me of a paragraph I have cut from this week's newspaper:—"The fishing smack Veto, of Grimshy, S. Cousins, master, arrived in port from the Dogger Bank on Saturday night. The master reports that on the previous Wednesday, when about two hundred miles from Spurn, he sighted to the leeward what at first appeared to be a small schooner in distress, but on bearing down to her found her to be a full-sized lifeboat, upwards of twenty feet long, and full of water up to her corks. There was no name on the boat, which had evidently belonged to some large ship or steamer. It was painted white both inside and out, with a brown streak round the rim. When alongside, on closer examination, three dead sailors were perceived lying aft, huddled together, and a fourth athwart in the bow, with his head hanging over the rowlocks. They seemed from their dress and general appearance to be foreigners, but the bodies had been frightfully; 'washed about,' and were in a state of decomposition, and had evidently been dead some weeks. The water-logged waif drifted on with its ghastly cargo, and the horrible sight so shocked the crew of the Veto that afterwards they were almost too unnerved to attend to their trawling, and the smack, in consequence, returned to port with a comparatively small catch, and sooner than expected." Do you wonder at the men sickening in the presence of this mystery of the sea? I shudder as I think I see that Charon-like boat floating on and on; mercy need not follow it, she can confer no boon; love need not seek it, no deed of hers can save. My soul sees, as in a vision, souls hopelessly lost, drifting on the waves of eternity, beyond all hope or help. Alas! Alas! Millions of our race are now in that condition. Upon them has passed the second death, and powerless are we all to save them. Towards them even the gospel has no aspect of hope. Our joy is that we

have to deal to-day with lost souls who are not yet hopelessly lost. They are dead in sin, but there is a quickening power which can make them live. O mariner of the sea of life, fisher of men upon this stormy sea, those castaways whom you meet with are accessible to your efforts of compassion, they can be rescued from the pitiless deeps; your mission is not a hopeless one. I rejoice over the ungodly man here to-day that he is not in torment, not in hell, he is not among those whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched. I congratulate the Christian church too, that her piece of money has not fallen where she cannot find it. I rejoice that the fallen around us are not past hope; yea, though they dwell in the worst dens of London, though they be thieves and harlots, they are not beyond the reach of mercy. Up, O church of God, while possibilities of mercy remain! Gird up your loins, be soul-winners, and resolve by the grace of God that every hour of hope shall be well employed by you.

One other point is worthy of notice. The piece of silver was lost, but it was lost in the house, and the woman knew it to be so. If she had lost it in the streets, the probabilities are she would not have looked for it again, for other hands might have closed over it. If she had lost it in a river, or dropped it in the sea, she might very fairly have concluded that it was gone for ever, but evidently she was sure that she had lost it in the house. Is it not a consolation to know that those here, who are lost, are still in the house? They are still under the means of grace, within the sphere of the church's operations, within the habitation of which she is the mistress, and where the Holy Spirit works. What thankfulness there ought to be in your minds that you are not lost as heathens, nor lost amid Romish or Mohammedan superstition, but lost where the gospel is faithfully and plainly preached to you; where you are lovingly told, that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is not condemned. Lost, but lost where the church's business is to look after you, where it is the Spirit's work to seek and to find you.

This is the condition of the lost soul, depicted as a lost piece of silver.

II. Secondly, we shall notice the soul under another condition, we shall view it as sought.

By whom was the piece of silver sought? It was sought by its owner personally. Notice, she who lost the money lit a candle and swept the house, and sought diligently till she found it. So, brethren, I have said that the woman represents the Holy Spirit, or rather the church in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Now, there will never be a soul found till the Holy Spirit seeks after it. He is the great soul finder. The heart will continue in the dark until he comes with his illuminating power. He is the owner, he possesses it, and he alone can effectually seek after it. The God to whom the soul belongs must seek the soul. But he does it by his church, for souls belong to the church too; they are sons and daughters of the chosen mother, they are her citizens and treasures. For this reason the church must personally seek after souls. She cannot delegate her work to anybody. The woman did not pay a servant to sweep the house, but she swept it herself. Her eyes were much better than a servant's eyes, for the servant's eyes would only look after somebody else's money, and perhaps would not see it; but the mistress would look after her own money, and she would be certain to light upon it if it were anywhere within sight. When the church of God solemnly feels, "It is our work to look after sinners, we must not delegate it even to the minister, or to the City-missionary, or the Biblewoman, but the church as a church must look after the souls of sinners," then I believe souls will be found and saved. When the church recognizes that these lost souls belong to her, she will be likely to find them. It will be a happy day when every church of God is actively at work for the salvation of sinners. It has been the curse of Christendom that she has ventured to delegate her sacred duties to men called priests, or that she has set apart certain persons to be called the religious who are to do works of mercy and charity and of evangelization. We are, every one of us who are Christ's, bound to do our own share; nay, we should deem it a privilege of which we will not be deprived, personally to serve God, personally to sweep the house and search after the lost spiritual treasures. The church herself, in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, must seek lost souls.

Note that this seeking became a matter of chief concern with the woman. I do not know what other business she had to do, but I do know that she put it all by to find the piece of money. There was the corn to be ground for the morning meal, perhaps that was done, at any rate, if not so, she

left it unprepared. There was a garment to be mended, or water to be drawn, or the fire to be kindled, or the friends and neighbors to be conversed with—never mind, the mistress forgets everything else, she has lost her piece of money, and she must find it at once. So with the church of God, her chief concern should be to seek the perishing sons of men. To bring souls to know Jesus, and to be saved in him with a great salvation should be the church's great longing and concern. She has other things to do. She has her own edification to consider, she has other matters to be attended to in their place, but this first, this evermore and always first. The woman evidently said, "The money is lost, I must find that first." The loss of her piece of silver was so serious a matter that if she sat down to her mending, her hands would miss their nimbleness, or if any other household work demanded her attention, it would be an irksome task to her, for she was thinking of that piece of coin. If her friend came and talked with her, she would say to herself, "I wish she were gone, for I want to be looking after my lost money." I wish the church of God had such an engrossing love for poor sinners that she would feel everything to be an impertinence which hindered her from soul-saving. We have every now and then, as a church, a little to do with politics, and a little to do with finance, for we are still in the world, but I love to see in all churches everything kept in the background, compared with soul-saving work. This must be first and foremost. Educate the people—yes, certainly; we take an interest in everything which will do good to our fellow citizens, for we are men as well as Christians; but first and foremost our business is to win souls, to bring men to Jesus, to hunt up those who bear heaven's image, though lost and fallen. This is what we must be devoted to, this is the main and chief concern of believers, the very reason for the existence of a church; if she regard it not, she forgets her highest end.

Now note, that the woman having thus set her heart to find her money, she used the most fit and proper means to accomplish her end. First, she lit a candle. So doth the Holy Spirit in the church. In Eastern dwellings it would be necessary, if you lost a piece of money and wanted to find it, to light a candle at any time; for in our Savior's day glass was not used, and the windows of houses were only little slits in the side of the wall, and the rooms were very dark. Almost all the Oriental houses are very dark to this day, and if anything be dropped as small as a piece of silver, it must be

looked for with a candle even at high noon. Now, the sphere in which the church moves here on earth is a dim twilight of mental ignorance, and moral darkness, and in order to find a lost soul, light must be brought to bear upon it. The Holy Spirit uses the light of the gospel; he convinces men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. The woman lit a candle, and even thus the Holy Spirit lights up some chosen man whom he makes to be a light in the world. He calls to himself whomsoever he wills, and makes him a lamp to shine upon the people. Such a man will have to be consumed in his calling, like a candle he will be burnt up in light-giving. Earnest zeal, and laborious self-sacrifice, will eat him up. So may this church, and every church of God, be continually using up her anointed men and women, who shall be as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to find out lost souls.

But she was not content with her candle, she fetched her broom, she swept the house. If she could not find the silver as things were in the house, she brought the broom to bear upon the accumulated dust. Oh, how a Christian church, when it is moved by the Holy Spirit, cleanses herself and purges all her work! "Perhaps," saith she, "some of our members are inconsistent, and so men are hardened in sin; these offenders must be put away. The tone of religion is low—that may be hindering the conversion of souls, it must be raised. Perhaps our statements of truth, and our ways of proclaiming it, are not the most likely to command attention, we must amend them; we must use the best possible methods, we must in fact sweep the whole house." I delight to see an earnest house-sweeping by confession of sin at a prayer meeting, or by a searching discourse, a house-sweeping when every one is earnest to reform himself, and to get nearer to God himself by a revival of his own personal piety. This is one of the means by which the church is enabled to find the hidden ones. Besides this, all the neighborhood round the church (for the house is the sphere in which the church moves), must be ransacked, stirred, turned over, in a word "swept." A church that is really in earnest after souls will endeavor to penetrate the gloom of poverty and stir the heaps of profligacy. She will hunt high and hunt low if by any means she may rescue from destruction the precious thing upon which her heart is set.

Carefully note that this seeking after the lost piece of silver with fitting instruments, the broom and the candle, was attended with no small stir. She swept the house—there was dust for her eyes; if any neighbors were in the house there was dust for them. You cannot sweep a house without causing some confusion and temporary discomfort. We sometimes hear persons complain of certain Christians for making too much ado about religion. The complaint shows that something is being done, and in all probability some success being achieved. Those people who have no interest in the lost silver are annoyed at the dust; it is getting down their throats, and they cough at it; never mind, good woman, sweep again, and make them grumble more. Another will say, "I do not approve of religious excitement, I am for quiet and orderly modes of procedure." I dare say that this good woman's neighbor, when she came in to make a call, exclaimed in disgust, "Why, mistress, there is not a chair to sit down upon in comfort, and you are so taken up about this lost money that you scarce give me an answer. Why, you are wasting candle at a great rate, and seem quite in a fever." "Well," the good woman would answer, "but I must find my piece of silver, and in order to seek it out I can bear a little dust myself, and so must you if you wish to stop here while I am searching." An earnest church will be sure to experience a degree of excitement when it is soul-hunting, and very cautious, very fastidious, very critical people will find fault. Never mind them, my brethren, sweep on and let them talk on. Never mind making a dust if you find the money. If souls be saved irregularities and singularities are as the small dust of the balance. If men be brought to Jesus, care nothing what cavillers say. Sweep on, sweep on, even though men exclaim, "They that turn the world upside down are come hither also." Though confusion and stir, and even persecution be the present result, yet if the finding of an immortal soul be the ultimate effect, you will be well repaid for it.

It is to be remarked, also, that in the seeking of this piece of silver the coin was sought in a most engrossing manner. For a time nothing was thought of but the lost silver. Here is a candle: the good woman does not read by the light of it, nor mend her garments; no, but the candle-light is all spent on that piece of money. All its light is consecrated to the search. Here is a broom: there is other work for the broom to do, but for the present it sweeps for the silver and for nothing else. Here are two bright

eyes in the good woman's head: ay, but they look for nothing but the lost money; she does not care what else may be in the house or out of it—her money she cares for, and that she must find; and here she is with candle, broom, strength, eyesight, faculties of mind, and limbs of body, all employed in searching for the lost treasure. It is just so when the Holy Ghost works in a church, the preacher, like a candle, yields his light, but it is all with the view of finding out the sinner and letting him see his lost estate. Whether it be the broom of the law or the light of the gospel, all is meant for the sinner. All the Holy Spirit's wisdom is engaged to find the sinner, and all the living church's talent and substance and power are put forth if by any means the sinner may be saved. It is a fair picture, may I see it daily. How earnestly souls are sought for when the Spirit of God is truly in his church!

One other thought only. This woman sought for her piece of silver continuously—"till she found it." May you and I, as parts of the church of God, look after wandering souls till we find them. We say they discourage us. No doubt that piece of silver did discourage the woman who sought it. We complain that men do not appear inclined to religion. Did the piece of money lend the housewife any help? Was it any assistance to her? She did the seeking, she did it all. And the Holy Ghost through you, my brother, seeks the salvation of the sinner, not expecting the sinner to help him, for the sinner is averse to being found. What, were you repulsed the other day by one whose spiritual good you longed for? Go again! Were your invitations laughed at? Invite again! Did you become the subject of ridicule through your earnest entreaties? Entreat again! Those are not always the least likely to be saved who at first repel our efforts. A harsh reception is sometimes only an intimation that the heart recognises the power of the truth, though it does not desire at present to yield to it. Persevere, brother, till you find the soul you seek. You who spend so much effort in your Sunday-school class, use still your candle, enlighten the child's mind still, sweep the house till you find what you seek; never give up the child till it is brought to Christ. You, in your senior class, dealing with that young man or young woman, cease not from your private prayers and from your personal admonitions, till that heart belongs to Jesus. You who can preach in the streets, or visit the lodging-houses, or go from door to door with tracts, I charge you all, for you can

all do something, never give up the pursuit of sinners until they are safely lodged in Jesus' hands. We must have them saved! With all the intense perseverance of the woman who turned everything upside down, and counted all things but loss that she might but find her treasure, so may we also, the Spirit of God working in us, upset everything of rule and conventionality, and form and difficulty, if we may but by any means save some, and bring out of the dust those who bear the King's image, and are dear to the King's heart.

III. Time has fled, alas! too swiftly, and so I must close with the third point, which is the piece of silver FOUND.

Found! In the first place, this was the woman's ultimatum, and nothing short of it. She never stopped until the coin was found. So it is the Holy Spirit's design, not that the sinner should be brought into a hopeful state, but that he should be actually saved: and this is the church's great concern, not that people be made hearers, not that they be made orthodox professors, but that they be really changed and renewed, regenerated and born again.

The woman herself found the piece of money. It did not turn up by accident, nor did some neighbor step in and find it. The Spirit of God himself finds sinners, and the church of God herself as a rule is the instrument of their recovery. Dear brethren, a few years ago there was a kind of slur cast upon the visible church, by many enthusiastic but mistaken persons, who dreamed that the time was come for doing away with organised effort, for irregular agencies outside of the visible church were to do all the work. Certain remarkable men sprang up whose ferocious censures almost amounted to attacks upon the recognised churches. Their efforts were apart from the regular ministry, and in some cases ostentatiously in opposition to it. It was as much their aim to pull down the existing church as to bring in converts. I ask any man who has fairly watched these efforts, what they have come to? I never condemned them, nor will I; but I do venture to say to-day in the light of their history, that they have not superseded regular church work and never will. The masses were to be aroused, but where are the boasted results? What has become of many of these much-vaunted works? Those who have worked

in connection with a church of God have achieved permanent usefulness; those who acted as separatist agencies, though they blazed for awhile before the public eye and filled the corners of the newspapers with spiritual puffery, are now either altogether or almost extinct. Where are the victories which were to be won by these freebooters? Echo answers, Where? We have to fall back on the old disciplined troops. God means to bless the church still, and it is through the church that he will continue to send a benediction upon the sons of men. I am glad to hear of anybody preaching the gospel if Christ is preached I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. I remember the Master's words, "Forbid them not! He that is not against us is for us." Still the mass of conversions will come through the church, and by her regular organised efforts. The woman who lights the candle and sweeps the house, to whom the silver belongs, will herself find it.

Now notice when she had found it what she did, she rejoiced. The greater her trouble in searching, the higher her joy in finding. What joy there is in the church of God when sinners are converted! We have our high holidays, we have our mirthful days downstairs in the lecture hall, when we hear of souls turned from the paths of the destroyer—and in the vestries behind, your pastors and elders often experience such joy as only heaven can equal, when we have heard the stories of souls emancipated from the slavery of sin, and led into the perfect liberty which Jesus gives. The church rejoices.

Next, she calls her friends and neighbors to share her joy. I am afraid we do not treat our friends and neighbors with quite enough respect, or remember to invite them to our joys. Who are they? I think the angels are here meant; not only the angels in heaven, but those who are watching here below. Note well, that when the shepherd took home the sheep, it is written, "There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;" but it does not mention heaven here, nor speak of the future, but it is written, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God." Now, the church is on earth, and the Holy Spirit is on earth, at work; when there is a soul saved, the angels down below, who keep watch and ward around the faithful, and so are our friends and neighbors, rejoice with us. Know ye not that angels are present in our assemblies? for this reason the apostle tells us

that the woman hath her head covered in the assembly. He saith, "Because of the angels, for they love order and decorum." The angels are wherever the saints are, beholding our orders and rejoicing in our joy. When we see conversions we may bid them rejoice too, and they will praise God with us. I do not suppose the rejoicing ends there; for as angels are always ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, they soon convey the tidings to the hosts above, and heaven rejoices over one repenting sinner.

The joy is a present joy; it is a joy in the house, in the church in her own sphere; it is the joy of her neighbors who are round about her here below. All other joy seems swallowed up in this: as every other occupation was suspended to find the lost silver, so every other joy is hushed when the precious thing is found. The church of God has a thousand joys—the joy of her saints ascending to the skies, the joy of her saints ripening for glory, the joy of such as contend with sin and overcome it, and grow in grace and receive the promise; but the chief Joy in the church, which swallows all others, as Aaron's rod swallowed up the other rods, is the joy over the lost soul which, after much sweeping and searching, is found at last.

The practical lesson to the unconverted is just this. Dear friend, see what value is set upon you. You think that nobody cares for you—why, heaven and earth care for you! You say, "I am as nothing, a castaway, and I am utterly worthless." No, you are not worthless to the blessed Spirit, nor worthless to the church of God—she longs for you.

See, again, how false that suspicion of yours is that you will not be welcome if you come to Christ. Welcome! welcome! why, the church is searching for you; the Spirit of God is searching for you. Do not talk of welcome, you will be a great deal more than welcome. Oh, how glad will Christ be, and the Spirit be, and the church be, to receive you! Ah! but you complain that you have done nothing to make you fit for mercy. Talk not so, what had the lost piece of money done? What could it do? It was lost and helpless. They who sought it did all; he who seeks you will do all for you. O poor soul, since Christ now bids thee come, come! If his Spirit draws thee, yield it Since the promise now speaks, "Come now, and let us

reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," accept the promise. Believe in Jesus. God bless you and save you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Love

We love him, because he first loved us. - 1 John 4:19

During the last two Sabbath days I have been preaching the gospel to the unconverted. I have earnestly exhorted the very chief of sinners to look to Jesus Christ, and have assured them that as a preparation for coming to Christ, they need no good works, or good dispositions, but that they may come, just as they are, to the foot of the cross, and receive the pardoning blood and all-sufficient merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought has since occurred to me, that some who were ignorant of the gospel might, perhaps, put this query: - Is this likely to promote morality? If the gospel be a proclamation of pardon to the very chief of sinners, will not this be a license to sin? In what respects can the gospel be said to be a gospel according to holiness? How will such preaching operate? Will it make men better? Will they be more attentive to the laws which relate to man and man? Will they be more obedient to the statutes which relate to man and God? I thought, therefore, that we would advance a step further, and endeavour to show, this morning, how the proclamation of the gospel of God, though in the commencement it addresses itself to men who are utterly destitute of any good, is, nevertheless, designed to lead these very men to the noblest heights of virtue, yea, to ultimate perfection in holiness. The text tells us, that the effect of the gospel received in the heart is, that it compels and constrains such a heart to love God. "We love him, because he first loved us." When the gospel comes to us it does not find us loving God, it does not expect anything of us, but coming with the divine application of the Holy Ghost, it simply assures us that God loves us, be we never so deeply immersed in sin; and then, the after effect of this proclamation of love is, that "we love him because he first loved us."

Can you imagine a being placed halfway between this world and heaven? Can you conceive of him as having such enlarged capacities that he could easily discern what was done in heaven, and what was done on earth? I

can conceive that, before the Fall, if there had been such a being, he would have been struck with the singular harmony which existed between God's great world, called heaven, and the little world, the earth. Whenever the chimes of heaven rang, the great note of those massive bells was love; and when the little bells of earth were sounded, the harmonies of this narrow sphere, rang out their note, it was just the same - love. When the bright spirits gathered around the great throne of God in heaven to magnify the Lord, at the same time, there was to be seen the world, clad in its priestly garments, offering its sacrifice of purest praise. When the cherubim and seraphim did continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies," there was heard a note, feebler, perhaps, but yet as sweetly musical, coming up from paradise, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies." There was no jar, no discord; the thunder peals of heaven's melodies were exactly in accord with the whispers of earth's harmonies. There was "glory to God in the highest," and on earth there was glory too; the heart of man was as the heart of God; God loved man, and man loved God. But imagine that same great Spirit to be still standing between the heavens and the earth, how sad must he be, when he hears the jarring discord, and feels it grate upon the ear! The Lord saith, "I am reconciled to thee, I have put away thy sin;" but what is the answer of this earth? The answer of the world is, "Man is at enmity with God: God may be reconciled, but man is not. The mass of men are still enemies to God by wicked works." When the angels praise God, if they list to the sounds that are to be heard on earth, they hear the trump of cruel war; they hear the bacchanalian shout and the song of the lascivious, and what a discord is this in the great harmony of the spheres? The fact is this, - the world was originally one great string in the harp of the universe, and when the Almighty swept that harp with his gracious fingers there was nothing to be heard but praise; now that string is snapped, and where it has been reset by grace, still it is not wholly restored to its perfect tune, and the note that cometh from it hath but little of sweetness, and very much of discord. But, o bright Spirit, retain thy place, and live on. The day is hastening with glowing wheels, and the axle thereof is hot with speed. The day is coming, when this world shall be a paradise again. Jesus Christ, who came the first time to bleed and suffer, that he might wash the world from its iniquity, is coming a second time to reign and conquer, that he may clothe the earth with glory; and the day shall arrive, when

thou, O Spirit, shall hear again the everlasting harmony. Once more the bells of earth shall be attuned to the melodies of heaven; once more shall the eternal chorus find that no singer is absent, but that the music is complete.

But how is this to be? How is the world to be brought back? How is it to be restored? We answer, the reason why there was this original harmony between earth and heaven was, because there was love between them twain, and our great reason for hoping that there shall be at last re-established an undiscordant harmony between heaven and earth is simply this, that God hath already manifested his love towards us, and that in return, hearts touched by his grace do even now love him; and when they shall be multiplied, and love re-established, then shall the harmony be complete.

Having thus introduced my text, I must now plunge into it. We shall notice the parentage, the nourishment, and the walk of love; and shall exhort all believers here present, to love God, because he hath first loved them.

1. In the first place, THE PARENTAGE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. There is no light in the planet but that which cometh from the sun; there is no light in the moon but that which is borrowed, and there is no true love in the heart but that which cometh from God. Love is the light, the life, and way of the universe. Now, God is both life, and light, and way, and, to crown all, God is love. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God, all our love to God must spring. This must ever be a great and certain truth, that we love him, for no other reason than because he first loved us. There are some that think that God might be loved by simple contemplation of his works. We do not believe it. We have heard a great deal about admiring philosophers, and we have felt that admiration was more than possible when studying the works of God. We have heard a great deal about wondering discoverers, and we have acknowledged that the mind must be base indeed which does not wonder when it looks upon the works of God; and we have sometimes heard about a love to God which has been engendered by the beauties of scenery, but we have never believed in its existence. We do believe that where love is already born in

the heart of man, all the wonders of God's providence and creation may excite that love again, it being there already; but we do not and we cannot believe, because we never saw such an instance, that the mere contemplation of God's works could ever raise any man to the height of love. In fact, the great problem has been tried, and it has been solved in the negative. What saith the poet,

"What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Java's isle;
Where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

Where God is most resplendent in his works, and most lavish in his gifts, there man has been the vilest and God is the most forgotten.

Others have taught, if not exactly in doctrine, yet their doctrine necessarily leads to it, that human nature may of itself attain unto love to God. Our simple reply is, we have never met with such an instance. We have curiously questioned the people of God, and we believe that others have questioned them in every age, but we have never had but one answer to this question, "Why hast thou loved God?" The only answer has been, "Because he first loved me." I have heard men preach about free-will, but I never yet heard of a Christian who exalted free-will in his own experience. I have heard men say, that men of their own free-will may turn to God, believe, repent, and love, but I have heard the same persons, when talking of their own experience, say, that they did not so turn to God, but that Jesus sought them when they were strangers, wandering from the fold of God. The whole matter may look specious enough, when preached, but when felt it is found to be a phantom. It may seem right enough for a man to tell his fellow that his own free-will may save him; but when he comes to close dealing with his own conscience, he himself, however wild in his doctrine, is compelled to say, "Oh! yes, I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." I have wondered at a Wesleyan brother, who has sometimes railed against this doctrine in the pulpit, and then has given out this very hymn, and all the members of the church have joined in singing it most heartily, while at the same time they were tolling the death-knell of their own peculiar tenets; for if that hymn be true Arminianism must be false. If it be the certain fact, that the only reason for our loving God is that his love has been shed abroad in our hearts,

then it cannot be true anyhow, that man ever did or ever will love God, until first of all God has manifested his love towards him.

But without disputing any longer, do we not all admit that our love to God is the sweet offspring of God's love to us? Ah! beloved, cold admiration every man may have; but the warmth of love can only be kindled by the fires of God's Spirit. Let each Christian speak for himself, we shall all hold this great and cardinal truth, that the reason of our love to God is, the sweet influence of his grace. Sometimes I wonder that such as we should have been brought to love God at all. Is our love so precious that God should court our love, dressed in the crimson robes of a dying Redeemer? If we had loved God, it would have been no more than he deserved. But when we rebelled, and yet he sought our love, it was surprising indeed. It was a wonder when he disrobed himself of all his splendours, and came down and wrapt himself in a mantle of clay; but methinks the wonder is excelled yet, for after he had died for us, still we did not love him; we rebelled against him; we rejected the proclamation of the gospel; we resisted his Spirit; but he said, I will have their hearts; and he followed us day after day, hour after hour. Sometimes he laid us low, and he said, "Surely they will love me if I restore them!" At another time he filled us with corn and with wine, and he said "Surely they will love me now," but we still revolted, still rebelled. At last he said, "I will strive no longer, I am Almighty, and I will not have it that a human heart is stronger than I am. I turn the will of man as the rivers of water are turned," and lo! he put forth his strength, and in an instant the current changed, and we loved him, because we then could see the love of God, in that he sent his Son to be our Redeemer. But we must confess, beloved, going back to the truth with which we started, that never should we have had any love towards God, unless that love had been sown in us by the sweet seed of his love to us. If there be any one here that hath a love to Christ, let him differ from this doctrine here, but let him know that he shall not differ hereafter; for in heaven they all sing, praise to free grace. They all sing, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

II. Love, then, has for its parent the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. But after it is divinely born in our heart it must be divinely NOURISHED. Love is an exotic; it is not a plant that will nourish

naturally in human soil. Love to God is a rich and rare thing; it would die if it were left to be frost-bitten by the chilly blasts of our selfishness, and if it received no nourishment but that which can be drawn from the rock of our own hard hearts it must perish. As love comes from heaven, so it must feed on heavenly bread. It cannot exist in this wilderness, unless it is nurtured from above, and fed by manna from on high. On what, then, does love feed? Why, it feeds on love. That which brought it forth becomes its food. "We love him because he first loved us." The constant motive and sustaining power of our love to God is his love to us. And here let me remark that there are different kinds of food, in this great granary of love. When we are first of all renewed, the only food on which we can live is milk, because we are but babes, and as yet have not strength to feed on higher truths.

The first thing, then, that our love feeds upon, when it is but an infant, is a sense of favours received. Ask a young Christian why he loves Christ, and he will tell you, I love Christ because he has bought me with his blood! Why do you love God the Father? I love God the Father because he gave his Son for me. And why do you love God the Spirit? I love him because he has renewed my heart. That is to say we love God for what he has given to us. Our first love feeds just on the simple food of a grateful recollection of mercies received. And mark, however much we grow in grace this will always constitute a great part of the food of our love.

But when the Christian grows older and has more grace, he loves Christ for another reason. He loves Christ because he feels Christ deserves to be loved. I trust I can say, I have in my heart now a love to God, These men did not merely love Christ because of what he had done for them; but you will find in their sonnets and in their letters - that their motive of love was, that he had communed with them, he had showed them his hands and his side; they had walked with him in the villages; they had lain with him on the beds of spices; they had entered into the mystic circle of communion; and they felt that they loved Christ, because he was all over glorious, and was so divinely fair, that if all nations could behold him, sure they must be constrained to love him too.

This, then, is the food of love; but when love grows rich - and it does

sometimes - the most loving heart grows cold towards Christ. Do you know that the only food that ever suits sick love, is the food on which it fed at first. I have heard say by the physicians, that if a man be sick there is no place so well adapted for him as the place where he was born; and if love grow sick and cold, there is no place so fit for it to go to as the place where it was born, namely, the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Where was love born? Was she born in the midst of romantic scenery, and was she nursed with wondrous contemplations upon the lap of beauty? Ah! no. Was she born on the steeps of Sinai, when God came from Sinai and the holy one from mount Paran, and melted the mountains with the touch of his foot, and made the rocks flow down like wax before his terrible presence? Ah! no. Was love born on Tabor, when the Saviour was transfigured, and his garment became whiter than wool, whiter than any fuller could make it? Ah! no; darkness rushed o'er the sight of those that looked upon him then, and they fell asleep, for the glory overpowered them. Let me tell you where love was born. Love was born in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus sweat great drops of blood, it was nurtured in Pilate's hall, where Jesus bared his back to the ploughing of the lash, and gave his body to be spit upon and scourged. Love was nurtured at the cross, amid the groans of an expiring God, beneath the droppings of his blood - it was there that love was nurtured. Bear me witness, children of God. Where did your love spring from, but from the foot of the cross? Did you ever see that sweet flower growing anywhere but at the foot of Calvary? No; it was when ye saw "love divine, all loves excelling," outdoing its own self; it was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own stroke, laying down its life, though it had power to retain it and to take it up again; it was there your love was born; and if you wish your love, when it is sick, to be recovered, take it to some of those sweet places; make it sit in the shade of the olive trees, and make it stand on the pavement and gaze, while the blood is still gushing down. Take it to the cross, and bid it look and see afresh the bleeding lamb; and surely this shall make thy love spring from a dwarf into a giant, and this shall fan it from a spark into a flame.

And then, when thy love is thus recruited, let me bid thee give thy love full exercise; for it shall grow thereby. You say, "Where shall I exercise the contemplation of my love, to make it grow?" Oh! Sacred Dove of love,

stretch thy wings, and play the eagle now. Come! open wide thine eyes, and look full in the Sun's face, and soar upward, upward, upward, far above the heights of this world's creation, upwards, till thou art lost in eternity. Remember, that God loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Does not this strengthen thy love? Ah! what a bracing air is that air of eternity? When I fly into it for a moment, and think of the great doctrine of election - of

"That vast unmeasured love,
Which from the days of old,
Did all the chosen seed embrace,
like sheep within the fold."

It makes the tears run down one's cheeks to think that we should have an interest in that decree and council of the Almighty Three, when every one that should be blood-bought had its name inscribed in God's eternal book. Come, soul, I bid thee now exercise thy wings a little, and see if this does not make thee love God. He thought of thee before thou hadst a being. When as yet the sun and the moon were not, - when the sun, the moon, and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup, when the old sea was not yet born, long ere this infant world lay in its swaddling bands of mist, then God had inscribed thy name upon the heart and upon the hands of Christ indelibly, to remain for ever. And does not this make thee love God? Is not this sweet exercise for thy love? For here it is my text comes in, giving, as it were, the last charge in this sweet battle of love, a charge that sweeps everything before it. "We love God, because he first loved us," seeing that he loved us before time began, and when in eternity he dwelt alone.

And when thou hast soared backward into the past eternity, I have yet another flight for thee. Soar back through all thine own experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God has led thee in the wilderness, and how he hath fed and clothed thee every day - how he hath borne with thine ill manners - how he hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt - how he has opened the rock to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how his grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles -

how his blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins - how his rod and his staff have comforted thee. And when thou hast flown over this sweet field of love, thou mayest fly further on, and remember that the oath, the covenant, the blood, have something more in them than the past, for though "he first loved us," yet this doth not mean that he shall ever cease to, love, for he is Alpha and he shall be Omega, he is first, and he shall be last; and therefore bethink thee, when thou shalt pass through the valley of the shadow of death, thou needest fear no evil, for he is with thee. When thou shalt stand in the cold floods of Jordan, thou needest not fear, for death cannot separate thee from his love; and when thou shalt come into the mysteries of eternity thou needest not tremble, for "I am persuaded that neither principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And now, soul is not thy love refreshed? Does not this make thee love him? Doth not a flight over those illimitable plains of the ether of love, inflame thy heart, and compel thee to delight thyself in the Lord thy God? Here is the food of love. "We love him, because he first loved us," and because in that first love there is the pledge and promise that he will love us even to the end.

III. And now comes the third point, the WALK OF LOVE. "We love him." Children of God, if Christ were here on earth, what would you do for him? If it should be rumoured to-morrow that the Son of Man had come down from heaven, as he came at first, what would you do for him? If there should be an infallible witness that the feet that trod the holy acres of Palestine were actually treading the roads of Great Britain, what would you do for him? Oh, I can conceive that there would be a tumult of delighted hearts - a superabundance of liberal hands - that there would be a sea of streaming eyes to behold him. "Do for him!" says one; "Do for him! Did he hunger, I would give him meat, though it were my last crust. Did he thirst, I would give him drink, though my own lips were parched with fire. Was he naked, I would strip myself and shiver in the cold to clothe him. Do for him! I should scarcely know what to do. I would hurry away, and I would cast myself at his dear feet, and I would beseech him, if it would but honour him, that he would tread upon me, and crush me in the dust, if he would but be raised one inch the higher thereby. Did he

want a soldier, I would enlist in his army; did he need that some one should die, I would give my body to be burned, if he stood by to see the sacrifice and cheer me in the flames." O ye daughters of Jerusalem! would ye not go forth to meet him? would ye not rejoice with the tabret, and in the dance? Dance then ye might, like Miriam, by the side of Egypt's waters, red with blood. We, the sons of men, would dance, like David before the ark, exulting for joy, if Christ were come. Ah! we think we love him so much that we should do all that; but there is a grave question about the truth of this matter after all. Do you not know that Christ's wife and family are here? And if ye love him, would it not follow as a natural inference, that you would love his bride and his offspring? "Ah!" says one, "Christ has no bride on earth." Has he not? Has he not espoused unto himself his church? Is not his church, the mother of the faithful, his own chosen wife? And did he not give his blood to be her dower? And has he not declared that he never will be divorced from her, for he hates to put away, and that he will consummate the marriage in the last great day, when he shall come to reign with his people upon the earth. And has he no children here? "The daughters of Jerusalem and the sons of Zion who hath begotten me these?" Are not they the offspring of the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the child born, the son given? Surely they are; and if we love Christ, as we think we do, as we pretend we do, we shall love his church and people. And do you love his church? Perhaps you love the part to which you belong. You love the hand. It may be a hand that is garnished with many a brilliant ring of noble ceremonies, and you love that. You may belong to some poor, poverty-stricken denomination - it may be the foot - and you love the foot; but you speak contemptuously of the hand, because it is garnished with greater honours. Whilst perhaps ye of the hand are speaking lightly of those who are of the foot. Brethren, it is a common thing with us all to love only a part of Christ's body, and not to love the whole; but if we love him we should love all his people.

When we are on our knees in prayer, I fear that when we are praying for the church we do not mean all that we say. We are praying for our church, our section of it. Now, he that loves Christ, if he be a Baptist, he loves the doctrine of baptism, because he knows it to be Scriptural; but, at the same time wherever he sees the grace of God to be in any man's heart, he loves him because he is a part of the living church, and he does not

withhold his heart, his hand, or his house from him, because he happens to differ on some one point. I pray that the church in these days may have a more loving spirit towards herself. We ought to delight in the advance of every denomination. Is the Church of England rousing from its sleep? Is she springing like a phoenix, from her ashes? God be with her, and God bless her! Is another denomination leading the van, and seeking by its ministers to entice the wanderer into the house of God? God be with it! Is the Primitive Methodist labouring in the hedge and ditch, toiling for his Master? God help Him! Is the Calvinist seeking to uphold Christ crucified in all his splendours? God be with him! And does another man with far less knowledge preach much error, but still hold that "by grace are ye saved through faith," then God bless him, and may success be with him evermore. If ye loved Christ better ye would love all Christ's church, and all Christ's people.

Do you not know that Christ hath now a mouth on earth, and hath left a hand on earth and a foot on earth still, and that if ye would prove your love to him, ye would not think that ye cannot feed him - ye need not imagine that ye cannot fill his hand, or that ye cannot wash his feet? Ye can do all this to-day. He has left his poor and afflicted people, and their mouths are hungry, for they need bread, and their tongue is parched for they need water. You meet them; they come to you; they are destitute and afflicted. Do ye refuse them? Do you know who it was ye denied at your door? "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me." In rejecting the petition of the poor when you might have helped them, you rejected Christ. Christ was virtually the man to whom you parsimoniously refused the needed alms, and your Saviour was thus rejected at the door of one for whom he himself had died. Do you want to feed Christ? Open your eyes, then, and you shall see him everywhere; in our back streets, in our lanes, in our alleys, in all our churches, connected with every branch of Christ's people, ye shall find the poor and the afflicted. If ye want feed Christ, feed them. But ye say that ye are willing to wash Christ's feet Ah! well, and ye may do it. Has he no fallen children? Are there no brethren who have sinned, and who are thus defiled? If Christ's feet were foul, ye say ye would wash them; then if a Christian man has stepped aside, seek to restore him, and lead him once more in the way of righteousness. And do you want to fill Christ's hands

with your liberality? His Church is the treasure-house of his alms, and the hand of his church is outstretched for help, for she always needs it. She has a work to do which must be accomplished. She is straitened because your help is withheld from her; pour your gifts into her treasury, for all that ye can give unto her is given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to stimulate your love, let me remind you that Christ Jesus had two trials of his love, which he endured with firmness, but which are often too much for us. When Christ was high, and glorious, I marvel that he loved us. I have known many a man who loved his friend when he was in the same low estate; but he has risen, and he has disdained to know the man at whose table he had fed. A lofty elevation tries the love which we bear to those who are inferior to us in rank. Now, Christ Jesus, the Lord of heaven and the King of angels, condescended to notice us before he came on earth, and always called us brethren: and since he has ascended up to heaven, and has re-assumed the diadem. and once more sits down at the right hand of God, he never has forgotten us. His high estate has never made him slight a disciple. When he rode into Jerusalem in triumph, we do not read that he disdained to confess that the humble fishermen were his followers. And "now, though he reigns exalted high, his love is still as great;" still he calls us brethren, friends; still he recognizes the kinship of the one blood. And yet, strange to say, we have known many Christians who have forgotten much of their love to Christ when they have risen in the world. "Ah!" said a woman, who had been wont to do much for Christ in poverty, and who had had a great sum left her, "I cannot do as much as I used to do." "But how is that?" said one. Said she, "When I had a shilling purse I had a guinea heart, and now I have a guinea purse I have only a shilling heart." It is a sad temptation to some men to get rich. They were content to go to the meeting-house and mix with the ignoble congregation, while they had but little; they have grown rich, there is a Turkey carpet in the drawing-room, they have arrangements now too splendid to permit them to invite the poor of the flock, as once they did, and Christ Jesus is not so fashionable as to allow them to introduce any religious topic when they meet with their new friends. Besides this, they say they are now obliged to pay this visit and that visit, and they must spend so much time upon attire, and in maintaining their station and respectability, they cannot find time to pray

as they did. The house of God has to be neglected for the party, and Christ has less of their heart than ever he had. "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" And hast thou risen so high that thou art ashamed of Christ? and art thou grown so rich, that Christ in his poverty is despised? Alas! poor wealth! alas! base wealth! vile wealth! 'Twere well for thee if it should be all swept away, if a descent to poverty should be a restoration to the ardency of thine affection.

But once again: what a trial of love was that, when Christ began to suffer for us! There are many men, I doubt not, who are true believers, and love their Saviour, who would tremble to come to the test of suffering. Imagine yourself my brother, taken to-day into some dark dungeon of the Inquisition; conceive that all the horrors of the dark ages are revived, you are taken down a long dark staircase, and hurried you know not whither, at last you come to a place, far deep in the bowels of the earth, and round about you see hanging on the walls the pincers, the instruments of torture of all kinds and shapes. There are two inquisitors there who say to you, "Are you prepared to renounce your heretical faith, and to return to the bosom of the church?" I conceive my brethren and sisters, that you would have strength of mind and grace enough to say, "I am not prepared to deny my Saviour." But when the pincers began to tear the flesh, when the hot coals began to scorch, when the rack began to dislocate the bones; when all the instruments of torture were wreaking their hellish vengeance, unless the supernatural hand of God should be mightily upon you, I am sure that in your weakness you would deny your Master, and in the hour of your peril would forsake the Lord that bought you. True, the love of Christ in the heart, when sustained by his grace, is strong enough to bear us through; but I am afraid that with many of us here present, if we had no more love than we have now, we should come out from the inquisition miserable apostates from the faith. But now, remember Christ. He was exposed to tortures, which were really more tremendous, far. There is no engine of Romish cruelty that can equal that dreadful torture which forced a sweat of blood from every pore. Christ was scourged and he was crucified; but there were other woes unseen by us, which were the soul of his agonies. Now, if Christ in the hour of sore trial had said, "I disown my disciples, I will not die," he might have come down from the cross; and who could accuse him of evil? He owed us

nothing; we could do nothing for him. Poor worms would be all that he would disown. But our Master, even when the blood-sweat covered him as with a mantle of gore, never thought of disowning us - NEVER. "My Father," said he once, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But there was always the "If it be possible." If it be possible to save without it, let the cup pass; but if not thy will be done. You never hear him say in Pilate's hall one word that would let you imagine that he was sorry he had undertaken so costly a sacrifice for us; and when his hands are pierced, and when he is parched with fever, and his tongue is dried up like a potsherd, and his whole body is dissolved into the dust of death, you never hear a groan or a shriek that looks like going back. It is the cry of one determined to go on, though he knows he must die on his onward march. It was love that could not be stayed by death, but overcame all the horrors of the grave.

Now, what say we to this? We who live in these gentler times, are we about to give up our Master, when we are tried and tempted for him? Young man in the workshop! it is your lot to be jeered at because you are a follower of the Saviour; and will you turn back from Christ because of a jeer? Young woman! you are laughed at because you profess the religion of Christ, shall a laugh dissolve the link of love that knits your heart to him, when all the roar of hell could not divert his love from you. And you who are suffering because you maintain a religious principle, are you cast out from men; will you not bear that the house should be stripped, and that you shall eat the bread of poverty, rather than dishonour such a Lord? Will you not go forth from this place, by the help of God's Spirit, vowing and declaring that in life, come poverty, come wealth - in death, come pain, or come what may, you are and ever must be the Lord's; for this is written on your heart, "We love him, because he first loved us."

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"Love And I" - A Mystery

I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. - John 17:26

For several sabbath mornings my mind has been directed into subjects which I might fitly call the deep things of God. I think I have never felt my own incompetence more fully than in trying to handle such subjects. It is a soil into which one may dig and dig as deep as ever you will, and still never exhaust the golden nuggets which lie within it. I am, however, comforted by this fact, that these subjects are so fruitful that even we who can only scratch the surface of them shall yet get a harvest from them. I read once of the plains of India, that they were so fertile that you had only to tickle them with a hoe and they laughed with plenty, and surely such a text as this may be described as equally fruitful, even under our feeble husbandry. Pearls lie on the surface here as well as in the depth. We have only to search its surface, and stir the soil a little, and we shall be astonished at the plenitude of spiritual wealth which lies before us. Oh, that the Spirit of God may help us to enjoy the blessed truths which are herein set forth! Here is the priceless treasure, but it lies hid till he reveals it to us.

You see, this text is taken out of our Lord's last prayer with his disciples. He did as good as say, "I am about to leave you, I am about to die for you; and for a while you will not see me; but now, before we separate, let us pray." It is one of those impulses that you have felt yourselves. When you have been about to part from those you love, to leave them perhaps in danger and difficulty, you have felt you could do no less than say, "Let us draw nigh unto God." Your heart found no way of expressing itself at all so fitting, so congenial, so satisfactory as to draw near unto the great Father and spread the case before him. Now, a prayer from such a one as Jesus, our Lord and Master; a prayer in such a company, with the eleven whom he had chosen, and who had consorted with him from the beginning; a prayer under such circumstances, when he was just on the

brink of the brook of Cedron, and was about to cross that gloomy stream and go up to Calvary, and there lay down his life—such a prayer as this, so living, earnest, loving and divine, deserves the most studious meditations of all believers. I invite you to bring hither your best thoughts and skill for the navigation of this sea. It is not a creek or bay, but the main ocean itself. We cannot hope to fathom its depths. This is true of any sentence of this matchless prayer; but for me the work of exposition becomes unusually heavy, because my text is the close and climax of this marvellous supplication: it is the central mystery of all. In the lowest depth there is still a lower deep, and this verse is one of those deeps which still exceed the rest. Oh, how much we want the Spirit of God. Pray for his bedewing: pray that his balmy influences may descend upon us richly now.

You will observe that the last word of our Lord's prayer is concerning love. This is the last petition which he offers, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." He reaches no greater height than this, namely, that his people be filled with the Father's love. How could he rise higher? For this is to be filled with all the fulness of God, since God is love, and he that loveth dwelleth in God and God in him. What importance ought you and I to attach to the grace of love! How highly we should esteem that which Jesus makes the crown jewel of all. If we have faith, let us not be satisfied unless our faith worketh by love and purifieth the soul. Let us not be content indeed until the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Well did the poet say,

"Only love to us be given,
Lord, we ask no other heaven;"

for indeed there is no other heaven below, and scarcely is there any other heaven above than to reach to the fulness of perfect love. This is where the prayer of the Son of David ends, in praying "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." What a subject! The highest that even our Lord Jesus reached in his noblest prayer. Again with groanings my heart cries, Holy Spirit, help.

I shall this morning try to speak first upon the food of love, or what love lives upon; secondly, upon the love itself, what kind of love it is; and then, thirdly, upon the companion of love. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

I. First, THE FOOD OF LOVE to God: what is it? It is knowledge. "I have made known unto them thy name, and will make it known." We cannot love a God whom we do not know: a measure of knowledge is needful to affection. However lovely God may be, a man blind of soul cannot perceive him, and therefore is not touched by his loveliness. Only when the eyes are opened to behold the loveliness of God will the heart go out towards God who is so desirable an object for the affections. Brethren, we must know in order to believe; we must know in order to hope; and we must especially know in order to love. Hence the great desirableness that you should know the Lord, and his great love which passeth knowledge. You cannot reciprocate love which you have never known, even as a man cannot derive strength from food which he has not eaten. Till first of all the love of God has come into your heart, and you have been made a partaker of it, you cannot rejoice in it or return it. Therefore our Lord took care to feed his disciples' hearts upon the Father's name. He laboured to make the Father known to them. This is one of his great efforts with them, and he is grieved when he sees their ignorance, and has to say to one of them, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Study much, then, the word of God: be diligent in turning the pages of Scripture and in hearing God's true ministers, that the flame of love within your hearts may be revived by the fuel of holy knowledge which you place upon it. Pile on the logs of sandal wood, and let the perfumed fires burn before the Lord. Heap on the handfuls of frankincense and sweet odours of sacred knowledge, that on the altar of your heart there may always be burning the sacred flame of love to God in Christ Jesus.

The knowledge here spoken of is a knowledge which Jesus gave them. "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." O beloved, it is not knowledge that you and I pick up as a matter of book learning that

will ever bring out our love to the Father: it is knowledge given us by Christ through his Spirit. It is not knowledge communicated by the preacher alone which will bless you; for however much he may be taught of God himself, he cannot preach to the heart unless the blessed Spirit of God comes and takes of the things that are spoken, and reveals them and makes them manifest to each individual heart, so that in consequence it knows the Lord. Jesus said, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee," and you and I would have been in the same condition, strangers to God, without God and without hope in the world, if the Spirit of God had not taken of divine things and applied them to our souls so that we are made to know them. Every living word of knowledge is the work of the living God. If you only know what you have found out for yourself, or picked up by your own industry apart from Jesus, you know nothing aright: it must be by the direct and distinct teaching of God the Holy Ghost that you must learn to profit. Jesus Christ alone can reveal the Father. He himself said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." He that knows not Christ knows not the Father; but when Jesus Christ reveals him, ah! then we do know him after a special, personal, peculiar, inward knowledge. This knowledge brings with it a life and a love with which the soul is not puffed up, but built up. By such knowledge we grow up into him in all things who is our head, being taught of the Son of God.

This knowledge, dear friends, comes to us gradually. The text indicates this. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." As if, though they knew the Father, there was far more to know and the Lord Jesus was resolved to teach them more. Are you growing in knowledge, my brothers and sisters? My labour is lost if you are not growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I hope you know much more of God than you did twenty years ago when first you came to him. That little knowledge which you received by grace when you found "life in a look at the Crucified One" has saved you; but in these after years you have added to your faith knowledge, and to your knowledge experience; you have gone on to know more deeply what you knew before, and to know the details of what you seemed to know in the gross and the lump at first. You have come to look into things as well as upon things—a look at Christ saves; but oh, it is the look into Christ that wins the heart's love and holds it fast and binds us to him as with fetters

of gold. We ought every day to be adding something to this inestimably precious store, that as we are known of God so we may know God, and become thereby transformed from glory unto glory through his Spirit.

Are you not thankful for this blessed word of the Lord Jesus: "I will declare it": "I will make it known"? He did do so at his resurrection, when he taught his people things they knew not before; but he did so much more after he had ascended up on high when the Spirit of God was given. "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And now to-day in the hearts of his people he is daily teaching us something that we do not know. All our experience tends that way. When the Spirit of God blesses an affliction to us, it is one of the Saviour's illuminated books out of which we learn something more of the Father's name, and consequently come to love him better: for that is the thing Christ aims at. He would so make known the Father, that the love wherewith the Father hath loved him may be in us, and that he himself may be in us.

This knowledge distinguishes us from the world. It is the mark by which the elect are made manifest. In the sixth verse of this chapter our Lord says: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." The world does not know the Father, and cannot know him, for it abides in the darkness and death of sin. Judge yourselves therefore by this sure test, and let the love which grows out of gracious knowledge be a token for good unto you.

Now let me try to show you what the Saviour meant when he said, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare." This knowledge which breeds love is knowledge of the name of God. What does he mean by "Thy name." Now, I do not think I should preach an unprofitable sermon if I were to stop with the connection and say that the "name" here meant is specially the name used in the twenty-fifth verse: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." This is the name which we most need to know—"righteous Father." Observe the singular combination. Righteous and yet a Father. "Righteous": to us poor sinners that is a word of terror when first we hear it. "Father,"—oh, how sweet. That is a word of good

cheer even to us prodigals; but we are afraid to lay hold upon it, for our sins arise, and conscience protests that God must be righteous, and punish sin. Our joy begins when we see the two united: "righteous Father,"—a Father full of love, and nothing but love, to his people, and yet righteous as a Judge, as righteous as if he were no Father. Dealing out his righteousness with stern severity as the Judge of all the earth must do, and yet a Father at the same time. I do protest that I never did love God at all, nor could I embrace him in my affections, till I understood how he could be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus: how, in a word, he could be the "righteous Father." That satisfied my conscience and my heart at the same time, for my conscience said, It is well. God hath not put away sin without a sacrifice, and hath not winked at sin nor waived his justice in order to indulge his mercy, but he remains just as he ever was—the same thrice holy God who will by no means spare the guilty. He hath laid the punishment of our sins upon Christ; he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And all this he has done that he might act to us as a Father, and save his own children from the result of their transgressions. He has given his only begotten Son to die in our stead that many sons might be brought to glory through him. It is at the cross we understand this riddle. Here we see the righteous Father. But the world will not learn it, and a large part of the professing church, which is nothing better than the world wrongfully named with Christ's name, will not learn it. They do anything they can to get away from atonement: love without righteousness is their idol. Substitution is a word that is hard for the world to spell: they cannot abide it. That Christ should suffer in the stead of the guilty, and bear that we might never bear the Father's righteous wrath,—this they cannot away with. Many pretend to keep the atonement, and yet they tear the bowels out of it. They profess to believe in the gospel, but it is a gospel without the blood of the atonement; and a bloodless gospel is a lifeless gospel, a dead gospel, and a damning gospel. Let those take heed who cannot see God as a righteous Father, for they are numbered amongst the world who know him not. "These have known thee," saith our Lord. These who have been taught by Christ, and these alone, come to find as much joy in the word "righteous" as in the word "Father"; and blending the two together they feel an intense love to the "righteous Father," and their hearts rejoice in a holy gospel, a message of

mercy consistent with justice, a covenant salvation ordered in all things and sure, because it does no violence to law and does not bind the hands of justice. Beloved, if this revelation of the atoning blood does not make your heart love Jesus, and love the Father, it is because you are not in him; but if you know this secret as to how righteousness and peace have kissed each other, you know the name that wins the affection of believers to God. My own heart is glad and rejoices every hour because I find rest in substitution, safety in the vindication of the law, and bliss in the glory of the divine character.

"Lo! In the grace that rescued man
His brightest form of glory shines!
Here, on the cross, 'tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.

"Here I behold his inmost heart,
Where grace and vengeance strangely join,
Piercing his Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasure mine.

"Oh, the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where God the Saviour loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding sides."

Still, I would take the word "name" in a wider sense. "I have declared unto them thy name," which signifies "thy character." The word "name" is used as a sort of summary of all the attributes of God. All these attributes are well adapted to win the love of all regenerate spirits. Just think for a minute. God is holy. To a holy mind there is nothing in the world, there is nothing in heaven more beautiful than holiness. We read of the beauties of holiness; for to a soul that is purified, holiness is superlatively lovely. Now, beauty wins love, and consequently when Jesus Christ makes known his holy Father, and shows us in his life and in his death the holiness of the Ever-blessed, then our heart is won to the Father. "Oh," say you, "but holiness does not always win love." No, not the love of the defiled hearts that cannot appreciate it; but those who are pure in heart,

and can see God, no sooner behold his holiness than they are enamoured of it, and their souls at once delight in their Lord.

Moreover, we learn from our Lord Jesus that God is good. "There is none good but one: that is God." How inexpressibly good he is! There is no goodness but what comes from God. His name, "God" is but short for "good," and all the good things that we receive in this life, and for the life to come, are but enlargements of his blessed name. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Blessings enjoyed by us are streams that flow from the fountain head of God's infinite goodness to the sons of men. A man cannot help loving God when once he knows him to be good, for all men love that which they apprehend to be good to them. A man says, "Gold is good; rest is good; fame is good;" and therefore he seeks after these things, and when he comes to know that God is good, oh, then his spirit follows hard after him. He cannot help but love that which he is persuaded is in the highest sense good. The soul that knows the name of the Lord rejoices at the very mention of him.

To sinners like ourselves perhaps the next word may have more sweetness. God is merciful; he is ever ready to forgive. Note how the prophet saith, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by transgression?" He does not say, "Who is a man like unto thee?" for none among our race can for a moment be compared with him; but even if the gods of the heathen were gods, none of them could be likened unto the Lord for mercy. Now, when a man knows that he has offended, and yet the person offended readily and freely forgives, why, it wins his love. If he is a right-hearted man he cries, "I cannot again offend one who so generously casts all my offences behind his back." The mercy of God is such a love-winning attribute that, as I told you the other Sunday, twenty-six times in a single psalm the ancient church sang, "His mercy endureth for ever." Free grace and pardoning love sensibly known in the soul will win your hearts unto God for ever, so that you shall be his willing servants as long as you have any being.

But then there is a higher word still. God is love, and there is a something about love which always wins love. When love puts on her own golden

armour, and bares her sword bright with her own unselfishness, she goeth on conquering and to conquer. Let a man once apprehend that God is love, that this is God's very essence, and he must at once love God. I do not mean merely "apprehend" that God is love in the cold intellect; but when this heart begins to glow and burn with that divine revelation, then straightway the spirit is joined unto the Lord, and rests with delight in the great Father of spirits. Love knits and binds. Oh to feel more of its uniting power.

Thus have I shown you the manna which love feeds upon, the nectar which it drinks. Everything in God is lovely, and there is no trait in his character that is otherwise than lovely. All the lovelinesses that can be conceived are heaped up in God without the slightest admixture or adulteration. He is love altogether, wholly, and emphatically. Oh, surely our Lord and Master was wise when he fed his people's love upon such meat as this.

II. Brethren, we have as yet only been standing at the furnace mouth: let us now enter into the devouring flame while we speak, in the second place, upon THE LOVE ITSELF.

Observe, first, what this love is not. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." Do notice that the prayer is not that the Father's love may be set upon them, or moved towards them. God does not love us because we know him, for he loved us before we knew him, even as Paul speaks of "His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." Jesus has not come to set his Father's love upon the chosen. Oh, no; he did not even die with that object, for the Father's love was upon the chosen from everlasting. "The Father himself loveth you" was always true. Christ did not die to make his Father loving, but because his Father is loving: the atoning blood is the outflow of the very heart of God toward us. So do not make any mistake. Our Lord speaks not of the divine love in itself, but in us. This is not the eternal love of God towards us of which we are now reading, but that love in us. We are inwardly to feel the love which proceeds from the Father, and so to have it in us. We are to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost

which is given unto us. It is to be recognized by us, felt in us, made the subject of inward joy; this it is that our Lord wishes to produce, that the love of God may be in us, dwelling in our hearts, a welcome guest, the sovereign of our souls.

And this love is of a very peculiar sort. Do let me read the verse again: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." It is God's own love in us. The love of the Father towards Jesus springs up like a crystal fountain, and then the sparkling drops fall and overflow, as you have seen the fountains do, and we are the cups into which this overflowing love of God towards Christ Jesus flows, and flows till we too are full. The inward love so much desired for us by our Lord is no emotion of nature, no attachment proceeding from the unregenerate will, but it is the Father's love transplanted into the soil of these poor hearts, and becoming our love to Jesus, as we shall have to show in the next point. But is not this a wonderful thing,—that God's own love to Jesus should dwell in our hearts? And yet it is so. The love wherewith we love Christ, mark you, is God's love to Christ: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them. "All true love, such as the Father delights in and accepts at our hands, is nothing but his own love, which has come streaming down from his own heart into our renewed minds.

But what can this mean? I must ask you to observe that it includes within itself four precious things.

First, the text means that our Lord Jesus Christ desires us to have a distinct recognition of the Father's love to him. He wants the love wherewith the Father loves him to be felt in us, so that we may say, "Yes, I know the Father loved him, for I, who am such a poor, unworthy, and foolish creature, yet love him; and, oh, how his Father must love him." I love him! Ay, by his grace, it were a blessed thing to die for him; but if I love him, oh, how must his Father love him who can see all his beauty, and can appreciate every distinct piece of loveliness that is in him! God never loved anything as he loves Christ, except his people, and they have had to be lifted up to that position by the love which the Father has to his Son. For, first and foremost, the Father and the Son are one: they are one in essence. The Saviour has been with the Father from the beginning, and

his delight has been with him, even as the Father testified, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Oh, do try to feel, if you can, the love of the Father to his Son, or else you will not love the Father as you should for the amazing sacrifice which he made in giving Jesus to us. Think what it cost him to tear his Well-Beloved from his bosom and send him down below to be "despised and rejected." Think what it cost him to nail him up to yonder cross, and then forsake him and hide his face from him, because he had laid all our sins upon him. Oh, the love he must have had to us thus to have made his best Beloved to become a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." I want you to get this right into your souls, dear friends. Do not hold it as a dry doctrine, but let it touch your heart. Let it flow into your heart like a boiling stream, till your whole souls become like Icelandic geysers, which boil and bubble up and send their steam aloft into the clouds. Oh, to have the soul filled with the love of the Father towards him who is altogether lovely.

Now, go a step further and deeper. Our text bears a further reading. Remember that you are to have in your heart a sense of the Father's love to you, and to recollect that it is precisely the same love wherewith he loves his Son. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." Oh, wonder of wonders, I feel more inclined to sit down and meditate upon it than to stand up and talk about it! The love wherewith he loved his Son—such is his love to all his chosen ones. Can you believe it, that you should be the object of God's delight, even as Christ is, because you are in Christ; that you should be the object of the Father's love as truly as Christ is, because he sees you to be part and parcel of the mystical body of his well-beloved Son? Do not tell me that God the Father does not love you as well as he does Christ: the point can be settled by the grandest matter of fact that ever was. When there was a choice between Christ and his people which should die of the two, the Father freely delivered up his own Son that we might live through him. Oh, what a meeting there must have been of the seas of love that day, when God's great love to us came rolling in like a glorious springtide, and his love to his Son came rolling in at the same time. If they had met and come into collision, we cannot imagine the result; but when they both took to rolling together in one mighty torrent, what a stream of love was there! The Lord Jesus sank that we might swim, he sank that we might rise; and now we

are borne onward for ever by the mighty sweep of infinite love into an everlasting blessedness which tongues and lips can never fully set forth. Oh, be ravished with this. Be carried away with it; be in ecstasy at love so amazing, so divine: the Father loves you even as he loves his Son; after the same manner and sort he loveth all his redeemed.

But now this goes to a third meaning, and that is that we are to give back a reflection of this love, and to love Jesus as the Father loves him. A dear old friend speaking to me the other day in a rapturous tone said, "I love Jesus as the Father loves him." This is true; not equally, but like. Is not this a blessed thought? I said, "O friend, that is a strong thing to say!" "Ah," said he, "but not stronger than Jesus would have it when he prays that 'the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.'" His people love Christ as the Father loves him,—in the same way, though from want of capacity they cannot reach to the same immeasurable force of love. Oh, to throw back on Christ his Father's love. The Father is the sun and we are the moon, but the moonlight is the same light as the sunlight. We can see a difference because reflection robs the light of much of its heat and its brilliance, but it is the same light. The moon has not a ray of light but what came from the sun, and we have not a live coal of love to Christ but what came from the Father. We are as the moon, shining by reflected light, but Jesus loves the moonlight of our love and rejoices in it. Let us give him all of it: let us try to be as the full moon always, and let us not dwindle down to a mere ring of love, or a crescent of affection; let us render no half-moon love; let us not be half dark and cold, but let us shine on Christ with all the light we can possibly reflect of his father's love, saying in our very soul,

"My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;
For thee all the follies of sin I resign."

And then fourthly, this love of the Father in us is to go beaming forth from us to all around. When we get the love wherewith the Father loves the Son into our hearts, then it is to go out towards all the chosen seed. He that loveth him that begat loveth also them that are begotten of him. Ay, and your love is to go forth to all the sons of men, seeking their good for God's glory, that they may be brought in to know the same Saviour in

whom we rejoice. Oh, if the love of the Father to Christ once enters into a man's soul it will change him; it will sway him with the noblest passion; it will make him a zealot for Christ; it will cast out his selfishness; it will change him into the image of Christ, and fit him to dwell in heaven where love is perfected.

So I conclude this second head by saying that this indwelling of the Father's love in us has the most blessed results. It has an expulsive result. As soon as ever it gets into the heart it says to all love of sin, "Get thee hence; there remains no room for thee here." When the light enters in, the darkness receives immediate notice of ejection; the night is gone as soon as the dawn appears. It has also a repulsive power by which it repels the assaults of sin. As though a man did snatch the sun out of the heaven and make a round shield with it, and hold it in the very face of the prince of darkness, and blind him with the light, so doth the love of God the Father repel the enemy. It girds the soul with the armour of light. It repels the devil, the love of the world, the love of sin, and all outward temptations. And then what an impulsive power it has. Get the love of Christ into you, and it is as when an engine receives fire and steam, and so obtains the force which drives it. Then have you strengthening, then have you motive power, then are you urged on to this and that heroic deed which, apart from this sublime love, you never would have thought of. For Christ you can live, for Christ you can suffer, for Christ you can die, when once the Father's love to him has taken full possession of your spirit. And, oh, how elevating it is. How it lifts a man up above self and sin; how it makes him seek the things that are above! How purifying it is; and how happy it makes the subject of its influence. If you are unhappy you want more of the love of God. "Oh," say you, "I want a larger income." Nonsense. A man is not made happy by money. You will do very well in poverty if you have enough of the love of God. Oh, but if your soul be filled with the love of God, your spirit will be ready to dance at the very sound of his name. You murmur and repine at providence because the fire of your love is burning low. Come, get the ashes together; pray the Spirit of God to blow upon them: beg him to bring fresh fuel of holy knowledge, till your soul becomes like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, heated seven times hotter. This is the kind of love we should have towards Christ. No blessing can excel it. Oh, Saviour, let thy prayer be fulfilled in

me and in all thy dear people this morning, and may the love wherewith the Father hath loved thee be in us.

III. Thirdly, here is THE COMPANION OF LOVE. "I in them." Look the text a minute and just catch those two words. Here is "love" and "I"—love and Christ come together. Oh, blessed guests! "Love and I," says Christ; as if he felt he never had a companion that suited him better. "Love" and "I": Jesus is ever at home where love is reigning. When love lives in his people's hearts, Jesus lives there too. Does Jesus, then, live in the hearts of his people? Yes; wherever there is the love of the Father shed abroad in them, he must be there. We have his own word for it, and we are sure that Jesus knows where he is.

We are sure that he is where love is; for, first, where there is love there is life, and where there is life there is Christ, for he himself says, "I am the life." There is no true life in the believer's soul that is divided from Christ. We are sure of that; so that where there is love there is life, and where there is life there is Christ. Again, where there is the love of God in the heart there is the Holy Spirit; but wherever the Holy Spirit is, there is Christ, for the Holy Spirit is Christ's representative; and it is in that sense that he tells us, "Lo, I am with you always," namely, because the Spirit is come to be always with us. So where there is love there is the Spirit of God, and where there is the Spirit of God there is Christ. So it is always "Love and I."

Furthermore where there is love there is faith, for faith worketh by love, and there never was true love to Christ apart from faith; but where there is faith there is always Christ, for if there is faith in him he has been received into the soul. Jesus is ever near to that faith which has himself for its foundation and resting place. Where there is love there is faith, where there is faith there is Christ, and so it is "love and I."

Ay, but where there is the Father's love toward Christ in the heart God himself is there. I am sure of that, for God is love. So if there is love within us there must be God, and where God is, there Christ is, for he saith, "I and my Father are one." So you see, where there is love, there must be Jesus Christ, for these reasons and for many others beside.

"I in them." Yes, if I were commanded to preach for seven years from these three words only, I should never exhaust the text, I am quite certain. I might exhaust you by my dulness, and exhaust myself by labour to tell out the sacred secret, but I should never exhaust the text. "I in them." It is the most blessed word I know of. You, beloved, need not go abroad to find the Lord Jesus Christ. Where does he live? He lives within you. "I in them." As soon as ever you pray you are sure he hears you, because he is within you. He is not knocking at your door: he has entered into you, and there he dwells, and will go no more out for ever.

What a blessed sense of power this gives to us. "I in them." Then it is no more "I" in weakness, but, since Jesus dwells in me, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." "I in them." It is the glory of the believer that Christ dwells in him. "Unto you that believe he is precious."

Hence we gather the security of the believer. Brother, if Christ be in me, and I am overcome, Christ is conquered too, for he is in me. "I in them." I cannot comprehend the doctrine of believers falling from grace. If Christ has once entered into them, will he not abide with them? Paul saith, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." To that persuasion I set my hand and seal. Well, then, if Christ is in us, whatever happens to us will happen to him. We shall be losers if we do not get to heaven; but so will he be, for he is in us, and so is a partaker of our condition. If it is an indissoluble union—and so he declares it is—"I in them," then his destiny and ours are linked together; and if he wins the victory we conquer in him: if he sits at the right hand of God we shall sit at the right hand of God with him, for he is in us.

I know not what more to say, not because I have nothing more, but because I do not know which to bring forward out of a thousand precious things; but I leave the subject with you. Go home, and live in the power of this blessed text. Go home, and be as happy as you can be to live, and if you get a little happier that will not hurt you, for then you will be in

heaven. Keep up unbroken joy in the Lord. It is not "I in them" for Sundays, and away on Mondays; "I in them" when they sit in the Tabernacle, and out of them when they reach home. No; "I in them," and that for ever and for ever. Go and rejoice. Show this blind world that you have a happiness which as much outshines theirs as the sun outshines the sparks which fly from the chimney and expire. Go forth with joy and be led forth with peace; let the mountains and the hills break forth before you into singing.

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to the King."

"Oh, but I have my troubles." I know you have your troubles, but they are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you, nor even with your present glory. I feel as if I could not think about troubles, nor sins, nor anything else when I once behold the love of God to me. When I feel my love to Christ, which is but God's love to Christ, burning within my soul, then I glory in tribulation, for the power of God shall be through these afflictions made manifest in me. "I in them." God bless you with the knowledge of this mystery, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Love Thy Neighbour

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself - Matthew 19:19

Our Saviour very often preached upon the moral precepts of the law. Many of the sermons of Christ - and what sermons shall compare with them - have not what is now currently called "the gospel" in them at all.

Our Saviour did not every time he stood up to preach, declare the doctrine of election, or of atonement, or of effectual calling, or of final perseverance. No, he just as frequently spoke upon the duties of human life, and upon those precious fruits of the Spirit, which are begotten in us by the grace of God. Mark this word that I have just uttered. You may have started at it at first, but upon diligent reading of the four evangelists, you will find I am correct in stating that very much of our Saviour's time was occupied in telling the people what they ought to do towards one another; and many of his sermons are not what our precise critics would in these times call sermons full of unction and savor; for certainly they would be far from savory to the sickly sentimental Christians who do not care about the practical part of religion. Beloved, it is as much the business of God's minister to preach man's duty, as it is to preach Christ's atonement; and unless he doth preach man's duty, he will never be blessed of God to bring man into the proper state to see the beauty of the atonement. Unless he sometimes thunders out the law, and claims for his Master the right of obedience to it, he will never be very likely to produce conviction - certainly, not that conviction which afterwards leads to conversion. This morning, I am aware, my sermon will not be very unctuous and savory to you that are always wanting the same round of doctrines, but of this I have but little care. This rough world sometimes needs to be rebuked, and if we can get at the ears of the people, it is our business to reprove them; and I think if ever there was a time when this text need to be enlarged upon, it is just now. It is so often forgotten, so seldom remembered, "Thou shalt love thy neighbours thyself."

I shall notice, first of all, *the command*; secondly, I shall try and bring *some reasons for your obedience to it*; and afterwards, I shall draw *some suggestions from the law itself*.

I. First, then, THE COMMAND. It is the second great commandment. The first is, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," and there, the proper standard is, thou shalt love thy God more than thyself. The second commandment is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," and the standard there is a little lower, but still preeminently high, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is the command. We can split it into three parts. *Whom am I to love?* My neighbour. *What am I to do?* I am to love

him. *How am I to do it?* I am to love him *as myself*.

First, whom am I to love? I am to love my neighbour. By the word neighbour, we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, nae or near, (near) and buer, (to dwell) persons residing, or being near us, and if any one in the world is near us, he is our neighbour. The Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho, felt that he was in his neighbourhood, and that therefore he was his neighbour, and he was bound to love him. "Love thy neighbour." Perhaps he is in riches, and thou art poor, and thou livest in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion. Thou seest his estates, thou markest his fine linen, and his sumptuous raiment. God has given him these gifts, and if he has not given them to thee, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. There will ever be differences in the circumstances of man, so let it be. Be content with thy own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbour, and wish that he were poor as thyself; and do not aid or abet any who would rid him of his wealth, to make thee hastily rich. Love him, and then thou canst not envy him. Mayhap, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbours. Do not scorn to own that thou art bound to love even them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are thine equals really, though not so in station. "God hath made of one blood all people that dwell on the face of the earth." Thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? They may be men in rags, but men in rags are men; and if thou be a man arrayed in scarlet, thou art no more than a man. Take heed that thou love thy neighbour, even though he be in rags, and scorn him not, though sunken in the depths of poverty.

Love thy neighbour, too, *albeit that he be of a different religion*. Thou thinkest thyself to be of that sect which is the nearest to the truth, and thou hast hope that thou and thy compeers who think so well, shall certainly be saved. Thy neighbour thinketh differently. His religion thou sayest is unsound and untrue; love him, for all that. Let not thy differences separate him from thee. Perhaps he may be right, or he may be wrong; *he* shall be the rightest in practice, who loves the most. Possibly he has no religion at all. He disregards thy God; he breaks the

Sabbath; he is confessedly an atheist; love him still. Hard words will not convert him, hard deeds will not make him a Christian. Love him straight on; his sin is not against thee, but against thy God. Thy God takes vengeance for sins committed against himself, and leave thou him in God's hands. But if thou canst do him a kind turn, if thou canst find aught whereby thou canst serve him, do it, be it day or night. And if thou makest any distinction, make it thus: Because thou art not of my religion, I will serve thee the more, that thou mayest be converted to the right; whereas thou art a heretic Samaritan, and I an orthodox Jew, thou art still my neighbour, and I will love thee with the hope that thou mayest give up thy temple in Gerizim, and come to bow in the temple of God in Jerusalem. Love thy neighbour, despite differences in religion.

Love thy neighbour, *although he oppose thee in trade*. It will be a motto hard to introduce upon the exchange, or in trade; but, nevertheless, it is one I am bound to preach to you that are merchants and tradesmen. A young man has lately started a shop which you are afraid will damage you. You must not hurt him; you must neither think nor say anything to injure him. Your business is to love him, for though he oppose you in your business, he is your neighbour still. There is another one residing near you, who is indebted to you, and if you should take from him all that he owes you, you will ruin him; but if you let him keep your money for a little, he may weather the storm, and succeed in his endeavors. It is your business to love him as yourself. Let him have your money, let him try again, and perhaps you shall have your own, and he shall be helped too. With whomsoever thou hast dealings in thy business, he is thy neighbour. With whomsoever thou tradest, be he greater or less than thou, he is thy neighbour, and the Christian law commands that thou shalt love thy neighbour. It doth not merely say that thou art not to hate him, but it tells thee to love him; and though he should thwart thy projects, though he should prevent thy obtaining wealth, though he should rob thee of thy custom - ay, though he should obscure thy fame, yet thou art bound to love him as thyself. This law makes no exception. Is he near thee, and hast thou any dealings with him? Thus says the law, "Thou shalt love him."

Again, thou art bound to love thy neighbour, *though he offend thee with*

him sin. Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed, and our hearts are grieved, when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common habit with the harlot or the profligate, is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right, it is not Christian-like. We are bound to love even sinners, and not to drive them from the land of hope, but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue; but I am bound to love *him* still, and even though I am wronged by him, yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling, but as I would desire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him. And if he so sins against the law of the land, that he is to be punished (and rightly so,) I am to love him in the punishment; for I am not to condemn him to imprisonment vindictively, but I am to do it for his good, that he may be led to repent through the punishment; I am to give him such a measure of punishment as shall be adequate, not as an atonement for his crime, but to teach him the evil of it, and induce him to forsake it. But let me condemn him with a tear in my eye, because I love him still. And let me, when he is thrust into prison, take care that all his keepers attend to him with kindness, and although there be a necessity for sternness and severity in prison discipline, let it not go too far, lest it merge into cruelty, and become wanton, instead of useful. I am bound to love him, though he be sunken in vice, and degraded. The law knows of no exception. It claims my love for him. I must love him. I am not bound to take him to my house; I am not bound to treat him as one of my family. There may be some acts of kindness which would be imprudent, seeing that by doing them I might ruin others, and reward vice. I am bound to set my *face* against him, as I am just, but I feel I ought not to set my *heart* against him, for he is my brother-man, and though the devil has besmeared his face, and spits his venom in his mouth, so that when he speaks he speaks in oaths, and when he walks, his feet are swift to shed blood, yet he is a man, and as a man he is my brother, and as a brother I am bound to love him, and if by stooping I can lift him up to something like moral dignity, I am wrong if I do not do it, for I am bound to love him as I love myself. O, I would to God that this great law were fully carried out. Ah, my hearers, you do not love your neighbours, you know you do not. You do not hardly love all the people who go to the same chapel. Certainly, you would not think of loving those who differ from you in opinion - would you? That would be

too strange a charity. Why, you hardly love your own brothers and sisters. Some of you to-day are at daggers drawing with them that hung on the same breast. O, how can I expect you to love your enemies if you do not love your friends? Some of you have come here angered at your parents, and here is a brother who is angry with his sister for a word she said before he left home. O, if you can not love your brothers and sisters you are worse than heathen men and publicans. How can I expect you to obey this high and mighty command, "Love your neighbours?" But whether you obey it or not, it is mine to preach it, and not shift it to a gainsaying generation's taste. First, we are bound to love and honor all men, simply because they are men; and we are to love, next, all those who dwell near us, not for their goodness or serviceableness toward us, but simply because the law demands it, and they are our neighbours. "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

2. But, now, what am I to do to my neighbour? *Love* him - it is a hard word - *love* him. "Well I believe," says one, "I never speak an unkind word of any of my neighbours. I do not know that I ever hurt a person's reputation in my life. I am very careful to do my neighbour no damage. When I start in business I do not let my spirit of competition over throw my spirit of charity. I try not to hurt anybody." My dear friend, that is right as far as it goes, but it does not go the whole way. It is not enough for you to say, you do not hate your neighbour, you are to love him. When you see him in the street it is not sufficient that you keep out of his way, and do not knock him down. It is not sufficient that you do not molest him by night, nor disturb his quiet. It is not a negative, it is a positive command. It is not *the not doing*, it is the doing. Thou must not injure him it is true, but thou hast not done all when thou hast not done that. Thou oughtest to love him. "Well," says one, "when my neighbours are sick round about; if they be poor, I take a piece from the joint for dinner, and send it to them, that they may have a little food and be refreshed, and if they be exceedingly poor, I lay out my money, and see that they are taken care of." Yes, but thou mayest do this, and not love them. I have seen charity thrown to a poor man as a bone is thrown to a dog, and there was no love in it. I have seen money given to those who needed it with not one half the politeness with which hay is given to a horse. "There it is, you want it. I suppose I must give it to you, or people will not think me liberal.

Take it, I am sorry you came here. Why don't you go to somebody else's house? I am always having paupers hanging on me." O, this is not loving our neighbour, and this is not making him love us. If we had spoken a kind word to him, and refused him, he would have loved us better than when we gave to him in an unkind manner. No, though thou feedest the poor, and visitest the sick, thou hast not obeyed the command, unless thy heart goes with thy hand, and the kindness of thy life bespeaks the kindness of thy soul. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

And now some one here may say, "Sir, I can not love my neighbour, you may love yours perhaps, because they may be better than mine, but mine are such an odd set of neighbours, and I try to love them, and for all I do they do but return insult." So much the more room for heroism. Wouldst thou be some feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? Sir, he who dares the most - shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, and still on, loving thy neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please *them*, but to please *thy Master*, and remember if they spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to him as if it had been acceptable to them. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

Now, if this love for our neighbour were carried out - love, real love - it would prohibit all *rash anger*. Who is ever angry with himself? I suppose all wise men are now and then, and I suspect we should not be righteous if we were not sometimes angry. A man who is never angry is not worth a button. He can not be a good man, for he will often see things so bad that he must be angry at them. But, remember, thou hast no right to be more angry with thy neighbour than thou art with thyself. Thou art sometimes vexed with thyself, and thou mayest sometimes be vexed with him if he has done wrong. But thine anger toward thyself is very short lived: thou soon forgivest thine own dear self; well, thou art bound just as soon to forgive him, and though thou speakest a rough word, if it be too rough, withdraw it, and if it be but rough enough, do not add more to it to make it too much so. State the truth if thou art obliged to do it, as kindly as thou canst. Be no more stern than there is need to be. Deal with others as thou wouldst deal with thyself. Above all, harbor no revenge. Never let

the sun set on thine anger - it is impossible to love thy neighbour if thou dost that. Revenge renders obedience to this command entirely out of the question.

Thou art bound to love thy neighbour, then *do not neglect him*. He may be sick, he may live very near thy house, and he does not send for thee to call on him, for he says, "No, I do not like to trouble him." Remember, it is thy business to find him out. The most worthy of all poverty is that which never asks for pity. See where thy neighbours are in need; do not wait to be told of it, but find it out thyself, and give them some help. Do not neglect them; and when thou goest, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes, not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction, but go to thy brother as if thou were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due, and sit by his side, and talk to him; and if he be one that hath a high spirit, give him not thy charity as a charity, give it to him in some other way, lest thou break his head with the very box of ointment with which thou hadst intended to have anointed him. Be thou very chary how thou speakest to him: break not his spirit. Leave thy charity behind thee, and he shall forget that, but he shall remember well thy kindness toward him in thy speech.

Love to our neighbours puts aside every sin that is akin to covetousness, and envy, and it makes us at all times ready to serve them, ready to be their footstool, if so it must be, that we may be so proved to be the children of Christ.

"Well," says one, "I can not see that I am always to forgive; you know a worm will turn if it is trodden upon." And is a worm to be your exemplar? A worm will turn; but a Christian will not. I think it foul scorn to take a worm for my exemplar, when I have got Christ for my copy. Christ did not turn - when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when they crucified him, and nailed him to the tree, he cried, "Father, forgive them." Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in thy bosom, love which many waters can not quench, love which the floods can not drown. Love thy neighbours.

3. And now we have done with this command, when we have noticed *how we are to love our neighbour*. It would be a good thing if some ladies

loved their neighbours as much as they loved their lap-dogs. It would be a fine thing for many a country squire if he loved his neighbours as much as he loved his pack of hounds. I think it might be a high pitch of virtue, if some of you were to love your neighbours as much as you love some favorite animal in your house. What an inferior grade of virtue, however, that appears to be! And yet it were something far superior to what some of you have attained to. You do not love your neighbour as you love your house, your estate, or your purse. How high then is, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" the gospel standard? How much does a man love himself? None of us too little, some of us too much. Thou mayest love thyself as much as thou pleasest, but take care that thou lovest thy neighbour as much. I am certain thou needest no exhortation to love thyself, thine own case will be seen to, thine own comfort will be a very primary theme of thine anxiety. Thou wilt line thine own nest well with downy feathers, if thou canst. There is no need to exhort thee to love thyself. Thou wilt do that well enough. Well, then, as much as thou lovest thyself love thy neighbour. And mark, by this is meant - thine enemy, the man who opposes thee in trade, and the man of another class. Thou oughtest to love him as thou lovest thyself.

Oh, it would turn the world upside down indeed, if this were practiced. A fine lever this would be for upsetting many things that have now become the custom of the land. In England we have a caste almost as strong as in Hindostan. My lord will not speak to any one who is a little beneath himself in dignity, and he who hath the next degree of dignity thinks the tradesman infinitely below him, and he who is a tradesman thinks a mechanic scarcely worth his notice, and mechanics according to their grades have their castes and classes too. Oh, for the day when these shall be broken down, when the impulse of the one blood shall be felt, and when as one family each shall love the other, and feel that one class depends upon the other! It were well if each would strive to help and love the other as he ought. My fine lady, in your silks and satins, you have gone to church many a day and sat side by side with a poor old woman in her red cloak, who is as good a saint as you could be. But do you ever speak to her? Never in your life. You would not speak to her, poor soul, because you happen to be worth more hundreds of pounds a-year than she is shillings. There are you, Sir John, you come to your place, and you

expect every one to be eminently respectful to you, as indeed they ought to be, for we are all honorable men, and the same text that says, "Honor the king," says also, "Honor all men." And so we are bound to honor every one of them. But you think that you, above all men, are to be worshipped. You do not condescend to men of mean estate. My dear sir, you would be a greater man by one-half if you were not to appear so great. Oh, I say again, blessed be Christ, blessed be his Father for this commandment, and blessed be the world when the commandment shall be obeyed, and we shall love our neighbours as ourselves!

II. And now shall I have to give REASONS WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THIS COMMAND.

The best reason in all the world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbours because *God commands it*. To the Christian there is no argument so potent as God's will. God's will is the believer's law. He doth not ask what shall it profit him, what shall be the good effect of it upon others, but he simply says, doth my Father say it? Oh, Holy Spirit, help me to obey, not because I may see how it shall be always good for me, but simply because thou commandest. It is the Christian's privilege to do God's commandments, "hearkening to the voice of his Word." But some other reasons may prevail more with others of you who are not Christians.

Let me remark, then, that *selfishness itself would bid you love your neighbour*. Oh, strange that selfishness should preach a suicidal sermon; but yet if self could speak, it might, if it were wise, deliver an oration like this, "Self, love thy neighbour, for then thy neighbour will love thee. Self, help thy neighbour, for then thy neighbour will help thee. Make to thyself, O self, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when thou fairst they may receive thee into abiding habitations. Self, thou wantest ease; make thyself easy by treating everybody well. Self, thou wantest pleasure, thou canst get no pleasure if those around thee hate thee. Make them love thee, dear self, and so shalt thou bless thyself." Ay, even if ye are selfish, I would ye were so pre-eminently selfish, and so wisely selfish that ye would love others to make yourselves happy.

The short cut to be happy yourself is to try to make others happy. The world is bad enough, but it is not so bad as not to feel the power of kindness. Treat servants well. There are some of them that you can't mend at all, but treat them well, and as a rule they will treat you well. Treat your masters well. Some of them are gruff and bad enough, but as a class they know good servants, and they will treat you well. There, now, if I would wish to be happy, I would not ask to have the wealth of this world, nor the things that men call comforts; the best comforts that I should desire would be loving ones round about me, and a sense that where I went I scattered happiness, and made men glad. That is the way to be happy, and selfishness itself might say, "Love thy neighbour," for in so doing thou dost love thyself; for there is such a connection between him and thee, that in loving him the stream of thy love returns into thine own heart again.

But I shall not assail you with such a paltry motive as that; it is too poor for a Christian; it should be too base even for a man. Love your neighbour, in the next place, *because that will be the way to do good in the world*. You are philanthropists, some of you subscribe to missionary societies, you subscribe to the society for orphans, and other charitable objects. I am persuaded that these institutions, though they be excellent and good things, are in some respects a loss, for now a man gives to a society one-tenth of what he would have given himself; and where an orphan would have been kept by a single family, ten families join together to keep that orphan, and so there is about one-tenth of the charity. I think the man who has the time is bound to give nothing at all to societies, but to give all away himself. Be your own society. If there be a society for the sick, then if you have enough money, be your own sick society. If you have the time go and visit the sick yourself, you will know money is well spent then, and you will spare the expense of a secretary. There is a society for finding soup for the poor. Make your own soup. Give it yourself; and if every one who gives his half-a-crown to the society would just spend half-a-sovereign to give the soup away himself, there would be more done. Societies are good; God forbid that I should speak against them; do all you can for them: but still I am afraid that they sometimes thwart individual effort, and I know they rob us of a part of the pleasure which we should have in our own benefactions - the pleasure of seeing

the gleaming eye, and of hearing the grateful word when we have been our own almoners.

Dear friends, remember that man's good requires that you should be kind to your fellow creatures. The best way for you to make the world better is to be kind yourself. Are you a preacher? Preach in a surly way and in a surly tone to your church; a pretty church you will make of it before long! Are you a Sunday-school teacher? Teach your children with a frown on your face; a fine lot they will learn! Are you a master? Do you hold family prayer? Get in a passion with your servants, and say "Let us pray." A vast amount of devotion you will develop in such a manner as that. Are you a warder of a jail, and have prisoners under you? Abuse them and ill-treat them, and then send the chaplain to them. A fine preparation for the reception of the Word of God! You have poor around you; you wish to see them elevated, you say. You are always grumbling about the poverty of their dwellings, and the meanness of their tastes. Go and make a great row at them all - a fine way that would be to improve them! Now, just wash your face of that black frown, and buy a little essence of summer somewhere, and put it on your face, and have a smile on your lip, and say, "I love you. I am no cant, but I love you, and as far as I can I will prove my love to you. What can I do for you? Can I help you over a stile? Can I give you any assistance, or speak a kind word to you? Methinks I could see after your little daughter. Can I fetch the doctor to your wife now she is ill?" All these kind things would be making the world a little better. Your jails and gibbets, and all that, never made the world better yet. You may hang men as long as you like; you will never stop murder. Hang us all, we should not be much the better for it. There is no necessity for hanging any; it will never improve the world. Deal gently, deal kindly, deal lovingly, and there is not a wolf in human shape but will be melted by kindness; and there is not a tiger in woman form but will break down and sue for pardon, if God should bless the love that is brought to bear upon her by her friend. I say again, for the world's good, love your neighbours.

And now, once more, love your neighbour, for *there is a deal of misery in the world that you do not know of*. We have often spoken hard words to poor miserable souls; we did not know their misery, but we should have known it, we should have found it out. Shall I tell you, my friend landlord,

you went yesterday to get a warrant against a poor woman that has got three children. Her husband died a long while ago. She was three weeks back in her rent; the last time, to pay you, she sold off her late husband's watch and her own wedding ring; it was all that she had that was dear to her, and she paid you; and you went to her the next week, and she begged a little patience, and you think yourself highly exemplary because you had that little patience. "The woman," you have said, "I dare say is good for nothing, and if not, it is no particular business of mine whether she has got three children, or none; rent is rent, and business is business." Out she goes directly. Oh, if you could have seen that woman's heart when she stood penniless and homeless, and knew not where to send the children for the night, you would have said, "Never mind, my good woman, stop there; I can not turn a widow out of house and home." You did not do it yourself, did you? No, but you sent your agent to do it and the sin lay on you just as much for all that. You had no right to do it; you had a right in the eye of man's law but God's law says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self." A young man called upon you a little time ago. He said, "Sir, you know my little business. I have been struggling very hard, and you have kindly let me have some things on credit. But through the pressure of the times, I don't know how it is, I seem to get very hard up. I think, sir, if I could weather the next month, I might be able to get on well. I have every prospect of having a trade yet, if I could but have a little more credit, if you could possibly allow it." "Young man," you have said, "I have had a great many bad debts lately. Besides you do not bring me any good security; I can not trust you." The young man bowed, and left you. You did not know how he bowed in spirit as well as in body. That young man had a poor old mother and two sisters in the house, and he had tried to establish a little business that he might earn bread and cheese for them as well as for himself. For the last month they have eaten scarcely anything but bread and butter, and the weakest tea has been their drink, and he has been striving hard; but some one, poorer than he seemed to be, did not pay him the little debt that was due to him, and he could not pay you. And if you had helped him, it might have been all well with him; and now what to do he can not tell. His heart is broken, his soul is swollen within him. That aged mother of his, and those girls, what shall become of them? You did not know his agony, or else you would have helped him. But you ought to have known. You never should have dismissed his case until you

had known a little more about him. It would not be business-like, would it? No, sir, to be business-like is sometimes to be devil-like. But I would not have you business-like when it is so. Out on your business; be Christian-like. If you be professors, seek to serve God in obeying his commands - "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

"Nay," says another, "but I am always very kind to the poor." There is a lady here who has got a tolerable share of money to spare, and to her, money is about as common as pins. And she goes to see the poor; and when she gets in, they set her a chair, and she sits down, and begins to talk to them about economy, and gives them a tolerably good lecture on that. The poor souls wonder how they are to economise any more than they do; for they eat nothing but bread, and they can not see that they can get anything much cheaper. Then she begins to exhort them about cleanliness, and makes about fifty impertinent remarks about the children's clothes. "Now," says she, "my good woman, before I leave you I will give you this tract, it is about drunkenness: perhaps you will give it to your husband." If she does he will beat her, you may depend upon it. "Come now," she says, "there is a shilling for you." And now, my lady thinks, "I love my neighbour." Did you shake hands with her? "No, sir." Did you speak lovingly to her? "Of course not. She is an inferior." Then you did not obey this command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Shall I tell you what happened after you left? That woman as soon as ever you were gone, began to cry. She started off to the minister for consolation. She said to him, "Do you know, sir, I am very thankful to God that I have had a little relief given me this morning, but my spirit was almost broken. Do you know, sir, we used to be in better circumstances. This morning Mrs. So-and-so came and talked to me in such a way, as if I had been a dog, or as if I had been a child, and though she gave me a shilling I did not know what to do. I wanted the shilling bad enough, or else I really think I should have thrown it after her. She did talk in such a way, I could not bear it. Now, if you come to see me, sir, I know you will speak kindly to me, and if you give me nothing you will not abuse me and find fault with me." "Oh," she said, "my heart is broken within me. I can not bear this, for we have seen better days, and we have been used to different treatment to this." Now, you did not love her. Your shilling, what was the good of that, if you did not put a little love on it. You might have made it

as good as a golden sovereign if you had spread a little love upon it. She would have thought far more of it. "Love thy neighbours." Oh! would to God that I could always practice it myself, and would that I could impress it into every one of your hearts. Love thy neighbour as thou lovest thyself.

And now the last argument I shall use is one especially appropriate to the Christian. Christian, your religion *claims your love* - Christ loved you before you loved him. He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted him, though you despised him and rebelled against him. He has loved you right on, and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart was still eternally the same, and he shed his heart's blood to prove his love for you. He has given you what you want on earth, and provided for you an habitation in heaven. Now Christian, your religion claims from you, that you should love as your Master loved. How can you imitate him, unless you love too? We will leave to the Mahometans, to the Jew, and to the infidel, coldheartedness and unkindness; 'twere more in keeping with their views, but with you unkindness is a strange anomaly. It is a gross contradiction to the spirit of your religion, and if you love not your neighbour, I see not how you can be a true follower of the Lord Jesus.

And now I conclude with just a weighty suggestion or two, and I will not weary you. My text suggests first, *the guilt of us all*. My friends, if this be God's law, who here can plead that he is not guilty? If God's law demands I should love my neighbour, I must stand in my pulpit, and confess my guilt. In thinking of this text yesterday, my eyes ran with tears at the recollection of many a hard thing I had spoken in unwary moments. I thought of many an opportunity of loving my neighbour that I had slighted, and I labored to confess the sin. I am certain there is not one of all this immense audience who would not do the same, if he felt this law applied by the Spirit in power to his soul.

Oh! are we not guilty? Kindest of spirits, most benevolent of souls, are you not guilty? Will you not confess it? And then that suggests this remark. If no man can be saved by his works, unless he keeps this law perfectly, who can be saved by his works? Have any of you loved your

neighbour all your life with all your heart? Then shall you be saved by your own deeds, if you have not broken any other command. But if you have not done it, and can not do it, then hear the sentence of the law. You have sinned, and you shall perish for your sin. Hope not to be saved by the mandate of the law. And oh! how this endears the gospel to me! If I have broken this law, and I have - and if I can not enter heaven with this law broken, precious is the Saviour who can wash me from all my sins in his blood! Precious is he that can forgive my want of charity, and pardon my want of kindness - can forgive my roughness and my rudeness, can put away all my harsh speaking, my bigotry and unkindness, and can through his all-atoning sacrifice give me a seat in heaven, notwithstanding all my sins. You are sinners this morning - you must feel it: my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt. Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the gospel. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall he saved." Though he hath hitherto broken this law God shall forgive him, and put a new heart and a right spirit into his bosom, whereby he shall be enabled to keep the law in future, at least to an eminent degree, and shall, by-and-by, attain to a crown of life in glory everlasting.

Now, I do not know whether I have been personal to anybody this morning. I sincerely hope I have. I meant to be. I know there are a great many characters in the world that must have a cap made exactly to fit them, or else they will never wear it, and I have tried as near as I could to do it. If you would not say, "How well that applied to my neighbour," but just for once say, "How well it applied to me," I shall hope that there will be some good follow from this exhortation; and though the Antinomian may turn away, and say, "Ah! it was only a legal sermon," my love to that precious Antinomian. I do not care about his opinion. My Saviour preached like that, and I shall do the same. I believe it is right that Christians should be told what they should do, and that worldlings should know what Christianity will lead us to do; that the highest standard of love, of kindness, and of law, should be uplifted in the world, and kept constantly before the people's eyes.

May God bless you, and be with you, for Jesus' sake!

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The Loved Ones Chastened

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
- Revelation 3:19

The dealings of God towards the sons of men have always puzzled the wise men of the earth who have tried to understand them. Apart from the revelation of God the dealings of Jehovah towards his creatures in this world seem to be utterly inexplicable. Who can understand how it is that the wicked flourish and are in great power? The ungodly man flourishes like a green bay tree; behold, he stretcheth out his roots by the river: he knoweth not the year of drought; his leaf withereth not; and his fruit doth not fall in an untimely season. Lo, these are the ungodly that flourish in the world; they are filled with riches; they heap up gold like dust; they leave the rest of their substance to their babes; they add field to field, and acre to acre, and they become the princes of the earth. On the other hand, see how the righteous are cast down. How often is virtue dressed in the rags of poverty! How frequently is the most pious spirit made to suffer from hunger, and thirst, and nakedness! We have sometimes heard the Christian say, when he has contemplated these things, "Surely, I have served God in vain; it is for nothing that I have chastened myself every morning and vexed my soul with fasting; for lo, God hath cast me down, and he lifteth up the sinner. How can this be?" The sages of the heathen could not answer this question, and they therefore adopted the expedient of cutting the gordian knot. "We can not tell how it is," they might have said; therefore they flew at the fact itself, and denied it. "The man that prospers is favored of the gods; the man who is unsuccessful is obnoxious to the Most High." So said the heathen, and they knew no better. Those more enlightened easterns, who talked with Job in the days of his affliction, got but little further; for they believed that all who served God would have a hedge about them; God would multiply their wealth and increase their happiness; while they saw in Job's affliction, as they conceived, a certain sign that he was a hypocrite, and therefore God had

quenched his candle and put out his light in darkness. And alas! even Christians have fallen into the same error. They have been apt to think, that if God lifts a man up there must be some excellence in him; and if he chastens and afflicts, they are generally led to think that it must be an exhibition of wrath. Now hear ye the text, and the riddle is all unriddled; listen ye to the words of Jesus, speaking to his servant John, and the mystery is all unmysteried. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

The fact is, that this world is not the place of punishment. There may now and then be eminent judgments; but as a rule God does not in the present state fully punish any man for sin. He allows the wicked to go on in their wickedness; he throws the reins upon their necks; he lets them go on unbridled in their lusts; some checks of conscience there may be; but these are rather, as monitions than as punishments. And, on the other hand, he casts the Christian down; he gives the most afflictions to the most pious; perhaps he makes more waves of trouble roll over the breast of the most sanctified Christian than over the heart of any other man living. So, then, we must remember that as this world is not the place of punishment, we are to expect punishment and reward in the world to come; and we must believe that the only reason, then, why God afflicts his people must be this: -

"In love I correct thee, thy gold to refine,
To make thee at length in my likeness to shine."

I shall try this morning to notice, first, *what it is in his children that God corrects*; secondly, *why God corrects them*; and thirdly, *what is our comfort, when we are laboring under the rebukes and correctings of our God*. Our comfort must be the fact that he loves us even then. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

I. First, then, beloved, WHAT IS IT IN THE CHRISTIAN THAT GOD REBUKES? One of the Articles of the Church of England saith right truly, that, naturally, "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it

deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *phronema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin," and because evil remains in the regenerate there is therefore a necessity that that evil should be upbraided. Ay, and a necessity that when that upbraiding is not sufficient, God should go to severer measures, and after having failed in his rebukes, adopt the expedient of chastening. "I rebuke and chasten." Hence God has provided means for the chastisement and the rebuking of his people. Sometimes God rebukes his children under the ministry. The minister of the gospel is not always to be a minister of consolation. The same Spirit that is the Comforter is he who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and the same minister who is to be as the angel of God unto our souls, uttering sweet words that are full of honey, is to be at times the rod of God, the staff in the hand of the Almighty, with which to smite us on account of our transgressions. And ah! beloved, how often under the ministry ought we to have been checked when we were not? Perhaps the minister's words were very forcible, and they were uttered with true earnestness, and they applied to our case; but alas! we shut our ear to them, and applied them to our brother instead of to ourselves. I have often marveled when I have been preaching. I have thought that I have described the cases of some of my most prominent members. I have marked in them diverse sins, and as Christ's faithful pastor, I have not shunned to picture their case in the pulpit, that they might receive a well-deserved rebuke; but I have marveled when I have spoken to them afterward, that they have thanked me for what I have said, because they thought it so applicable to such another brother in the church, whilst I had intended it wholly for them, and had, as I thought, so made the description accurate, and so brought it out in all its little points, that it must have been received by them. But alas! you know, my friends, that we sit under the sound of the Word, and we seldom think how much it belongs to us, especially if we hold an office in the Church. It is hard for a minister when he is hearing a brother minister preach, to think, it may be, he has a word of rebuke to me. If

exalted to the office of elder or deacon, there groweth sometimes with that office a callousness to the Word when spoken to himself; and the man in office is apt to think of the hundreds of inquirers unto whom that may be found applicable, and of the multitudes of the babes in grace to whom such a word comes in season. Ay, friends, if we did but listen more to the rebukes of God in the ministry, if we hearkened more to his Word as he speaks to us every Sabbath day, we might be spared many corrections, for we are not corrected until we have despised rebukes, and after we have rejected those, then out comes the rod.

Sometimes, again, God rebukes his children *in their consciences*, without any visible means whatever. Ye that are the people of God will acknowledge that there are certain times, when, apparently without any instrumentality, your sins are brought to remembrance; your soul is cast down within you, and your spirit is sore vexed. God the Holy Spirit is himself making inquisition for sin; he is searching Jerusalem with candles; he is so punishing you because you are settled on your lees. If you look around you there is nothing that could cause your spirits to sink. The family are not sick; your business prospers; your body is in good health; why then this sinking of spirit? You are not conscious at the time, perhaps, that you have committed any gross act of sin; still this dark depression continues, and at last you discover that you had been living in a sin which you did not know - some sin of ignorance, hidden and unperceived, and therefore God did withdraw from you the joy of his salvation, till you had searched your heart, and discovered wherein the evil lay. We have much reason to bless God that he does adopt this way sometimes of rebuking us before he chastens.

At other seasons, the rebuke is *quite indirect*. How often have I met rebuke, where it never was intended to be given! But God overruled the circumstance for good. Have you never been rebuked by a child? The innocent little prattler uttered something quite unwittingly, which cut you to your heart, and manifested your sin. You walked the street, may hap, and you heard some man swear; and the thought perhaps struck your mind, "How little am I doing for the reclaiming of those who are abandoned!" And so, the very sight of sin accused you of negligence, and the very hearing of evil was made use of by God to convince you of

another evil. Oh! if we kept our eyes open, there is not an ox in the meadow, nor a sparrow in the tree, which might not sometimes suggest a rebuke. There is not a star in midnight, there is not a ray in the noon-day, but what might suggest to us some evil that is hidden in our hearts, and lead us to investigate our inner man, if we were but awake to the soft whispers, of Jehovah's rebukes. You know, our Saviour made use of little things to rebuke his disciples. He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. Behold the fowls of the air, how they are fed!" So he made lilies and ravens speak to his disciples, to upbraid their discontent. Earth is full of monitors: all that we need, are ears to hear. However, when these rebukes all fail, God proceeds from rebuke to correction. He will not always chide; but, if his rebukes are unheeded, then he grasps the rod, and he uses it. I need not tell you how it is that God uses the rod. My brethren, you have all been made to tingle with it. He has sometimes smitten you in your persons, sometimes in your families, frequently in your estates, oftentimes in your prospects. He has smitten you in your nearest and dearest friend; or, worse still, it may be he has given you "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet you." But you all understand, if you know anything of the life of a Christian, what the rod, and the staff, and the covenant are; and what it is to be corrected by God. Let me just particularize for a few minutes, and show what it is that God corrects in us.

Very frequently, God corrects *inordinate affection*. It is right of us to love our relatives - it is wrong of us to love them more than God. You, perhaps, are yourselves to-day guilty of this sin. At any rate, beloved, we may most of us look at home when we come to dwell on this point. Have we not some favored one - perhaps, the partner of our heart, or the offspring of our bosom, more dear to us than life itself? Have I not heard some man whose life is bound up in the life of the lad, his child? - some mother, whose soul is knit into the soul of her babe - some wife, some husband, to whom the loss of the partner would be the loss of life? Oh, there are many of us who are guilty of inordinate affection toward relations. Mark you, God will rebuke us for that. He will rebuke us in this way. Sometimes he will rebuke us by the minister; if that is not enough, he will rebuke us by sending sickness or disease to those very persons upon whom we have set our hearts; and if that rebuke us not, and if we are not zealous to repent,

he will chasten us: the sickness shall yet be unto death. The disease shall break forth with more fearful violence, and the thing which we have made our idol shall be smitten, and shall become the food of worms. There never was an idol, that God either did not, or will not pull out of its place. "I am the Lord thy God; I am a jealous God;" and if we put any, however good and excellent their characters may be, and however deserving of our affection, upon God's throne, God will cry, "Down with it," and we shall have to weep many tears; but if we had not done so, we might have preserved the treasure, and have enjoyed it far better, without having lost it.

But other men are baser than this. One can easily overlook the fault of making too much of children, and wife, and friends, although very grievous in the sight of God; but alas! there are some that are too sordid to love flesh and blood; they love dirt, mere dirty earth, yellow gold. It is that on which they set their hearts. Their purse, they tell us, is dross; but when we come to take aught from it, we find they do not think it is so. "Oh," said a man once, "if you want a subscription from me, Sir, you must get at my heart, and then you will get at my purse." "Yes," said I, "I have no doubt I shall, for I believe that is where your purse lies, and I shall not be very far off from it." And how many there are who call themselves Christians, who make a god out of their wealth! Their park, their mansion, their estate, their warehouses, their large ledgers, their many clerks, their expanding business, or if not these, their opportunity to retire, their money in the Three per Cents. All these things are their idols and their gods; and we take them into our churches, and the world finds no fault with them. They are prudent men. You know many of them; they are very respectable people, they hold many respectable positions, and they are so prudent, only that the love of money, which is the root of all evil, is in their hearts too plainly to be denied. Every one may see it, though, perhaps, they see it not themselves. "Covetousness, which is idolatry," reigns very much in the church of the living God. Well, mark you, God will chasten for that. Whosoever loveth mammon among God's people, shall first be rebuked for it, as he is rebuked by me this day, and if that rebuke be not taken, there shall be a chastisement given. It may be, that the gold shall melt like the snow-flake before the sun; or if it be preserved, it shall be said, "Your gold and silver are cankered; the moth

shall eat up your garments, and destroy your glory." Or else, the Lord will bring leanness into their souls, and cause them to go down to their graves with few honors on their heads, and with little comfort in their hearts; because they loved their gold more than their God, and valued earthly riches more than the riches that are eternal. The Lord save us from that, or else he will surely correct us.

But this is not the only sin: we are all subject to another crime which God abhors exceedingly. It is the sin of *pride*. If the Lord gives us a little comfort, we grow so big that we hardly know what to do with ourselves. Like Jeshurun of old, of whom it is said, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." Let us for a little time enjoy the full assurance of faith; self-conceit whispers, "You will retain the savor of that all your days;" and there is not quite a whisper, but something even fainter than that - "You have no need to depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit now. See what a great man you have grown. You have become one of the Lord's most valued people; you are a Samson; you may pull down the very gates of hell and fear not. You have no need to cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.'" Or at other times, it takes a different turn. He gives us temporal mercies, and then we presumptuously say, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved." We meet with the poor saints, and we begin to hector over them, as if we were something, and they were nothing. We find some in trouble; we have no sympathy with them; we are bluff and blunt with them, as we talk with them about their troubles; yea, we are even savage and cruel with them. We meet with some who are in deep distress and faint-hearted; we begin to forget when we were faint-hearted too, and because they cannot run as fast as we can, we run far ahead, and turn back and look at them, call them sluggards, and say they are idle and lazy. And perhaps even in the pulpit, if we are preachers, we have got hard words to say against those who are not quite so advanced as we are. Well, mark, there never was a saint yet, that grew proud of his fine feathers, but what the Lord plucked them out by-and-by. There never yet was an angel that had pride in his heart, but he lost his wings, and fell into Gehenna, as Satan and those fallen angels did; and there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit, and pride, and self-confidence, but the Lord will spoil his glories, and trample his honors in the mire, and make him cry out yet again, "Lord, have mercy upon me," less than the

least of all saints, and the "very chief of sinners."

Another sin that God rebukes, is *sloth*. Now I need not stop to picture that. How many of you are the finest specimens of sloth that can be discovered! I mean not in a business sense, for you are "not slothful in business;" but with regard to the things of God, and the cause of truth, why, nine out of ten of all the professors of religion, I do hazard the assertion, are as full of sloth as they can be. Take our churches all around, and there is not a corporation in the world, however corrupt, that is less attentive to its professed interest, than the church of Christ. There certainly are many societies and establishments in the world that deserve much blame for not attending to those interests which they ought to promote; but I do think the Church of God is the hugest culprit of all. She says that she is the preacher of the gospel to the poor: does she preach it to them? Yes, here and there: now and then there is a spasmodic effort: but how many are there that have got tongues to speak, and ability to utter God's Word that are content to be still! She professes to be the educator of the ignorant, and she is so in a measure: there are many of you who have no business to be here this morning - you ought to have been teaching in the Sabbath-school, or instructing the young, and teaching others. Ye have no need of teachers just now; ye have learned the truth. and should have been teaching it to other people. The church professes that she is yet to cast the light of the gospel throughout the world. She does a little in missionary enterprise; but ah! how little! how little! how little compared with what her Master did for her and the claims of Jesus upon her! We are a lazy set. Take the church all round, we are as idle as we can be; and we need to have some whipping times of persecution, to whip a little more earnestness and zeal into us. We thank God this is not so much the case now, as it was even twelve months ago. We hope the church may progress in her zeal; for if not, she, as a whole, and each of us as members, will be first rebuked, and if we take not the rebuke, we shall afterwards be chastened for this our great sin.

I have no time to enter into all the other reasons for which God will rebuke and chasten. Suffice it to say that every sin has one twig in God's rod appropriated to itself. Suffice it to say, that in God's hand there are punishments for each particular transgression; and it is very singular to

notice how in Bible history almost every saint has been chastened for the sin he has committed by the sin itself falling upon his own head. Transgression has been first a pleasure, and afterward it has been a scourge. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," and that is the severest punishment in all the world.

Thus I have tried to open the first head - *it is that God rebukes and chastens.*

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES GOD REBUKE AND CHASTEN? "Why," says one, "God rebukes his children because they are his children; and he chastens them because they are his children." Well; I will not go the length of saying that is false, but I will go the length of saying it is not true. If any one should say to a father, after he had chastened his child, "Why is it you have chastened the child?" he would not say, it is because I am his father. It is true in one sense; but he would say, "I have chastened the child because he has done wrong." Because the proximate reason why he had chastened his child would not be that he was his father, though that would have something to do with it as a primary reason; but the absolute and primary cause would be, "I have chastened him because he has done wrong, because I wish to correct him for it, that he might not do so again." Now, God, when he chastens his children, never does it absolutely; because he is his father; but he does it for a wise reason. He has some other reason besides his fatherhood. At the same time, one reason why God afflicts his children and not others, is because he is their Father. If you were to go home to-day and see a dozen boys in the streets throwing stones and breaking windows it is very likely you would start the whole lot of them; but if there is one boy that would get a sweet knock on the head it would be your own; for you would say, "What are you at, John? What business have you here?" You might not be justified, perhaps, in meddling with the others - you would let their own fathers attend to them; but because you were his father, you would try to make him remember it. Certain special chastisements are inflicted on God's children, because they are his children; but it is not because they are his children that he chastens them at any one time, but because they have been doing something wrong. Now, if you are under chastisement, let this truth be certain to you. Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is

there any secret thing with thee? Art thou chastened in thy business? Then what sin hast thou committed? Art thou cast down in thy spirit? Then what transgression has brought this on thee? Remember, it is not fair to say, "I am chastened because I am his child;" the right way to say it is, "I am his child, and therefore when he chastens me he has a reason for it." Now, what is it? I will help you to judge.

Sometimes God chastens and afflicts us, *to prevent sin*. He sees that the embryo of lust is in our hearts; he sees that that little egg of mischief is beginning to hatch and to produce sin, and he comes and crushes it at once - nips the sin in the bud. Ah! we can not tell how much guilt Christians have been saved from by their afflictions. We are running on madly to our destruction, and then some dark apparition of trouble comes, and stretches itself across the way, and in great fright we fly back astonished. We ask, why this trouble? Oh! if we knew the danger into which we were rushing we should only say, "Lord, I thank thee that by that direful trouble thou didst save me from a sin, that would have been far more troublous and infinitely more dangerous."

At other times God chastens us for sins already committed. We perhaps have forgotten them; but God has not. I think that sometimes years elapse between a sin and the chastisement for it. The sins of our youth may be punished in our gray old age; the transgression you did twenty years ago, those of you who have grown old, may this very day be found in your bones. God chastens his children, but he sometimes lays the rod by. The time would not be seasonable perhaps; they are not strong enough to bear it: so he lays the rod by and he says, as surely as he is my child, though I lay the rod by, I will make him smart for it, that I may at last deliver him from his sin, and make him like unto myself. But mark, ye people of God, in all these chastisements for sin there is no punishment. When God chastises you he does not punish as a judge does, but he chastens as a father. When he lays the rod on, with many blows and smart ones, there is not one thought of anger in his heart - there is not one look of displeasure in his eye; he means it all for your good; his heaviest blows are as much tokens of his affection as his sweetest caresses. He has no motive but your profit and his own glory. Be of good cheer, then, if these be the reasons. But take care that thou dost fulfil the

command - "Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

I read in an old Puritan author the other day a very pretty figure. He says, "A full wind is not so favorable to a ship when it is fully fair as a side wind. It is strange," says he, "that when the wind blows in an exact direction to blow a ship into port, she will not go near so well as if she had a cross wind sideways upon her." And he explains it thus: "The mariners say that when the wind blows exactly fair it only fills a part of the sails, and it can not reach the sails that are ahead, because the sail, bellying out with the wind, prevents the wind from reaching that which is further ahead. But when the wind sweeps sideways, then every sail is full, and she is driven on swiftly in her course with the full force of the wind. Ah!" says the old Puritan, "there is nothing like a side wind to drive God's people to heaven. A fair wind only fills a part of their sails; that is, fills their joy, fills their delight; but," says he, "the side wind fills them all; it fills their caution, fills their prayerfulness, fills every part of the spiritual man, and so the ship speeds onward toward its haven." It is with this design that God sends affliction, to chasten us on account of our transgressions.

III. And now I am to conclude by noting WHAT IS OUR COMFORT WHEN GOD REBUKES AND CHASTENS US?

Our great comfort is, that he *loves* us still. Oh! what a precious thing faith is, when we are enabled to believe our God, and how easy then it is to endure and to surmount all trouble. Hear the old man in the garret, with a crust of bread and a cup of cold water. Sickness has confined him these years within that narrow room. He is too poor to maintain an attendant. Some woman comes in to look to him in the morning and in the evening, and there he sits, in the depths of poverty. And you will suppose he sits and groans. No, brethren; he may sometimes groan when the body is weak, but usually he sits and sings; and when the visitor climbs the creaking staircase of that old house, where human beings scarcely ought to be allowed to live; and when he goes into that poor cramped up room that is more fit to accommodate swine than men, he sits down upon that bottomless chair, and when he has seated himself as well as he can upon the four cross pieces of it he begins to talk to him, and he finds him full of heaven. "Oh! sir," he says, "my God is very kind to me." Propped up he is

with pillows, and full of pain in every member of his body, but he says, "Blessed be his name, he has not left me. Oh! sir, I have enjoyed more peace and happiness in this room, out of which I have not gone for years," - (the case is real that I am now describing) "I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in all my life. My pains are great, sir, but they will not be for long; I am going home soon." Ay, were he more troubled still, had he such rich consolation poured into his heart, he might endure all with a smile and sing in the furnace. Now, child of God, thou art to do the same. Remember, all thou hast to suffer is sent in love. It is hard work for a child, when his father has been chastening it, to look at the rod as a picture of love. You can not make your children do that: but when they grow up to be men and women how thankful they are to you then! "O father," says the son, "I know now why it was I was so often chastened; I had a proud hot spirit; it would have been the ruin of me if thou hadst not whipped it out of me. Now, I thank thee, my father, for it."

So, while we are here below we are nothing but little children; we can not prize the rod: when we come of age, and we go into our estates in Paradise, we shall look back upon the rod of the Covenant as being better than Aaron's rod, for it blossoms with mercy. We shall say to it, "Thou art the most wondrous thing in all the list of my treasures. Lord, I thank thee that thou didst not leave me unafflicted, or else I had not been where I am, and what I am, a child of God in Paradise." "I have this week," says one, "sustained so serious a loss in my business, that I am afraid I shall be utterly broken up." There is love in that. "I came here this morning," says one, "and I left a dead child in the house - dear to my heart." There is love in that. That coffin and that shroud will both be full of love; and when your child is taken away, it shall not be in anger. "Ah!" cries another, "but I have been exceedingly sick, and even now I feel I ought not to have ventured out; I must return to my bed." Ah! he makes your bed in your affliction. There is love in every pain, in every twitch of the nerve; in every pang that shoots through the members, there is love. "Ah!" says one, "it is not myself, but I have got a dear one that is sick." There is love there, too. Do what God may, he can not do an unloving act toward his people. O Lord! thou art Omnipotent; thou canst do all things; but thou canst not lie, and thou canst not be unkind to thine elect. No, Omnipotence may build a thousand worlds, and fill them with bounties; Omnipotence may

powder mountains into dust, and burn the sea, and consume the sky, but Omnipotence can not do an unloving thing toward a believer. Oh! rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God toward one of his own people is quite impossible. He is kind to you when he casts you into prison as when he takes you into a palace; He is as good when he sends famine into your house as when he fills your barns with plenty. The only question is, Art thou his child? If so, he hath rebuked thee in affection, and there is love in his chastisement.

I have now done, but not until I have made my last appeal. I have now to turn from God's people to the rest of you. Ah! my hearers, there are some of you that have no God; you have no Christ on whom to cast your troubles. I see some of you to-day dressed in the habiliments of mourning; I suppose you have lost some one dear unto you. Oh! ye that are robed in black, is God your God? Or are you mourning now, without God to wipe every tear from your eye? I know that many of you are struggling now in your business with very sharp and hard times. Can you tell your troubles to Jesus, or have you to bear them all yourself - friendless and helpless? Many men have been driven mad, because they had no one to whom to communicate their sorrow; and how many others had been driven worse than mad, because when they told their sorrows their confidence was betrayed. O poor mourning spirit, if thou hadst, as thou mightest have done, gone and told him all thy woes, he would not have laughed at thee, and he would never have told it out again. Oh I remember when once my young heart ached in boyhood, when I first loved the Saviour. I was far away from father and mother, and all I loved, and I thought my soul would burst; for I was an usher in a school, in a place where I could meet with no sympathy or help. Well, I went to my chamber, and told my little griefs into the ears of Jesus. They were great griefs to me then, though they are nothing now. When I just whispered them on my knees into the ear of him who had loved me with an everlasting love, oh! it was so sweet, none can tell. If I had told them to somebody else, they would have told them again; but he, my blessed confidant, he knows my secrets, and he never tells them. Oh! what can you do that have got no Jesus to tell your troubles to? And the worst of it is, you have got more troubles to come. Times may be hard now, but they will be harder one day - they will be harder when they come to an end.

They say it is hard to live, but it is very hard to die. When one comes to die and has Jesus with him, even then dying is hard work; but to die without a Saviour! Oh! my friends, are you inclined to risk it? Will you face the grim monarch, and no Saviour with you? Remember, you must do it; you must die soon. The chamber shall soon be hushed in silence no sound shall be heard except the babbling watch that ever tells the flight of time. The physician shall "Hush!" and hold up his finger, and whisper in a suppressed voice, "He can not last many minutes longer." And the wife and the children, or the father and the mother, will stand around your bed and look at you, as I have looked at some, with a sad, sad heart. They will look at you a little while, till at last the death-change will pass o'er your face. "He is gone!" it shall be said; and the hand uplifted shall be dropped down again, and the eye shall be glazed in darkness, and then the mother will turn away and say, "O my child, I could have borne all this if there had been hope in thine end!" And when the minister comes in to comfort the family, he will ask the question of the father, "Do you think your son had an interest in the blood of Christ?" The reply will be, "O sir, we must not judge, but I never saw anything like it; I never had any reason to hope: that is my greatest sorrow." There, there! I could bury every friend without a tear, compared with the burial of an ungodly friend. Oh! it seems such an awful thing, to have one allied to you by ties of blood, dead and in hell.

We generally speak very softly about the dead. We say, "Well, we hope." Sometimes we tell great lies, for we know we do not hope at all. We wish it may be so, but we can not hope it; we never saw any grounds that should lead us to hope. But would it not be an awful thing if we were honest enough to look the dread reality in its face - if the husband were simply to look at it, and say, "There was my wife; she was an ungodly, careless woman. I know at least, she never said anything concerning repentance and faith; and if she died so, and I have every reason to fear she did, then she is cast away from God." It would be unkind to say it; but it is only honest for us to know it - to look dread truth in the face. Oh! my fellow-men and brethren! Oh! ye that are partners with me of an immortal life! We shall one day meet again before the throne of God; but ere that time comes, we shall each of us be separated, and go our divers ways down the shelving banks of the river of death. My fellow-man, art

thou prepared to die alone? I ask thee this question again - Art thou prepared to arise in the day of judgment without a Saviour? Art thou willing to run all risks and face thy Maker, when he comes to judge thee, without an advocate to plead thy cause? Art thou prepared to hear him say, "Depart ye cursed!" Are ye ready now to endure the everlasting ire of him who smites, and smiting once, doth smite forever? Oh! if ye will make your bed in hell, if you are prepared to be damned, if you are willing to be so, then live in sin and indulge in pleasures; - you will get your wish. But if ye would not; if ye would enter heaven, and ye would be saved, "Turn thee, turn thee, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" May God the Holy Spirit, enable you to repent of sin and to believe on Jesus; and then you shall have a portion among them that are sanctified: but unrepenting and unbelieving, if ye die so, ye must be driven from his presence, never to have life, and joy, and liberty, as long as eternity shall last.

The Lord prevent this, for Jesus, sake.

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Love's Commendation

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8

I shall have nothing new to tell you; it will be as old as the everlasting hills, and so simple that a child may understand it. Love's commendation. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God's commendation of himself and of his love is not in words, but in deeds. When the Almighty God would commend his love to poor man, it is not written, "God commendeth his love towards us in an eloquent oration"; it is not written that he commendeth his love by winning professions; but he commendeth his love toward us by an act, by

a deed; a surprising deed, the unutterable grace of which eternity itself shall scarce discover. He "commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Let us learn, then upon the threshold of our text, that if we would commend ourselves it must be by deeds, and not by words. Men may talk fairly, and think that thus they shall win esteem; they may order their words aright, and think that so they shall command respect; but let them remember, it is not the wordy oratory of the tongue, but the more powerful eloquence of the hand which wins the affection of "the world's great heart." If thou wouldst commend thyself to thy fellows, go and *do* - not go and *say*; if thou wouldst win honour from the excellent, talk not, but *act*; and if before God thou wouldst show that thy faith is sincere, and thy love to him real: remember, it is no fawning words, uttered either in prayer or praise, but it is the pious deed, the holy act, which is the justification of thy faith, and the proof that it is the faith of God's elect. Doing, not saying - acting, not talking - these are the things which commend a man.

"No big words of ready talkers,
No fine boastings will suffice;
Broken hearts and humble walkers,
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

Let us imitate God, then, in this. If we would commend our religion to mankind, we cannot do it by mere formalities, but by gracious acts of integrity, charity and forgiveness, which are the proper discoveries of grace within. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ;" and so shall you honour him, and "adorn the doctrine" which you profess.

But now for this mighty deed whereby God commended his love. We think that it is twofold. We believe the apostle has given us a double commendation of love. The first is, "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, Christ died for us*"; the second commendation arises from our condition, "*In that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*"

I. The first commendation of love, then, is this - that "CHRIST DIED FOR

US"; and as the whole text is double, so this sentence also contains a twofold commendation There is a commendation of love in the person who died - *Christ*; and then in the act which he performed - "*Christ died for us.*"

First, then, it is the highest commendation of love, *that it was CHRIST* who died for us. When sinful man erred from his Maker, it was necessary that God should punish his sin. He had sworn by himself, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and God - with reverence to his all-holy name be it spoken - could not swerve from what he had said. He had declared on Sinai that he would by no means clear the guilty; but inasmuch as he desired to pardon the offending, it was necessary that some one else should bear the sufferings which the guilty ought to have endured, that so by the vicarious substitution of another, God might be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly." Now, the question might have arisen, "Who is he that shall be the scapegoat for man's offence? Who is he that shall bear his transgressions and take away his sins?" If I might be allowed to picture in my imagination (and mark, it is nothing more than imagination), I could almost conceive a parliament in heaven. The angels are assembled; the question is proposed to them: - "Cherubim and seraphim, cohorts of the glorified, ye spirits that like flames of fire, swift at my bidding fly; ye happy beings, whom I have created for my honour! here is a question which I condescend to offer for your consideration: - Man has sinned; there is no way for his pardon but by some one suffering and paying blood for blood. Who shall it be?" I can conceive that there was silence throughout the august assembly. Gabriel spoke not: he would have stretched his wings and flapped the ether in a moment, if the deed had been possible; but he felt that he could never bear the guilt of a world upon his shoulders, and, therefore, still he sat. And there the mightiest of the mighty, those who could shake a world if God should will it, sat still, because they felt all powerless to accomplish redemption. I do not conceive that one of them would have ventured to hope that *God himself* would assume flesh and die. I do not think it could have entered even into angelic thought to conceive that the mighty Maker of the skies should bow his awful head and sink into a grave. I cannot imagine that the brightest and most seraphic of these glorified ones would for an instant have suffered such a thought to abide with him. And when the Son of

God, upstarting from his throne, spoke to them and said, "Principalities and powers! I will become flesh, I will veil this Godhead of mine in robes of mortal clay, I will die!" - I think I see the angels for once astonished. They had seen worlds created; they had beheld the earth, like a spark from the incandescent mass of unformed matter, hammered from the anvil of Omnipotence, and smitten off into space; and yet they had not wondered. But on this occasion I conceive that they ceased not to marvel. "What! wilt thou die, O Word! Creator! Master! Infinite! Almighty! wilt thou become a man and die?" "Yes," saith the Saviour, "I will." And are you not astonished, mortal men? Do you not wonder? What, will *you* not marvel? The hosts of heaven still are wondering. Though it is many an age since they heard it, they have not yet ceased to admire; and do not you *begin* to marvel yet? Shall the theme which stirs the marvel of the seraph not move your hearts? That God himself should become man, and then should die for you! "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *Christ* should die. Roll that thought over in your mind; ponder it in your meditations; weigh it in your hearts. If ye have right ideas of Godhead, if ye know what Christ is, if ye can conceive him who is the everlasting God, and yet the man - if ye can picture him, the pure, holy, perfect creature, and yet the everlasting Creator - if ye can conceive of him as the man who was wounded, and yet the God who was exalted for ever - if ye can picture him as the Maker of all worlds, as the Lord of providence, by whom all things exist and consist - if ye can conceive of him now, as robed in splendor, surrounded with the choral symphonies of myriads of angels, then perhaps ye may guess how deep was that stride of condescension, when he stepped from heaven to earth, from earth into the grave, from the grave down, it is said, into the lowest "*sheol*," that he might make his condescension perfect and complete. "He hath commended his love" to you, my brethren, in that it was Christ, the Son of God, who died for us.

The second part of the first commendation lieth here, that Christ *died for us*. It was much love when Christ became man for us, when he stripped himself of the glories of his Godhead for awhile, to become an infant of a span long, slumbering in the manger of Bethlehem. It was no little condescension when he divested himself of all his glories, hung his mantle on the sky, gave up his diadem and the pleasures of his throne, and stooped to become flesh. It was moreover, no small love when he

lived a holy and a suffering life for us; it was love amazing, when God with feet of flesh did tread the earth, and teach his own creatures how to live, all the while bearing their scoffs and jests with cool unangered endurance. It was no little favour of him that he should condescend to give us a perfect example by his spotless life; but the commendation of love lieth here - not that Christ *lived* for us, but that Christ *died for us*.

Come, dear hearers, for a moment weigh those words. "Christ *died* for us!" Oh, how we love those brave defenders of our nation who but lately died for us in a far-off land! Some of us showed our sympathy to their sons and daughters, their wives and children, by contributing to support them, when the fathers were laid low. We feel that the wounded soldier is a friend to us, and that we are his debtors for ever. We may not love war; we may not, some of us, think it a Christian act to wield the sword; but, nevertheless, I am sure we love the men who sought to defend our country with their lives, and who died in our cause. We would drop a tear over the silent graves of Balaclava, if we were there now. And, if it should ever come to pass that any one of them should be called to die for us, should we not henceforth love them? Do any of us know what is contained in that great word "die?" Can we measure it? Can we tell its depths of suffering or its heights of agony? "Died for us!" Some of you have seen death; you know how great and dread is its power; you have seen the strong man bowing down, his knees quivering; you have beheld the eyestrings break, and seen the eyeballs glazed in death; you have marked the torture and the agonies which appal men in their dying hours; and you have said, "Ah! it is a solemn and an awful thing to die." But, my hearers, "Christ *died for us*." All that death could mean Christ endured; he yielded up the ghost, he resigned his breath; he became a lifeless corpse, and his body was interred, even like the bodies of the rest that died. "Christ died for us."

Consider the circumstances which attended his death. It was no common death he died; it was a death of ignominy, for he was put to death by a legal slaughter; it was a death of unutterable pain, for he was crucified; and what more painful fate than to die nailed to a cross? It was a long protracted death, for he hung for hours, with only his hands and his feet pierced - parts which are far away from the seat of life, but in which are

situated the most tender nerves, full of sensibility. He suffered a death which for its circumstances still remain unparalleled. It was no speedy blow which crushed the life out of the body, and ended it; but it was a lingering, long, and doleful death, attended with no comforts and no sympathy, but surrounded with scorn and contempt. Picture him! They have hurled him on his back; they have driven nails through his hands and his feet; they have lifted him up. See! They have dashed the cross into its place. It is fixed. And now behold him! Mark his eyes, all full of tears; behold his head, hanging on his breast. Ah! mark him, he seems all silently to say, "I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; I am brought into the dust of death." Hear him, when he groans, "I thirst." Above all, listen to him, whilst he cries, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" My words cannot picture him; my thoughts fail to express it. No painter ever accomplished it, nor shall any speaker be able to perform it. Yet I beseech you regard the Royal Sufferer. See him, with the eye of your faith, hanging on the bloody tree. Hear him cry, before he dies, "It is finished!"

"See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Oh! how I wish I could stir you! If I should tell you some silly story of a love-sick maid, ye would weep; if I should turn novelist, and give you some sad account of a fabled hero who had died in pain - if it were a fiction, I should have your hearts; but this is a dread and solemn reality, and one with which you are intimately connected, for all this was done for as many of you as sincerely repent of your sins.

"All ye that pass by,
to Jesus draw nigh:
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?"

Bethink you, that if you are saved, it is something to you, for the blood which trickles from his hands, distils for *you*. That frame which writhes in torture writhes for *you*; those knees, so weak with pain, are weak for you; those eyes, dripping with showers of tears, do drop for you. Ah!

think of him, then, ye who have faith in him; look to him, and as many of you as have not yet believed, I will pray for you, that ye may now behold him as the expiation of your guilt; as the key which opens heaven to all believers.

Our second point was this: "God commendeth his love towards us," not only because Christ died for us, but that **CHRIST DIED FOR US WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS.**"

Let us for a moment consider what sort of sinners many of us have been, and then we shall see it was marvellous grace that Christ should die for men - not as penitents"but as sinners. Consider how many of us have been *continual* sinners. We have not sinned once, nor twice, but ten thousand times. Our life, however upright and moral it has been, is stained by a succession of sins. If we have not revolted against God in the outward acts which proclaim the profligate to be a great sinner, yet the thoughts of our heart and the words of our lips are swift witnesses against us that we have continually transgressed. And oh! my brethren, who is there among us who will not likewise confess to sins of act? Who among us has not broken the Sabbath-day? Who among us has not taken God's name in vain? Who of us shall dare to say that we have loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength? Have we never by any act whatsoever showed that we have coveted our neighbour's goods? Verily, I know we have; we have broken his commands, and it is well for us to join in that general confession - "We have done those things which we ought not to have done; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." Now, the sweet thought is, that Christ died for us, whilst he knew that we should be continual transgressors. Men, brethren, and fathers, he did not die for you as those who have committed but one fault, but as those who were emphatically "sinners;" sinners of years' standing; some of you sinners with grey heads; sinners who have persevered in a constant course of iniquity. As sinners we are redeemed, and by it we become saints. Does not this commend Christ's love to us, that he should die for sinners, who have dyed themselves with sin as with crimson and with scarlet; great and continual sinners.

Note again, he has died for us, although our sins were *aggravated*. Oh! there are some of us here who are great sinners - not so much in the acts we have performed, as in the aggravation of our guilt. I reckon that when I sin, I sin worse than many of you, because I sin against better training than many of my hearers received in their youth. Many of you, when you sin, sin against faithful ministers, and against the most earnest warnings. It has been your wont to sit under truthful pastors; you have often been told of your sins. Remember, sirs, when you sin you do not sin so cheap as others: when you sin against the convictions of your consciences, against the solemn monitions of your pastors, you sin more grossly than others do. The Hottentot sinneth not as the Briton doth. He who has been brought up in this land may be openly more righteous, but he may be inwardly more wicked, for he sins against more knowledge. But even for such Christ died - for men who have sinned against the wooings of his love, against the strivings of their consciences, against the invitations of his Word, against the warnings of his providence - even for such Christ died, and therein he commendeth his love towards us, that he died for sinners. My hearer, if thou hast so sinned, do not therefore despair, it may be he will yet make thee rejoice in his redemption.

Reflect again, When we were sinners, *we were sinners against the very person who died for us*. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful," that the very Christ against whom we have sinned died for us. If a man should be injured in the street, if a punishment should be demanded of the person who attacked him, it would be passing strange if the injured man should for love's sake bear the penalty, that the other might go free; but 'twas so with Christ. He had been injured, yet he suffers for the very injury that others did to him. He dies for his enemies - dies for the men that hate and scorn him. There is an old tradition, that the very man who pierced Christ's side was converted; and I sometimes think that peradventure in heaven we shall meet with those very men who drove the nails into his hands and pierced his side. Love is a mighty thing; it can forgive great transgressors. I know my Master said, "Begin at Jerusalem," and I think he said that because there lived the men who had crucified him, and he wanted them to be saved. My hearer, hast thou ever blasphemed Christ? Hast thou ever mocked him, and scoffed at his people? Hast thou done all thou couldst to emulate the example of those

who spat in his holy face? Dost thou repent of it? Dost thou feel thou needst a Saviour? Then I tell thee, in Christ's name, he is *thy* Saviour; yes, thy Saviour, though thou hast insulted him - *thy* Saviour, though thou hast trampled on him - *thy* Saviour though thou hast spoken evil of his people, his day, his Word, and his gospel.

Once more, let us remember, that many of us as sinners have been persons who for a long time have heard this good news, and yet *have despised it*. Perhaps there is nothing more wonderful in the depravity of man than that it is able to forget the love of Christ. If we were not so sinful as we are, there is not one of us here this morning who would not weep at the thought of the Saviour's love, and I believe there is not a solitary man, woman, or child here, who would not say, "I love thee, O my God! because thou hast done so much for me." It is the highest proof of our depravity that we do not at once love the Christ who died for us. There is a story told of the covenanters - of one named Patrick Welwood - whose house was surrounded at a time when a minister had for security been hidden there. Claverhouse's dragoons were at the door, and the minister had fled. The master of the house was summoned, and it was demanded of him, "Where is the minister?" "He is gone; I cannot tell whither, for I know not." But they were not satisfied with that; they tortured him, and since he could not tell them where he was (for in reality he did not know), they left him, after inflicting upon him the torture of the thumbscrew; and they took his sister, a young girl who was living in the house. I believe she did know where the minister was concealed; but on taking her they asked her, and she said, "No, I can die myself, but I can never betray God's servant, and never will, as he may help me." They dragged her to the water's edge, and making her kneel down, they determined to put her to death. But the captain said, "Not yet; we will try to frighten her"; and sending a soldier to her, he knelt down, and applying a pistol to her ear, she was bidden to betray the minister or die. The click of the pistol was heard in her ear, but the pistol was not loaded. She slightly shivered, and the question was again asked of her. "Tell us now," said they, "where he is, or we will have your life." "Never, never," said she. A second time the endeavour was made; this time a couple of carabines were discharged, but into the air, in order to terrify her. At last they resolved upon really putting her to death, when Trail, the minister,

who was hidden somewhere near, being aroused by the discharge of guns, and seeing the poor girl about to die for him, sprang forward, and cried, "Spare that maiden's blood, and take mine; this poor innocent girl, what hath she done?" The poor girl was dead even there with the fright, but the minister had come prepared to die himself, to save her life. Oh, my friends, I have sometimes thought that her heroic martyrdom was somewhat like the blessed Jesus. He comes to us, and says, "Poor sinner, wilt thou be my friend?" We answer, "No," He comes to us, and says, "Ah, I will make thee so," saith he, "I will die for thee"; and he goes to die on the cross. Oh! methinks I could spring forward and say, "Nay, Lord Jesus, nay, thou must not die for such a worm." Surely such a sacrifice is a price too large to pay for poor sinful worms! And yet, my hearers, to return again to what I have uttered before, you will hear all this, and nine out of ten will retire from this place, and say, "It was an old, old story"; and while ye can drop a tear for aught else, ye will not weep one tear for Jesus, nor sigh one sigh for him, nor will ye afford him even a faint emotion of love. Would it were different! Would to God he would change your hearts, that so ye might be brought to love him.

Further, to illustrate my text, let me remark again, that inasmuch as Christ died for sinners, it is a special commendation of his love for the following reasons: - It is quite certain that God did not consider *man's merit* when Christ died; in fact, no merit could have deserved the death of Jesus. Though we had been holy as Adam, we could never have deserved a sacrifice like that of Jesus for us. But inasmuch as it says, "He died for sinners," we are thereby taught that God considered our sin, and not our righteousness. When Christ died, he died for men as black, as wicked, as abominable, not as good and excellent. Christ did not shed his blood for us as saints, but as sinners. He considered us in our loathsomeness, in our low estate and misery - not in that high estate to which grace afterwards elevates us, but in all the decay into which we had fallen by our sin. There could have been no merit in us; and therefore, God commendeth his love by our ill desert.

Again: it is quite certain, because Christ died for us as sinners, that God had *no interest* to serve by sending his Son to die. How could sinners serve him? Oh! if God had pleased, he might have crushed this nest of

rebels, and have made another world all holy. If God had chosen, the moment that man sinned he might have said unto the world, "Thou shalt be burned"; and like as a few years ago astronomers told us that they saw the light of a far-off world burning, myriads of miles away, this world might have been consumed with burning heat, and sin scorched out of its clay. But no. Whilst God could have made another race of beings, and could have either annihilated us, or consigned us to eternal torment, he was pleased to veil himself in flesh, and die for us. Surely then it could not have been from any motive of self-interest. God had nothing to get by man's salvation. What are the attractions of human voices in Paradise. What are the feeble symphonies which mortal lips can sing on earth, compared with the death of our Lord? He had angels enough. Do they not day without night circle his throne rejoicing? Are not their golden harps sufficient? Is not the orchestra of heaven large enough? Must our glorious Lord give up his blood to buy poor worms, that they may join their little notes with the great swell of a choral universe? Yes, he must; and inasmuch as we are sinners, and could by no possibility repay him for his kindness, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

But there is another commendation of love. Christ died for us "unasked." Christ did not consider me as an awakened heir of heaven, but as a dead, corrupt, lost, and ruined heir of hell. If he had died for me as an awakened heir of heaven, then I could have prayed for him to die, for then I have power to pray, and will to pray; but Christ died for me when I had no power nor will to lift my voice in prayer to him. It was entirely unasked. Where did ye ever hear that man was first in mercy? Did man ask God to redeem? Nay, rather, it is almost the other way; it is as if God did entreat man to be redeemed. Man never asked that he might be pardoned, but God pardons him, and then turns round and cries, "Return unto me, backsliding children of men, and I will have mercy upon you." Sinners! if you should go down on your knees, and were for months to cry for mercy, it would be great mercy if mercy should look upon you; but without asking, when we are hardened and rebellious, when we will not turn to Christ, he still comes to die for us. Tell it in heaven; tell it in the lower world! God's amazing work surpasses thought; for love itself did die for hatred - holiness did crucify itself to save poor sinful men, and

unasked for and unsought, like a fountain in the desert sparkling spontaneously with its native waters, Jesus Christ came to die for man, who would not seek his grace. "God commendeth his love towards us."

And now, my dear hearers, I want to close up, if the Spirit of God will help me, by endeavouring to commend God's love to you, as much as ever I can, and inviting as many of you as feel your need of a Saviour, to lay hold of him and embrace him now as your all-sufficient sacrifice. Sinner! I can commend Christ to thee for this reason: *I know that thou needest him*. Thou mayest be ignorant of it thyself, but thou dost need him. Thou hast a leprosy within thine heart - thou needest a physician; thou sayest, "I am rich;" but sinner, thou art not - thou art naked, and poor, and miserable. Thou sayest, "I shall stand before God accepted at last"; but, sinner, without Christ thou wilt not; for whosoever believeth not on Christ "hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Hear that, my dear hearers: "The wrath of God abideth on him." Oh! that wrath of God! Sinner, thou needest Christ, even though thou dost not think so. Oh, that the Lord would impress this upon thee! Again, a day is coming when *thou wilt feel thy need* of Christ if thou dost not now. Within a few short years, perhaps months or days, thou wilt lie upon the last bed that shall ever bear thy weight; soon thou shalt be stayed up by soft pillows; thy frame will be weak, and thy soul full of sorrow. Thou mayest *live* without Christ now, but it will be hard work to *die* without him. Thou mayest do without this bridge here; but when thou gettest to the river thou wilt think thyself a fool to have laughed at the only bridge which can carry thee safely over. Thou mayest despise Christ now, but what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan. Canst thou face death, and not be afraid? Nay, man, thou art affrighted now if the cholera is in the city; or if some little sickness is about thee thou shakest for fear; what wilt thou do when thou art in the jaws of death, when his bony hand is squeezing thee, and when his dart is in thy vitals? What wilt thou do then without a Saviour? Ah! thou wilt want him then. And what wilt thou do when thou hast passed that black stream, when thou findest thyself in the realm of spirits - in that day of judgment, when the thunders shall be loosed, and the wings of the lightning shall be unbound - when tempests shall herald with trumpet voice the arrival of the great Assize? What wilt thou do when thou shalt stand before *his* bar before whom, in astonishment, the stars shall flee,

the mountains quake, and the sea be licked up with tongues of forked flame? What wilt thou do, when from his throne he shall exclaim, "Come hither, sinner," and thou shalt stand there alone, to be judged for every deed done in the body? Thou wilt turn thine head, and say, "Oh! for an advocate!" And he shall look on thee, and say, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will now laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." Ah! what wilt thou do then sinner, when the judgment-seat is set? Oh! there will be weeping - there will be weeping at the judgment-seat of Christ. And what wilt thou do in that day when he shall say, "Depart, ye cursed;" and when the black angel, with a countenance more fierce than lightning, and with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, shall cry, "Depart!" and smite thee down where lie for ever those accursed spirits, bound in fetters of iron, who, long long ago, were cast into perdition? Say not, I tell thee terrible things: if it be terrible to speak of, how terrible it must be to bear! If you believe not what I say, I shall not wonder if you laugh at me; but as the most of you believe this, I claim your most solemn attention to this subject.

Sirs! Do ye believe there is a hell, *and that you are going there?* And yet do you still march heedless on? Do you believe that beyond you, when the stream of life is ended, there is a black gulf of misery? and do you still sail downwards to it, quaffing still your glass of happiness, still merry as the live-long day? O stay, poor sinner, stay! Stay! It may be the last moment thou wilt ever have the opportunity to stay in. Therefore stay now I beseech thee. And if thou knowest thyself to be lost and ruined, if the Holy Spirit has humbled thee and made thee feel thy sin, let me tell thee how thou shalt be saved. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. "He that believeth not," saith the Scripture "shall be *damned*." Do you not like that message? Ought I to have said another word instead of that? If you wish it, I shall not; what God says I will say; far be it from me to alter the messages from the Most High; I will, if he help me, declare his truth without altering. He saith "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." What is it to believe? To tell you as simply as possible: to believe is to give up trusting in yourself and to trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour. The negro said, you know, "Massa dis here is how I believe -

when I see a promise, I do not stand on de promise; but I say, dat promise firm and strong; I fall flat on it; if de promise will not bear me, den it is de promise fault; but I fall flat on it." Now, that is faith. Christ says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Faith is to say, "Well, then, sink or swim, that is my only hope; lost or saved, that is my only refuge. I am resolved, for this my last defence,

'If I perish there and die,
At his cross I still will lie'."

"*What!*" says one, "*no good works?*" Good works will come afterwards, but they do not go with it. You must come to Christ, not with your good works, but with your sins; and coming with your sins, he will take them away, and give you good works afterwards. After you believe, there will be good works as the effect of your faith; but if you think faith will be the effect of good works, you are mistaken. It is "believe and live." Cowper calls them the soul-quickenings words, "*believe and live.*" This is the sum and substance of the gospel.

Now, do any of you say this is not the gospel? I shall ask you one day what it is. Is not this the doctrine Whitfield preached? Pray what else did Luther thunder, when he shook the Vatican? what else was proclaimed by Augustine and Chrysostom, but this one doctrine of salvation in Christ by faith alone? And what did Paul write? Turn ye to his epistles. And what did our Saviour himself say, when he left these words on record - "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" And what did he command his disciples to teach them? To teach them this. The very words I have now repeated to you were his last commission. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

But again you say, "How can I believe that Christ died for me?" Why, thus, - He says he died for sinners: canst thou say thou art a sinner? I do not mean with that fine complimentary phrase which many of you use, when you say, "*Yes, I am a sinner;*" and if I sit down to ask you, "Did you break that commandment?" "*Oh, no,*" you will say: "Did you commit that

offence?" "Oh, no;" you never did anything wrong. And yet you are sinners. Now that is the sort of sinners I do not think I shall preach to. The sort of sinners I would call to repentance are those whom Christ invited - those who know that they have been guilty, vile, and lost. If thou knowest thy sinnership, so truly Christ died for thee. Remember that striking saying of Luther. Luther says, Satan once came to him and said, "Martin Luther, thou art lost, for thou art a sinner." Said I to him, "Satan, I thank thee for saying I am a sinner, for inasmuch as thou sayest I am a sinner, I answer thee thus - Christ died for sinners; and if Martin Luther is a sinner, Christ died for him." Now, canst thou lay hold on that, my hearer? It is not on my authority, but on God's authority. Go away and rejoice; for if thou be the chief of sinners thou shalt be saved, if thou believest.

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day.
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, thro' thy blood, absolv'd I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Sing that, poor soul, and thou hast begun to sing the song of Paradise.
May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, apply these simple statements of truth to
the salvation of your souls.

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Love's Complaining

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent,

and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent - Revelation 2:4-5

It was the work of the priest to go into the holy place and to trim the seven-branched lamp of gold: see how our Great High Priest walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: his work is not occasional, but constant. Wearing robes which are at once royal and priestly, he is seen lighting the holy lamps, pouring in the sacred oil, and removing impurities which would dim the light.

Hence our Lord's fitness to deal with the churches, which are these golden lamp-stands, for no one knows so much about the lamps as the person whose *constant* work it is to watch them and trim them. No one knows the churches as Jesus does, for the care of all the churches daily comes upon him, he continually walks among them, and holds their ministers as stars in his right hand. His eyes are perpetually upon the churches, so that he knows their works, their sufferings, and their sins; and those eyes are as a flame of fire, so that he sees with a penetration, discernment, and accuracy to which no other can attain. *We* sometimes judge the condition of religion too leniently, or else we err on the other side, and judge too severely. Our eyes are dim with the word's smoke; but his eyes are as a flame of fire. He sees the churches through and through, and knows their true condition much better than they know themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ is a most careful observer of churches and of individuals; nothing is hid from his observant eye.

As he is the most *careful* observer, so he is the most candid. He is ever "the faithful and true witness." He loves much, and therefore he never judges harshly. He loves much, and therefore he always judges jealously. Jealousy is the sure attendant of such love as his. He will neither speak smooth words nor bitter words; but he will speak the truth—the truth in love, the truth as he himself perceives it, and as he would have us perceive it. Well may he say, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," since his sayings are so true, so just, so weighty.

Certainly no observer can be so *tender* as the Son of God. Those lamps are very precious to him: it cost him his life to light them. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." Every church is to our Lord a more sublime thing than a constellation in the heavens; as he is precious to his saints, so are they precious to him. He careth little for empires, kingdoms, or republics; but his heart is set on the kingdom of righteousness, of which his cross is the royal standard. He must reign until his foes are vanquished, and this is the great thought of his mind at this present, "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He ceases not to watch over his church: his sacrifice is ended, but not his service in caring for the golden lamps. He has completed the redemption of his bride, but he continues her preservation.

I therefore feel at this time that we may well join in a prayer to our Lord Jesus to come into our midst and put our light in order. Oh for a visit from himself such as he paid in vision to the seven churches of Asia! With him is the oil to feed the living flame, and he knows how to pour it in according to due measure; with him are those golden snuffers with which to remove every superfluity of naughtiness, that our lights may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Oh for his presence now, to search us and to sanctify us; to cause us to shine forth to his Father's praise! We would be judged of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. We would pray this morning, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do; and we delight to have it so. We invite thee, O great High Priest, to come into this sanctuary, and look to this thy lamp this morning.

In the text, as it is addressed to the church at Ephesus and to us, we note three things. First, we note that *Christ perceives*: "I know thy works . . . nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." Secondly, *Christ prescribes*: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent," and so forth. Thirdly, *Christ persuades*—persuades with a threatening: "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place;" persuades, also, with a promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in

the midst of the paradise of God." If the Lord himself be here at this time, our plan of discourse will be a river of life; but if he be not among us by his Holy Spirit, it will be as the dry bed of a torrent which bears the name of "river," but lacks the living stream. We expect our Lord's presence; he will come to the lamps which his office calls upon him to trim; it has been his wont to be with us; some of us have met him this morning already, and we have constrained him to tarry with us.

I. First, then, we notice that HE PERCEIVES.

Our Lord sorrowfully perceives the faults of his church—"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee;" but *he does not so perceive those faults as to be forgetful of that which he can admire and accept*; for he begins his letter with commendations, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." Do not think, my brethren, that our Beloved is blind to the beauties of his church. On the contrary, he delights to observe them. He can see beauties where she herself cannot see them. Where we observe much to deplore, his loving eyes see much to admire. The graces which he himself creates he can always perceive. When we in the earnestness of self-examination overlook them, and write bitter things against ourselves, the Lord Jesus sees even in those bitter self-condemnations a life and earnestness and sincerity which he loves. Our Lord has a keen eye for all that is good. When he searches our hearts he never passes by the faintest longing, or desire, or faith, or love, of any of his people. He says, "I know thy works."

But this is our point at this time, that while Jesus can see all that is good, *yet in very faithfulness he sees all that is evil*. His love is not blind. He does not say, "As many as I love I commend;" but, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It is more necessary for us that we should make a discovery of our faults than of our virtues. So notice in this text that Christ perceiveth the flaw in his church, even in the midst of her earnest service. The church at Ephesus was full of work. "I know thy works and thy labour, and for my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted." It was such a laborious church that it pushed on and on with diligent perseverance, and never seemed to flag in its divine mission. Oh that we could say as much of all our churches! I have lived to see many

brilliant projects lighted and left to die out in smoke. I have heard of schemes which were to illuminate the world; but not a spark remains. Holy perseverance is a great desideratum. In these three and thirty years we thank God he has enabled us to labour and not to faint. There has been a continuance of everything attempted, and no drawing back from anything. "This is the work, this is the labour," to hold out even to the end. Oh how I have dreaded lest we should have to give up any holy enterprise or cut short any gracious effort! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. With men and means, liberality and zeal, he has supplied us. In this case the angel of the church has been very little of an angel from heaven, but very much of a human angel; for in the weakness of my flesh and in the heaviness of my spirit have I pursued my calling; but I have pursued it. By the help of God I continue to this day, and this church with equal footsteps is at my side; for which the whole praise is due to the Lord, who fainteth not, neither is weary. Having put my hand to the plough I have not looked back, but have steadily pressed forward, making straight furrows; but it has been by the grace of God alone.

Alas! under all the labouring the Lord Jesus perceived that the Ephesians had left their first love; and this was a grievous fault. So it may be in this church; every wheel may continue to revolve, and the whole machinery of ministry may be kept going at its normal rate, and yet there may be a great secret evil which Jesus perceives, and this may be marring all.

But this church at Ephesus was not only laborious, it was patient in suffering great persecution. He says of it: "I know thy works and thy patience, and how thou hast borne, and hast patience, and hast not fainted." Persecution upon persecution visited the faithful, but they bore it all with holy courage and constancy, and continued still confessing their Lord. This was good, and the Lord highly approved it; but yet underneath it he saw the tokens of decline; they had left their first love. So there may seem to be all the patient endurance and dauntless courage that there should be, and yet as a fair apple may have a worm at its core, so may it be with the church when it looks best to the eye of friends.

The Ephesian church excelled in something else, namely, in its discipline, its soundness in the faith, and fidelity towards heretics; for the Lord says

of it, "how thou canst not bear them which are evil." They would not have it; they would not tolerate false doctrine, they would not put up with unclean living. They fought against evil, not only in the common people, but in prominent individuals. "Thou has tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." They had dealt with the great ones; they had not flinched from the unmasking of falsehood. Those who seemed to be apostles they had dragged to the light and discovered to be deceivers. This church was not honeycombed with doubt; it laid no claim to breadth of thought and liberality of view; it was honest to its Lord. He says of it, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." This was grand of them: it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them; for nowadays, if a man be clever, he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth of hell, and it will go down with some. He may assail every doctrine of the gospel, he may blaspheme the Holy Trinity, he may trample on the blood of the Son of God, and yet nothing shall be said about it if he be held in repute as a man of advanced thought and liberal ideas. The church at Ephesus was not of this mind. She was strong in her convictions; she could not yield the faith, nor play the traitor to her Lord. For this her Lord commended her: and yet he says, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart. Love Jesus, and then it is well to hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes; but mere hate of evil will tend to evil if love of Jesus be not there to sanctify it. I need not make a personal application; but that which is spoken to Ephesus may be spoken at this hour to ourselves. As we hope that we may appropriate the commendation, so let us see whether the expostulation may not also apply to us. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Thus I have shown you that Jesus sees the evil beneath all the good; he does not ignore the good, but he will not pass over the ill.

So, next, *this evil was a very serious one*; it was love declining: "Thou hast left thy first love." "Is that serious?" saith one. It is the most serious ill of all; for the church is the bride of Christ, and for a bride to fail in love is to fail in all things. It is idle for the wife to say that she is obedient, and

so forth: if love to her husband has evaporated, her wifely duty cannot be fulfilled, she has lost the very life and soul of the marriage state. So, my brethren, this is a most important matter, our love to Christ, because it touches the very heart of that communion with him which is the crown and essence of our spiritual life. As a church we must love Jesus, or else we have lost our reason for existence. A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Have I not often reminded you that almost any disease may be hopefully endured except disease of the heart? But when our sickness is a disease of the heart, it is full of danger; and it was so in this case; "Thou hast left thy first love." It is a disease of the heart, a central, fatal disease, unless the great Physician shall interpose to stay its progress, and to deliver us from it. Oh, in any man, in any woman, any child of God here, let alone in the church as a whole, if there be a leaving of the first love, it is a woeful thing! Lord have mercy upon us; Christ have mercy upon us: this should be our solemn litany at once. No peril can be greater than this. Lose love, lose all. Leave our first love, we have left strength, and peace, and joy, and holiness.

I call your attention, however, to this point, that *it was he that found it out*. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Jesus himself found it out! I do not know how it strikes you; but as I thought it over, this fact brought the tears to my eyes. When I begin to leave off loving Christ, or love him less than I do, I would like to find it out myself; and if I did so, there would soon be a cure for it. But for him to find it out, oh, it seems so hard, so sad a thing! That we should keep on growing cold, and cold, and cold, and never care about it till the Beloved points it out to us. Why even the angel of the church did not find it out; the minister did not know it; but *He* saw it who loves us so well, that he delights in our love, and pines when it begins to fail. To him we are unutterably dear; he loved us up out of the pit into his bosom, loved us up from the dunghill among beggars to sit at his right hand upon his throne; and it is sorrowful that he should have to complain of our cooling love while we are utterly indifferent to the matter. Does Jesus care more about our love than we do? He loves us better than we love ourselves. How good of him to care one jot about our love! This is no complaint of an enemy, but of a dear wounded friend.

I notice that Jesus *found it out with great pain*. I can hardly conceive a greater grief to him as the husband of his church than to look her in the face and say, "Thou hast left thy first love." What can she give him but love? Will she deny him this? A poor thing is the church of herself: her Lord married her when she was in beggary; and if she does not give him love, what has she to give him? If she begins to be unfaithful in heart to him, what is she worth? Why, any unloving wife is a foul fountain of discomfort and dishonour to her husband. O beloved, shall it be so with thee? Wilt thou grieve Emmanuel? Wilt thou wound thy Well-beloved? Church of God, wilt thou grieve him whose heart was pierced for thy redemption? Brother, sister, can you and I let Jesus find out that our love is departing, that we are ceasing to be zealous for his name? Can we wound him so? Is not this to crucify the Lord afresh? Might he not hold up his hands this morning with fresh blood upon them, and say, "These are the wounds which I received in the house of my friends. It was nothing that I died for them, but ill it is that, after having died for them, they have failed to give me their hearts?" Jesus is not so sick of our sin as of our lukewarmness. It is a sad business to my heart; I hope it will be sad to all whom it concerns, that our Lord should be the first to spy out our declines in love.

The Saviour, having thus seen this with pain, now points it out. As I read this passage over to myself, I noticed that the Saviour had nothing to say about the sins of the heathen among whom the Ephesians dwelt: they are alluded to because it must have been the heathen who persecuted the church, and caused it to endure, and exhibit patience. The Saviour, however, has nothing to say against the heathen; and he does not say much more than a word about those who were evil. These had been cast out, and he merely says: "Thou canst not bear them which are evil." He denounced no judgment upon the Nicolaitanes, except that he hated them; and even the apostles which were found to be liars the Master dismisses with that word. He leaves the ungodly in their own condemnation. But what he has to say is against his own beloved: "I have somewhat against *thee*." It seems as if the Master might pass over sin in a thousand others, but he cannot wink at failure of love in his own espoused one. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." The Saviour loves, so

that his love is cruel as the grave against cold-heartedness. He said of the church of Laodicea, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." This was one of his own churches, too, and yet she made him sick with her lukewarmness. God grant that we may not be guilty of such a crime as that!

The Saviour pointed out the failure of love; and when he pointed it out *he called it by a lamentable name*. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen." He calls it *a fall* to leave our first love. Brothers, sisters, this church had not been licentious, it had not gone aside to false doctrine, it had not become idle, it had not been cowardly in the hour of persecution; but this one sin summed up the whole—she did not love Christ as she once loved him, and he calls this a fall. A fall indeed it is. "Oh, I thought," saith one, "that if a member of the church got drunk that was a fall." That is a grievous fall, but it is a fall if we become intoxicated with the world, and lose the freshness of our devotion to Jesus. It is a fall from a high estate of fellowship to the dust of worldliness. "Thou art fallen." The word sounds very harshly in my ears—no, not harshly, for his love speaks it in so pathetic a manner; but it thunders in my soul deep down. I cannot bear it. It is so sadly true. "Thou art fallen." "Remember from whence thou art fallen." Indeed, O Lord, we have fallen when we have left our first love for thee.

The Master evidently counts this decline of love to be a personal wrong done to himself. "I have somewhat against thee." It is not an offence against the king, nor against the judge, but against the Lord Jesus as the husband of the church: an offence against the very heart of Christ himself. "I have somewhat against thee." He does not say, "Thy neighbour has somewhat against thee, thy child has somewhat against thee, thy God has somewhat against thee," but, "I, I thy hope, thy joy, thy delight, thy Saviour, I have this against thee." The word *somewhat* is an intruder here. Our translators put it in italics, and well they might, for it is a bad word, since it seems to make a small thing of a very grave change. The Lord has *this* against us, and it is no mere "somewhat." Come, brothers and sisters, if we have not broken any law, nor offended in any way so as to grieve anybody else, this is sorrow enough, if our love has grown in the least degree chill towards him; for we have done a terrible wrong to our best friend. This is the bitterness of our offence; Against thee, thee only,

have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that I have left my first love. The Saviour tells us this most lovingly. I wish I knew how to speak as tenderly as he does; and yet I feel at this moment that I can and must be tender in this matter, for I am speaking about myself as much as about anybody else. I am grieving, grieving over some here present, grieving for all of us, but grieving most of all for myself, that our Well-beloved should have cause to say, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

So much for what our Lord perceives. Holy Spirit, bless it to us!

II. And now, secondly, let us note what THE SAVIOUR PRESCRIBES. The Saviour's prescription is couched in these three words: "Remember," "Repent," "Return."

The first word is *Remember*. "Thou hast left thy first love." Remember, then, what thy first love was, and compare thy present condition with it. At first nothing diverted thee from thy Lord. He was thy life, thy love, thy joy. Now thou lookest for recreation somewhere else, and other charms and other beauties win thy heart. Art thou not ashamed of this? Once thou wast never wearied with hearing of him and serving him. Never wert thou overdone with Christ and his gospel: many sermons, many prayer-meetings, many Bible readings, and yet none too many. Now sermons are long, and services are dull, and thou must have thy jaded appetite excited with novelties. How is this? Once thou wast never displeased with Jesus whatever he did with thee. If thou hadst been sick, or poor, or dying, thou wouldst still have loved and blessed his name for all things. He remembers this fondness, and regrets its departure. He says to thee to-day, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." Thou wouldst have gone after thy Lord anywhere in those days: across the sea, or through the fire, thou wouldst have pursued him; nothing would have been too hot or too heavy for thee then. Is it so now? Remember! Remember from whence thou art fallen. Remember the vows, the tears, the communings, the happy raptures of those days; remember and compare with them thy present state.

Remember and consider, that when thou wast in thy first love, that love was none too warm. Even then, when thou didst live *to* him, and *for* him, and *with* him, thou wast none too holy, none too consecrated, none too zealous. If thou wast not too forward then, what art thou now—now that thou hast come down even from that poor attainment? Remember the past with sad forebodings of the future. If thou hast come down from where thou wast, who is to tell thee where thou wilt cease thy declining? He who has sunk so far may fall much farther. Is it not so? Though thou sayest in thy heart like Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog?" thou mayest turn out worse than a dog yet, yea, prove a very wolf. Who knows? thou mayest even now be a devil! Thou mayest turn out a Judas, a son of perdition, and deny thy Master, selling him for thirty pieces of silver. When a stone begins to fall it falls with an ever-increasing rate; and when a soul begins to leave its first love, it quits it more and more, and more and more, til at last it falleth terribly. Remember!

The next word of the prescription is "Repent." Repent as thou didst at first. The word so suitable to sinners is suitable to thee, for thou hast grievously sinned. Repent of the wrong thou hast done thy Lord by leaving thy first love of him. Couldst thou have lived a seraphic life, only breathing his love, only existing for him, thou hadst done little enough; but to quit thy first love, how grievously hast thou wronged him! That love was well deserved, was it not? Why, then, hast thou left it? Is Jesus less fair than he was? Does he love thee less than he did? Has he been less kind and tender to thee than he used to be? Say, hast thou outgrown him? Canst thou do without him? Hast thou a hope of salvation apart from him? I charge thee, repent of this thine ill-doing towards one who has a greater claim upon thy love than ever he had. He ought to be to-day loved more than thou didst love him at thy very best! O my heart, is not all this most surely true? How ill art thou behaving! What an ingrate art thou! Repent! Repent!

Repent of much good that thou hast left undone through want of love. Oh, if thou hadst always loved thy Lord at thy best, what mightest thou not have known of him by this time! What good deeds thou mightest have done by force of his love! How many hearts mightest thou have won for thy Lord if thine own heart had been fuller of love, if thine own soul had

been more on fire! Thou hast lived a poor beggarly life because thou hast allowed such poverty of love.

Repent! Repent! To my mind, as I thought over this text, the call for repentance grew louder and louder, because of the occasion of its utterance. Here is the glorious Lord, coming to his church and speaking to her angel in tones of tender kindness. He condescends to visit his people in all his majesty and glory, intending nothing but to manifest himself in love to his own elect as he doth not to the world. And yet he is compelled even then to take to chiding, and to say, "I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Here is a love-visit clouded with upbraiding—necessary upbraiding. What mischief sin has done! It is a dreadful thing that when Jesus comes to his own dear bride he should have to speak in grief, and not in joy. Must holy communion, which is the wine of heaven, be embittered with the tonic of expostulation? I see the upper springs of nearest fellowship, where the waters of life leap from their first source in the heart of God. Are not these streams most pure and precious? If a man drink thereof he liveth for ever. Shall it be that even at the fountain-head they shall be dashed with bitterness? Even when Christ communes personally with us must he say, "I have somewhat against thee?" Break, my heart, that it should be so! Well may we repent with a deep repentance when our choicest joys are flavoured with the bitter herbs of regret, that our best Beloved should have somewhat against us.

But then he says in effect, *Return*. The third word is this—"Repent, and do the first works." Notice, that he does not say, "Repent, and get back thy first love." This seems rather singular; but then love is the chief of the first works, and, moreover, the first works can only come of the first love. There must be in every declining Christian a *practical repentance*. Do not be satisfied with regrets and resolves. Do the first works; do not strain after the first emotions, but do the first works. No renewal is so valuable as the practical cleansing of our way. If the life be made right, it will prove that the love is so. In doing the first works you will prove that you have come back to your first love. The prescription is complete, because the doing of the first works is meant to include the feeling of the first feelings, the sighing of the first sighs, the enjoying of the first joys: these are all

supposed to accompany returning obedience and activity.

We are to get back to these first works at once. Most men come to Christ with a leap; and I have observed that many who come back to him usually do so at a bound. The slow revival of one's love is almost an impossibility; as well expect the dead to rise by degrees. Love to Christ is often love at first sight: we see him, and are conquered by him. If we grow cold, the best thing we can do is to fasten our eyes on him till we cry, "My soul melted while my Beloved spake." It is a happy circumstance if I can cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." How sweet for the Lord to put us back again at once into the old place, back again in a moment! My prayer is that it may be so this morning with any declining one. May you so repent as not merely to feel the old feelings, but instantly to do the first works, and be once more as eager, as zealous, as generous, as prayerful, as you used to be! If we should again see you breaking the alabaster box, we should know that the old love had returned. May the good Master help us to do as well as ever, yea, much better than before!

Notice, however, that this will require much of effort and warfare; for the promise which is made is "to him that overcometh." Overcoming implies conflict. Depend upon it, if you conquer a wandering heart, you will have to fight for it. "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I give to eat of the tree of life." You must fight your way back to the garden of the Lord. You will have to fight against lethargy, against an evil heart of unbelief, against the benumbing influence of the world. In the name and power of him who bids you repent, you must wrestle and struggle till you get the mastery over self, and yield your whole nature to your Lord.

So I have shown you how Christ prescribes, and I greatly need a few minutes for the last part, because I wish to dwell with solemn earnestness upon it. I have no desire to say a word by which I may prove myself a true brother pleading with you in deep sympathy, because in all the ill which I rebuke I mourn my own personal share. Bless us, O Spirit of the Lord!

III. Now see, brethren, HE PERSUADES. This is the third point: the Lord Jesus persuades his erring one to repent.

First, he *persuades with a warning*: "I will come unto thee;" "quickly" is not in the original: the Revised Version has left it out. Our Lord is generally very slow at the work of judgment: "I will come unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." This he must do: he cannot allow his light to be apart from love, and if the first love be left, the church shall be left in darkness. The truth must always shine, but not always in the same place. The place must be made fit by love, or the light shall be removed.

Our Lord means, first, I will take away the comfort of the Word. He raises up certain ministers, and makes them burning and shining lights in the midst of his church, and when the people gather together they are cheered and enlightened by their shining. A ministry blessed of the Lord is a singular comfort to the church of God. The Lord can easily take away that light which has brought comfort to so many: he can remove the good man to another sphere, or he can call him home to his rest. The extinguisher of death can put out the candle which now gladdens the house. The church which has lost a ministry by which the Lord's glory has shone forth has lost a good deal; and if this loss has been sent in chastisement for decline of love it is all the harder to bear. I can point you to places where once was a man of God, and all went well; but the people grew cold, and the Lord took away their leader, and the place is now a desolation: those who now attend those courts and listen to a modern ministry cry out because of the famine of the Word of the Lord. O friends, let us value the light while we have it, and prove that we do so by profiting by it; but how can we profit if we leave our first love? The Lord may take away our comfort as a church if our first zeal shall die down.

But the candlestick also symbolizes usefulness: it is that by which a church shines. The use of a church is to preserve the truth, wherewith to illuminate the neighbourhood, to illuminate the world. God can soon cut short our usefulness, and he will do so if we cut short our love. If the Lord be withdrawn, we can go on with our work as we used to do, but nothing will come of it: we can go on with Sunday-schools, mission-stations, branch churches, and yet accomplish nothing. Brethren, we can go on with the Orphanage, the College, the Colportage, the Evangelistic Society,

the Book Fund, and all else, and yet nothing will be effected if the arm of the Lord be not made bare.

He can, if he wills, even take away from the church her very existence as a church. Ephesus is gone: nothing but ruins can be found. Rome once held a noble church of Christ, but has not her name become the symbol of antichrist? The Lord can soon take away candlesticks out of their places if the church uses her light for her own glory, and is not filled with his love. God forbid that we should fall under this condemnation! Of thy mercy, O Lord, forbid it! Let it not so happen to any one of us. Yet this may occur to us as individuals. You, dear brother or sister, if you lose your first love, may soon lose your joy, your peace, your usefulness. You, who are now so bright, may grow dull. You, who are now so useful, may become useless. You were once an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes; but if the Lord be withdrawn you will instruct nobody, you will be in the dark yourself. Alas! you may come to lose the very name of Christians, as some have done who once seemed to be burning and shining lights. They were foolish virgins, and ere long they were heard to cry, "Our lamps are gone out!" The Lord can and will take away the candlestick out of its place if we put *him* out of his place by a failure in our love to him.

How can I persuade you, then, better than with the warning words of my Master? My beloved, I persuade you from my very soul not to encounter these dangers, not to run these terrible risks; for as you would not wish to see either the church or your own self left without the light of God, to pine in darkness, it is needful that you abide in Christ, and go on to love him more and more.

The Saviour holds out a promise as his other persuasive. Upon this I can only dwell for a minute. It seems a very wonderful promise to me: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Observe, those who lose their first love *fall*, but those who abide in love are made to stand. In contrast to the fall which took place in the paradise of God, we have man eating of the tree of life, and so living for ever. If we, through grace, overcome the common tendency to decline in love, then shall we be confirmed and settled in the favour of the Lord. By eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil we

fell; by eating of the fruit of a better tree we live and stand fast for ever. Life proved true by love shall be nourished on the best of food: it shall be sustained by fruit from the garden of the Lord himself, gathered by the Saviour's own hand.

Note again, those who lose their first love wander far, they depart from God. "But," saith the Lord, "if you keep your first love you shall not wander, but you shall come into closer fellowship. I will bring you nearer to the centre. I will bring you to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The inner ring is for those who grow in love; the centre of all joy is only to be reached by much love. We know God as we love God. We enter into his paradise as we abide in his love. What joy is here! What a reward hath love!

Then notice the mystical blessing which lies here, waiting for meditation. Do you know how we fell? The woman took of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and gave to Adam, and Adam ate and fell. The reverse is the case in the promise before us: the Second Adam takes of the divine fruit from the tree of promise, and hands it to his spouse; she eats and lives for ever. He who is the Father of the age of grace hands down to us immortal joys, which he has plucked from an unwithering tree. The reward of love is to eat the fruit of life. "We are getting into mysteries," says one. Yes, I am intentionally lifting a corner of the veil, and no more. I only mean to give you a glimpse at the promised boon. Into his innermost joys our Lord will bring us if we keep up our first love, and go from strength to strength therein. Marvelous things are locked up in the caskets whereof love holds the key. Sin set the angel with a flaming sword between us and the tree of life in the midst of the garden; but love has quenched that sword, and now the angel beckons us to come into the innermost secrets of paradise. We shall know as we are known when we love as we are loved. We shall live the life of God when we are wholly taken up with the love of God. The love of Jesus answered by our love to Jesus makes the sweetest music the heart can know. No joy on earth is equal to the bliss of being all taken up with love to Christ. If I had my choice of all the lives that I could live, I certainly would not choose to be an emperor, nor to be a millionaire, nor to be a philosopher; for power, and wealth, and knowledge bring with them sorrow and travail; but I would choose to have nothing to do but to

love my Lord Jesus—nothing, I mean, but to do all things for his sake, and out of love to him. Then I know that I should be in paradise, yea, in the midst of the paradise of God, and I should have meat to eat which is all unknown to men of the world.

Heaven on earth is abounding love to Jesus. This is the first and last of true delight—to love him who is the first and the last. To love Jesus is another name for paradise. Lord, let me know this by continual experience. "You are soaring aloft," cries one. Yes, I own it. Oh that I could allure you to a heavenward flight upon wings of love! There is bitterness in declining love: it is a very consumption of the soul, and makes us weak, and faint, and low. But true love is the antepast of glory. See the heights, the glittering heights, the glorious heights, the everlasting hills to which the Lord of life will conduct all those who are faithful to him through the power of his Holy Spirit. See, O love, thine ultimate abode! I pray that what I have said may be blessed by the Holy Spirit to the bringing of us all nearer to the Bridegroom of our souls. Amen.

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Love's Labours

Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. - 1 Corinthians 13:7

The grace of charity, or love, of which so much is most admirably spoken in this chapter, is absolutely essential to true godliness. So essential is it that, if we have everything beside, but have not charity, it profiteth us nothing. The absence of charity is absolutely fatal to vital godliness; so saith the Holy Ghost in this chapter. When, then, you read the apostle's high encomiums of charity, do not say, "This is a fancy virtue to which certain special saints have attained, and we are bound to admire them for it, but we need not imitate them." Far from it. This charity is the common, everyday livery of the people of God. It is not the prerogative of

a few; it must be the possession of all. Do not, therefore, however lofty the model may be, look up to it as though you could not reach it: you must reach it. It is put before you not only as a thing greatly desirable, but as absolutely needful; for if you excelled in every spiritual gift, yet if you had not this all the rest would profit you nothing whatever. One would think that such excellent gifts might benefit us a little, but no, the apostle sums them all up, and saith of the whole, "it profiteth me nothing." I pray that this may be understood of us at the very beginning, lest we should manage to slip away from the truth taught us by the Holy Ghost in this place, and should excuse ourselves from being loving by the notion that we are so inconsiderable that such high virtue cannot be required of us, or so feeble that we cannot be expected to attain to it. You must attain it, or you cannot enter into eternal life, for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, and the Spirit of Christ is sure to beget the charity of our text, which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

What does this teach us at the outset, but that a salvation which leads to this must be of God, and must be wrought in us by his power? Such a comely grace can never grow out of our fallen nature. Shall such a clean thing as this be brought out of an unclean? This glorious salvation unto pure love must be grasped by faith, and wrought in us by the operation of the Spirit of God. If we consider salvation to be a little thing, we bring it, as it were, within the sphere of human possibility, but if we set it forth in its true proportions as involving the possession of a pure, loving, elevated state of heart, then we perceive that it is a divine wonder. When we estimate the renewed nature aright we cry, "This is the finger of God," and right gladly do we then subscribe to Jonah's creed, "Salvation is of the Lord." If charity be in any man and abound, God must have the glory of it; for assuredly it was never attained by mere natural effort, but must have been bestowed by that same hand which made the heavens. So then, brethren, I shall hope when I conclude to leave upon your minds the impression of your need of the grace of God for the attainment of love. I would not discourage you, but I would have you feel how great a labour lies before you, and how impossible it will be unless you are girt with a strength beyond your own. This shall be your solace that if it cannot be the outcome of your own effort, yet "the fruit of the Spirit is love," and the

Spirit is ready and willing to bear fruit in us also.

Notice then, first, the multitude of love's difficulties; it has to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things: secondly, observe the triumph of love's labour; it does all these four things, it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things": and then, thirdly, this will bring us back to the point we have started from, the sources of love's energy, and how it is she is able thus to win her fourfold victory over countless difficulties.

I. Consider well THE MULTITUDE OF LOVE'S DIFFICULTIES. When the grace of God comes into a man he is born at once to love. He that loveth is born of God, and he that is born of God loveth. He loveth him that begat, even God, and he loveth him that is begotten of him, even all the saved ones. He commences to obey the great command to love his neighbour as himself. His motto is no longer that of an earthly kingdom, Dieu et mon droit—God and my right; but he bears another word on his escutcheon, Dieu et mon frŠre—God and my brother.

No sooner is love born than she finds herself at war. Everything is against her, for the world is full of envy, hate, and ill-will. I would warn the most loving-hearted that they have entered upon a war for peace, a strife for love: they are born to hate hatred, and to contend against contention. As the lily among thorns, so is love among the sons of men. As the hind among the dogs, so is charity among the selfish multitude.

Evidently the difficulties of love are many, for the apostle speaks of them as "all things," and as if this were not enough he repeats the words, and sets forth the opposing armies as four times "all things." I do not know whether you can calculate this mighty host. "All things" would seem to comprehend as much as can be, but here in the text you have this amount multiplied by four. For, my brother, you will have to contend with all that is within yourself. Nothing in your original nature will help you. God has put within you a new life, but the old life seeks to smother it. You will find it a severe struggle to master yourself, and if you succeed therein you will be a conqueror indeed. Besides that you will have to contend with "all things" in the persons whom you are called upon to love. You must have

fervent charity towards the saints, but you will find very much about the best of them which will try your patience; for, like yourself, they are imperfect, and they will not always turn their best side towards you, but sometimes sadly exhibit their infirmities. Be prepared, therefore, to contend with "all things" in them. As for the ungodly whom you are to love to Christ, you will find everything in them that will oppose the drawings of your love, for they, like yourself, by nature are born in sin, and they are rooted in their iniquities. When you have mastered that kind of "all things" you will have to contend with "all things" in the world, for the world lieth in the wicked one, and all its forces run towards self, and contention, and hate. Every man's hand is against his fellow, and few there be who honour the gentle laws of love; they know not that divine charity which "seeketh not her own." The seed of the serpent is at enmity with all that is kind, and tender, and self-sacrificing, for these are the marks of the woman's seed. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. And then remember that "all things" in hell are against you. What a seething mass of rebellious life, all venomous with hate, is seen in the regions of darkness. The prince of the power of the air leads the van, and the host of fallen spirits eagerly follow him, like bloodhounds behind their leader. All these evil spirits will endeavour to create dissension, and enmity, and malice, and oppression among men, and the soldier of love must wrestle against all these. See, O my brother, what a battle is yours! Speak of crusades against the Paynim, what a crusade is this against hate and evil. Yet we shrink not from the fray.

Happily, though love has many difficulties, it overcomes them all, and overcomes them four times. There is such vitality in evil that it leaps up from the field whereon it seemed to be slain, and rages with all its former fury. First, we overcome evil by patience, which "beareth all things." Let the injury be inflicted, we will forgive it, and not be provoked: even seventy times seven will we bear in silence. If this suffice not, by God's grace we will overcome by faith: we trust in Jesus Christ, we rely upon our principles, we look for divine succour, and so we "believe all things." We overcome a third time by hope: we rest in expectation that gentleness will win, and that long-suffering will wear out malice, for we look for the ultimate victory of everything that is true and gracious, and so we "hope all things." We finish the battle by perseverance: we abide faithful to our

resolve to love, we will not be irritated into unkindness, we will not be perverted from generous, all-forgiving affection, and so we win the battle by steadfast non-resistance. We have set our helm towards the port of love, and towards it we will steer, come what may. Baffled often, love "endureth all things."

Yes, brethren, and love conquers on all four sides. Love does, as it were, make a hollow square, and she sets the face of her warriors towards all quarters of the compass. Does God seem himself to smite love with afflictions? She "beareth all things." Do her fellow Christians misrepresent her, and treat her ill? She believes everything that is good about them, and nothing that is injurious. Do the wicked rise against her? When she tries to convert them, do they return evil for good? She turns her hopefulness to the front in that direction, and hopes that yet the Spirit of God will bring them to a better mind. And does it happen that all her spiritual foes attack her with temptations and desperate insinuations? She lifteth up the banner of patience against them, and by the power of God's grace she putteth the infernal enemy to the rout, for she "endureth all things." What a brave mode of battle is this! Is not love a man-of-war? Is it not invincible? Hear love's heroic cry as she shouts her defiance -

"Come one, come all, this rock shall fly,
From its firm base as soon as I."

If once taught in the school of Christ to turn love to every point of the compass, and so to meet every assault against our heart, we have learned the secret of victory.

It seems to me that I might read my text as if it said that love conquers in all stages of her life. She begins in conversion, and straightway those that mark her birth are angry, and the powers of evil are at once aroused to seek her destruction. Then she "beareth all things." Let them mock, love never renders railing for railing: Isaac is not to be provoked by Ishmael's jeers.

She gathers strength and begins to tell out to others what she knows of her Lord and his salvation. She "believeth all things," and so she

confesses her faith, and her fellow Christians are confirmed by her witness. It is her time of energy, and so she tries to woo and win others, by teaching them the things which she believes.

She advances a little farther; and, though often disappointed by the unbelief of men and the coldness of her fellow Christians, she nevertheless "hopes all things," and pushes on in the expectation of winning more of them. Her dove's eyes see in the dark, and she advances to victory through ever-growing conflict.

Ay, and when infirmities thicken upon her, and old age comes, and she can do little else but sit still, and bear and believe and hope, she still perseveres, and accepts even the stroke of death itself without complaining, for love "endureth all things."

I do not think I need say more upon the difficulties of love. I am sure that every experienced person knows that these difficulties are supreme, and that we require superlative grace if we are to master them. Love does not ask to have an easy life of it: self-love makes that her aim. Love denies herself, sacrifices herself, that she may win victories for God, and bring blessings on her fellow-men. Hers is no easy pathway, and hers shall be no tinsel crown.

II. Secondly, let us survey THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE'S LABOUR. Her labours are fourfold.

First, in bearing all things. The word here rendered "bear" might as correctly have been translated "cover." You that have the Revised Version will find in the margin, "Love covereth all things." "Covereth" is the meaning of the word in ordinary Greek, but Paul generally uses the word in the sense of "bear." Our translators, therefore, had to choose between the usual meaning and the Pauline usage, and they selected Paul's meaning, and put it down in the first place as "beareth," giving us in the margin the other sense of "covereth." The two ideas may be blended, if we understand it to mean that love bears all things in silence, concealing injuries as much as possible even from herself.

Let us just think of this word "covers" in reference to the brethren. True love refuses to see faults, unless it be that she may kindly help in their removal. Love has no wish to see faults. Noah's younger son discovered and declared the shame of his father, but his other sons took a garment and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father: after this fashion does love deal with the sins of her brethren. She painfully fears that there may be something wrong, but she is loath to be convinced of it: she ignores it as long as she can, and wishes that she could deny it altogether. Love covers; that is, it never proclaims the errors of good men. There are busybodies abroad who never spy out a fault in a brother but they must needs hurry off to their next neighbour with the savoury news, and then they run up and down the street as though they had been elected common criers. It is by no means honourable to men or women to set up to be common informers. Yet I know some who are not half so eager to publish the gospel as to publish slander. Love stands in the presence of a fault, with a finger on her lip. If anyone is to smite a child of God, let it not be a brother. Even if a professor be a hypocrite, love prefers that he should fall by any hand rather than her own. Love covers all injuries by being silent about them, and acting as if they had never been. She sitteth alone, and keepeth silence. To speak and publish her wrong is too painful for her, for she fears to offend against the Lord's people. She would rather suffer than murmur, and so, like a sheep before her shearers, she is dumb under injury.

I would, brothers and sisters, that we could all imitate the pearl oyster. A hurtful particle intrudes itself into its shell, and this vexes and grieves it. It cannot eject the evil, and what does it do but cover it with a precious substance extracted out of its own life, by which it turns the intruder into a pearl. Oh, that we could do so with the provocations we receive from our fellow Christians, so that pearls of patience, gentleness, long-suffering, and forgiveness might be bred within us by that which else had harmed us. I would desire to keep ready for my fellow Christians, a bath of silver, in which I could electroplate all their mistakes into occasions for love. As the dripping well covers with its own deposit all that is placed within its drip, so would love cover all within its range with love, thus turning even curses into blessings. Oh that we had such love that it would cover all, and conceal all, so far as it is right and just that it should be

covered and concealed.

As to bearing all, taking the words as they stand in our version, I wish to apply the text mainly to our trials in seeking the conversion of the unconverted. Those who love the souls of men must be prepared to cover much when they deal with them, and to bear much from them in silence. When I begin to seek the conversion of anyone, I must try as much as ever I can to ignore any repulsiveness that there may be in his character. I know that he is a sinner, else I should not seek his salvation; but if he happens to be one who has fallen very low in the esteem of others, I must not treat him as such, but cover his worst points. You cannot possibly bring the Samaritan woman who has had five husbands into a right state of mind by "wondering that he spake with the woman." Thus the disciples acted, but not so their Master, for he sat on the well and talked with her, and made himself her willing companion that he might be her gracious Saviour; he ignored her sin so far as to converse with her for her good.

You will not long have begun this holy work before you will discover in the heart you seek to win much ignorance of the gospel. Bear with it, and bring forward the text which sheds light on that darkness, and teach the truth which will remove that error. Ere long you will have to contend with hardness of heart, for when a man knows the truth he is not always willing to receive it. Bear it, and be not vexed. Did you not expect the heart to be hard? Do not you know what business you are upon? You are sent to turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. Be not astonished if these things should not prove to be child's play. In addition to this perhaps you will have ridicule poured upon you; your attempts to convert will be converted into jests. Bear it; bear all things! Remember how the multitude thrust out the tongue at your Lord and Master when he was dying, and be not you so proud as to think yourself too good to be laughed at. Still speak concerning Christ, and whatever happens, bear all things. I will not attempt to make a catalogue of your provocations, you shall make one yourself after you have tried to convert men to Christ; but all that you can possibly meet with is included in my text, for it says, "beareth all things." If you should meet with some extraordinary sinner who opens his mouth with cruel speeches such as you have never heard before, and if by attempting to do him good you

only excite him to ribaldry and blasphemy, do not be astonished; have at him again, for charity "beareth all things," whatever they may be. Push on and say, "Yes, all this proves to me how much you want saving. You are my man; if I get you to Christ there will be all the greater glory to God." O blessed charity, which can thus cover all things and bear all things for Christ's sake.

Do you want an example of it? Would you see the very mirror and perfection of the charity that beareth all things? Behold your divine Lord. Oh, what he has covered! It is a tempting topic, but I will not dwell on it. How his glorious righteousness, his wondrous splendour of love, has covered all our faults and all their consequences, treating us as if he saw no sin in Jacob, neither perversity in Israel. Think what he bore when he came unto his own and his own received him not! What a covering was that when he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a pitying sight of the fearful misery of man our Lord Jesus had when holy tears bedewed those sacred eyes! What a generous blindness to their infamous cruelty he manifested when he prayed for his bloodthirsty enemies. O beloved, you will never be tempted, and taunted, and tried as he was; yet in your own shorter measure may you possess that love which can silently bear all things for the elect's sake and for Christ's sake, that the multitude of the redeemed may be accomplished, and that Christ through you may see of the travail of his soul.

Now let us look at the second of love's great labours. You have heard of the labours of Hercules, but the fabulous hero is far outdone by the veritable achievements of love. Love works miracles which only grace can enable her to perform. Here is the second of them—love "believeth all things." In reference, first, to our fellow Christians, love always believes the best of them. I wish we had more of this faith abroad in all the churches, for a horrid blight falls upon some communities through suspicion and mistrust. Though everything may be pure and right, yet certain weak minds are suddenly fevered with anxiety through the notion that all is wrong and rotten. This unholy mis-trust is in the air, a blight upon all peace: it is a sort of fusty mildew of the soul by which all sweet perfume of confidence is killed. The best man is suspected of being a designing knave, though he is honest as the day, and the smallest fault or

error is frightfully exaggerated, till we seem to dwell among criminals and to be all villains together. If I did not believe in my brethren I would not profess to be one of them. I believe that with all their faults they are the best people in the world, and that, although the church of God is not perfect, yet she is the bride of One who is. I have the utmost respect for her, for her Lord's sake. The Roman matron said "Where my husband is Caias I am Caia"; where Christ is King, she who stands at his right hand is "the queen in gold of Ophir." God forbid that I should rail at her of whom her Lord says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." True love believes good of others as long as ever it can, and when it is forced to fear that wrong has been done, love will not readily yield to evidence, but she gives the accused brother the benefit of many a doubt. When the thing is too clear, love says, "Yes, but the friend must have been under very strong temptation, and if I had been there I dare say I should have done worse;" or else love hopes that the erring one may have offended from a good though mistaken motive; she believes that the good man must have been mistaken, or he would not have acted so. Love, as far as she can, believes in her fellows. I know some persons who habitually believe everything that is bad, but they are not the children of love. Only tell them that their minister or their brother has killed his wife, and they would believe it immediately, and send out for a policeman: but if you tell them anything good of their neighbour, they are in no such hurry to believe you. Did you ever hear of gossips tittle-tattling approval of their neighbours? I wish the chatterers would take a turn at exaggerating other people's virtues, and go from house to house trumping up pretty stories of their acquaintances. I do not recommend lying even in kindness, but that side of it would be such a novelty that I could almost bear with its evils for a change. Love, though it will not speak an untruth in praise of another, yet has a quick eye to see the best qualities of others, and it is habitually a little blind to their failings. Her blind eye is to the fault, and her bright is for the excellence. Somewhere or other I met with an old legend—I do not suppose it to be literally true, but its spirit is correct. It is said that, once upon a time, in the streets of Jerusalem, there lay a dead dog, and everyone kicked at it and reviled it. One spoke of its currish breed, another of its lean and ugly form, and so forth; but one passed by who paused a moment over the dead dog, and said, "What white teeth it has." Men said, as he went on his way, "That is Jesus of

Nazareth." Surely it is ever our Lord's way to see good points wherever he can. Brethren, think as well as you can even of a dead dog. If you should ever be led into disappointments and sorrows by thinking too well of your fellow-men, you need not greatly blame yourself. I met, in Anthony Farrindon's Sermons, a line which struck me. He says the old proverb has it, "Humanum est errare," to err is human, but, saith he, when we err by thinking too kindly of others we may say, "Christianum est errare," it is Christian to err in such a fashion. I would not have you credulous, but I would have you trustful, for suspicion is a cruel evil. Few fall into the blessed error of valuing their fellow Christians at too high a rate.

In reference to the unconverted this is a very important matter. Love "believeth all things" in their case. She does not believe that the unconverted are converted, for, if so, she would not seek their conversion. She believes that they are lost and ruined by the Fall, but she believes that God can save them. Love believes that the precious blood of Christ can redeem the bondslaves of sin and Satan, and break their iron chains; she believes that the power of the Holy Spirit can change a heart of granite into a heart of flesh. Love, therefore, believing this, believes also that God can save this sinner by herself, and she therefore begins to speak to him, expecting that the word she speaks will be God's instrument of salvation. When she finds herself sitting next to a sinner, she believes that there was a necessity for her to be there, even as Christ must needs go through Samaria. She saith to herself, "Now will I tell to this poor soul what Christ hath done, for I believe that even out of my poor lips eternal life may flow, and in such a babe as I am God may perfect praise to his own glory." She does not refrain from preaching Christ through fear of failure, but she believes in the great possibilities which lie in the gospel and in the Spirit of God, and so she deals earnestly with the man next her. She believes in her own principles, she believes in the grace of God, she believes in the power of the Spirit of God, she believes in the force of truth, she believes in the existence of conscience, and so she is moved to set about her saving work. She believeth all things.

Brethren, do you want a model of this? Then I beseech you look to your divine Master once again. See him in the morning when the sheep are counted, missing one of them, and so full of faith is he that he can find

the lost one, that he leaves the ninety and nine, and cheerfully enters the pathless wilderness. See how he bounds over the mountains! How he descends the ravines! He is seeking his sheep until he finds it, for he is fully assured that he shall find it. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, for his faith is great in the salvation of men, and he goes forth to it believing that sinners shall be saved. I delight in the deep, calm faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had no faith in man's goodness, for "he knew what was in man"; but he had great faith in what could be done in men and what could be wrought for them, and for the joy that was set before him in this he endured the cross, despising the shame. He had faith that grand things would come of his salvation—men would be purified, error would be driven out, false-hood would be slain, and love would reign supreme.

Here is the second grand victory of love, she "believeth all things." Herein let us exercise ourselves till we are skilled in it.

Love's third great labour is in "hoping all things." Love never despairs. She believes in good things yet to come in her fellow-men, even if she cannot believe in any present good in them. Hope all things about your brethren. Suppose a friend is a member of the church, and you cannot see any clear signs of grace in him, hope all things about him. Many true believers are weak in faith, and the operations of grace are dim in them; and some are placed in positions where the grace they have is much hindered and hampered: let us take these things into consideration. It is hard to tell how little grace may yet suffice for salvation: it is not ours to judge. Hope all things, and if you should be forced to see sad signs in them, which make you fear that they have no grace, yet, remember that some of the brightest believers have had their faults, and grave ones too. Remember yourself, lest you also be tempted. If you cannot hope that these persons are saved at all, hope that they will be, and do all that you can to promote so blessed an end.

Hope all things. If thy brother has been very angry with thee without a cause, hope that thou wilt win him; and set about the task. If thou hast tried and failed, hope to succeed next time, and try again. Hope that though thou hast failed seven times, and he still speaks bitterly, yet in his heart he is really ashamed, or at least that he will be so very soon. Never

despair of your fellow Christians.

As to the unconverted, you will never do anything with them unless you hope great things about them. When the good Samaritan found the poor man half dead, if he had not hoped about him he would never have poured in the oil and the wine, but would have left him there to die. Cultivate great hopefulness about sinners. Always hope of them that they will be saved yet: though no good signs are apparent in them. If you have done your best for them, and have been disappointed and defeated, still hope for them. Sometimes you will find cause for hope in the fact that they begin to attend a place of worship. Grasp at that, and say, "Who can tell? God may bless them." Or if they have long been hearers, and no good has come of it, still hope that the minister will one day have a shot at them, and the arrow shall pierce through the joints of the harness. When you last spoke to them there seemed a little tenderness: be thankful for it, and have hope. If there has been a little amendment in their life, be hopeful about them. Even if you can see nothing at all hopeful in them, yet hope that there may be something which you cannot see, and perhaps an effect has been produced which they are endeavouring to conceal. Hope because you are moved to pray for them. Get other people to pray for them, for as long as they have some one to pray for them their case is not given over. If you get others to pray, there will be another string to your bow. If they are very ill, and you cannot get at them, or they are on their dying beds, still have hope about them, and try to send them a message in some form or other. Pray the Lord to visit and save them; and always keep up your hope about them. Till they are dead let not your hope be dead.

Would you see a model of this? Ah, look at our blessed Lord, and all his hopefulness for US: how, despairing of none, he went after those whom others would have given up. If you ask a proof, remember how he went after you. Will you despair of anybody since Christ did not despair of you? Wonders of grace belong to God, and all those wonders have been displayed in many among us. If you and I had been there when they brought the adulterous woman taken in the very act, I am afraid that we should have said, "This is too bad; put her away, she cannot be borne with." But oh, the hopefulness of the blessed Master when even to her he

said, "Woman, where are thine accusers? Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." What wonderful patience, and gentleness, and hopefulfulness our Lord displayed in all his converse with the twelve! It was a noble hopefulfulness in Christ which led him to trust Peter as he did: after he had denied his Master with oaths, our Lord trusted him to feed his sheep and lambs, and set him in the forefront of apostolic service. He has also had compassion on some of us, putting us into the ministry, and putting us in trust with the gospel, for he knew what love would do for us, and he was certain he could yet make something of us to his own glory.

The last victory of love is in enduring all things, by which I understand a patient perseverance in loving. This is perhaps the hardest work of all, for many people can be affectionate and patient for a time, but the task is to hold on year after year. I have known some men earnestly check their temper under provocation, and bear a great many slights, but at last they have said, "There is an end to everything: I am not going to put up with it any longer. I cannot stand it." Blessed be God, the love that Christ gives us endureth all things. As his love endured to the end, so does the love which the Spirit works in us endure to the end.

In reference first to our fellow Christians, love holds out under all rebuffs. You mean that I shall not love you, my good man, but I shall love you. You give me the rough side of your tongue, and make me see that you are not a very lovable person, but I can love you notwithstanding all. What? Will you do me a further unkindness? I will oppose you by doing you a greater kindness than before. You said a vile thing about me; I will not hear it, but if it be possible I will say a kind thing of you. I will cover you up with hot coals till I melt you; I will war against you with flames of love till your anger is consumed. I will master you by being kinder to you than you have been unkind to me. What hosts of misrepresentations and unkindnesses there are; but if you go on to be a true Christian you must endure all these. If you have to deal with people who will put up with nothing from you, take care to be doubly patient with them. What credit is there in bearing with those who bear with you? If your brethren are angry without a cause, be sorry for them, but do not let them conquer you by driving you into a bad temper. Stand fast in love; endure not some things, but all things, for Christ's sake; so shall you prove yourself to be a

Christian indeed.

As to your dealing with the unconverted, if ever you go into the field after souls, be sure to carry your gun with you, and that gun is love. You gentlemen who go out shooting partridges and other birds at this time of the year, no doubt find it a pleasant pastime; but for real excitement, joy, and pleasure, commend me to soul-winning. What did our Lord say, "I will make you fishers of men." If you go out fishing for souls you will have to endure all things, for it will come to pass that some whom you have been seeking for a long time will grow worse instead of better. Endure this among the all things. Those whom you seek to bless may seem to be altogether unteachable, they may shut their ears and refuse to hear you; never mind, endure all things. They may grow sour and sullen, and revile you in their anger, but be not put about by them, let them struggle till they are wearied, and meanwhile do you quietly wait, saying to yourself, "I must save them." A warder who has to take care of insane persons will frequently be attacked by them, and have to suffer hard blows; but what does he do? Strike the patient and make a fight of it? No, he holds him down and pins him fast; but not in anger, for he pities him too much to be angry with him. Does a nurse with a delirious patient take any notice of his cross words, and grumbling, and outcries? Not she. She says, "I must try to save this man's life," and so with great kindness she "endureth all things." If you were a fireman, and found a person in an upper room, and the house was on fire, would you not struggle with him rather than let him remain in the room and burn. You would say, "I will save you in spite of yourself." Perhaps the foolish body would call you names, and say, "Let me alone, why should you intrude into my chamber?" But you would say, "Never mind my intrusion; I will apologize afterwards for my rudeness, but you must be out of the fire first." I pray God give you this blessed unmannerliness, this sweet casting of all things to the wind, if by any means you may save some.

If you desire to see the mirror and the paragon of persevering endurance, look you there! I wish you could see it. I wish these eyes could see the sight as I have sometimes seen it. Behold the cross! See the patient Sufferer and that ribald multitude: they thrust out the tongue, they sneer, they jest, they blaspheme; and there he hangs, triumphant in his

patience, conquering the world, and death and hell by enduring "all things." O love, thou didst never sit on a throne so imperial as the cross, when there, in the person of the Son of God, thou didst all things endure. Oh that we might copy in some humble measure that perfect pattern which is here set before us. If you would be saviours, if you would bless your generation, let no unkindness daunt you; let no considerations of your own character, or honour, or peace of mind keep you back, but of you may it be said, even as of your Lord, "He saved others, himself he could not save."

Have not I shown you four grand battles far excelling all the Waterloos, and Trafalgars, and Almas, and Inkermans on record? Heroes are they that fight and win them, and the Lord God of love shall crown them.

III. I close by noting THE SOURCES OF LOVE'S ENERGY. The time is gone, as I thought it would be, but it has brought us round in a circle to where we started from. The Holy Ghost alone can teach men how to love, and give them power to do so. Love's art is learned at no other school but at the feet of Jesus, where the Spirit of love doth rest on those who learn of him. Beloved, the Spirit of God puts love into us, and helps us to maintain it, thus—first, love wins these victories, for it is her nature. The nature of love is self-sacrifice. Love is the reverse of seeking her own. Love is intense; love is burning; therefore she burneth her way to victory. Love! Look at it in the mother. Is it any hardship to her to lose rest and peace and comfort for her child? If it costs her pain, she makes it pleasure by the ardour of her affection. It is the nature of love to court difficulties, and to rejoice in suffering for the beloved object. If you have fervent love to the souls of men, you will know how true this is.

Next to this, love has four sweet companions. There are with her tenderness that "beareth all things," faith that "believeth all things," hope that "hopeth all things," and patience which "endureth all things," and he that hath tenderness, and faith, and hope, and patience hath a brave quaternion of graces to guard him, and he need not be afraid. Best of all, love sucks her life from the wounds of Christ. Love can bear, believe, hope, and endure because Christ has borne, believed, and hoped, and endured for her. I have heard of one that had a twist: they say that he saw

something that others never saw, and heard a voice that others never heard, and he became such a strange man that others wondered at him. Oh, that I had more and more of that most solemn twist which comes through feeling a pierced hand laid on my shoulder, and hearing in my ear a sorrowful voice, that selfsame voice which cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I would see that vision and hear that voice, and then—what then? Why, I must love; I must love; I must love. That would be the soul's strange bias and sweet twist. Love makes us love; love bought us, sought us, and brought us to the Saviour's feet, and it shall henceforth constrain us to deeds which else would be impossible. You have heard of men sometimes in a mad fit doing things that ordinary flesh and blood could never have performed. Oh to be distracted from selfishness by the love of Christ, and maddened into self-oblivion by a supreme passion for the Crucified. I know not how otherwise to put my thoughts into words so that they may hint at my burning meaning. May the Lord of love look into your very eyes with those eyes which once were red with weeping over human sin: may he touch your hands with those hands that were nailed to the cross, and impress the blessed nailmarks upon your feet, and then may he pierce your heart till it pour forth a life for love, and flow out in streams of kind desires, and generous deeds, and holy sacrifices for God and for his people. God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Love's Logic

We love him because he first loved us. - 1 John 4:19

This is a great doctrinal truth, and I might with much propriety preach a doctrinal sermon from it, of which the sum and substance would be the sovereign grace of God. God's love is evidently prior to ours: "He first loved us." It is also clear enough from the text that God's love is the cause of ours, for "We love him because he first loved us." Therefore, going back to old time, or rather before all time, when we find God loving us with an everlasting love, we gather that the reason of his choice is not because we loved him, but because he willed to love us. His reasons, and he had reasons (for we read of the counsel of his will), are known to himself, but they are not to be found in any inherent goodness in us, or which was foreseen to be in us. We were chosen simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. He loved us because he would love us. The gift of his dear Son, which was a close consequent upon his choice of his people, was too great a sacrifice on God's part to have been drawn from him by any goodness in the creature. It was not possible for the highest piety to have deserved so vast a boon as the gift of the Only-begotten; it was not possible for any thing in man to have merited the incarnation and the passion of the Redeemer. Our redemption, like our election, springs from the spontaneous self-originating love of God. And our regeneration, in which we are made actual partakers of the divine blessings in Jesus Christ, was not of us, nor by us. We were not converted because we were already inclined that way, neither were we regenerated because some good thing was in us by nature; but we owe our new birth entirely to his potent love, which dealt with us effectually turning us from death to life, from darkness to light and from the alienation of our mind and the enmity of our spirit into that delightful path of love, in which we are now travelling to the skies. As believers on Christ's name we "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The sum and substance of the text is that God's uncaused love, springing up within himself, has been the sole means of bringing us into the condition of loving him. Our love to him is like a trickling rill, speeding its way to the ocean because it first came from the Ocean. All the rivers run into the sea, but their floods first arose from it: the clouds that were exhaled from the mighty main distilled in showers and filled the water-brooks. Here was their first cause and prime origin; and, as if they recognised the obligation, they pay tribute in return to the parent source.

The ocean love of God, so broad that even the wing of imagination could not traverse it, sends forth its treasures of the rain of grace, which drop upon our hearts, which are as the pastures of the wilderness; they make our hearts to overflow, and in streams of gratitude the life imparted flows back again to God. All good things are of thee, Great God; thy goodness creates our good; thine infinite love to us draws forth our love to thee.

But, dear friends, I trust after many years of instruction in the doctrines of our holy faith, I need not keep to the beaten doctrinal track, but may lead you in a parallel path, in which the same truth may be from another point. I purpose to preach an experimental sermon, and possibly this will be even more in accordance with the run of the passage and the mind of its writer, than a doctrinal discourse. We shall view the text as a fact which we have tested and proved in our own consciousness. Under this aspect the statement of the text is this:—a sense of the love of God to us is the main cause of our love to him. When we believe, know, and feel that God loves us, we, as a natural result, love him in return; and in proportion as our knowledge increases, our faith strengthens, our conviction deepens that we are really beloved of God; we, from the very constitution of our being, are constrained to yield our hearts to God in return. The discourse of this morning, therefore, will run in that channel. God grant it may be blessed to each of us by his Holy Spirit.

I. At the outset we will consider THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF LOVE TO GOD IN THE HEART.

There are some graces which in their vigor are not absolutely essential to the bare existence of spiritual life, though very important for its healthy growth; but love to God must be in the heart, or else there is no grace there whatever. If any man love not God, he is not a renewed man. Love to God is a mark which is always set upon Christ's sheep, and never set upon any others. In enlarging upon this most important truth, I would all your attention to the connection of the text. You will find in the seventh verse of this chapter, that love to God is set down as being a necessary mark of the new birth. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." I have no right, therefore, to believe that I am a regenerated person unless my heart truly and sincerely loves God. It is

vain for me, if I love not God, to quote the register which records an ecclesiastical ceremony, and say that this regenerated me; it certainly did no such thing, or the sure result would have followed. If I have been regenerated I may not be perfect, but this one thing I can say, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." When by believing we receive the privilege to become the sons of God, we receive also the nature of sons, and with filial love we cry, "Abba, Father." There is no exception to this rule; if a man loves not God, neither is he born of God. Show me a fire without heat, then show me regeneration that does not produce love to God; for as the sun must give forth its light, so must a soul that has been created anew by divine grace display its nature by sincere affection towards God." "Ye must be born again," but ye are not born again unless ye love God. How indispensable, then, is love to God.

In the eighth verse we are told also that love to God is a mark of our knowing God. True knowledge is essential to salvation. God does not save us in the dark. He is our "light and our salvation." We are renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us. Now, "he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." All you have ever been taught from the pulpit, all you have ever studied from the Scriptures, all you have ever gathered from the learned, all you have collected from the libraries, all this is no knowledge of God at all unless you love God; for in true religion, to love and to know God are synonymous terms. Without love you remain in ignorance still, ignorance of the most unhappy and ruinous kind. All attainments are transitory, if love be not as a salt to preserve them; tongues must cease and knowledge must vanish away; love alone abides for ever. This love you must have or be a fool for ever. All the children of the true Zion are taught of the Lord, but you are not taught of God unless you love God. See then that to be devoid of love to God is to be devoid of all true knowledge of God, and so of all salvation.

Further, the chapter teaches us that love to God is the root of love to others. The eleventh verse says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Now no man is a Christian who does not love Christians. He, who, being in the church, is yet not of its heart and soul, is but an intruder in the family. But since love to our brethren springs out of

love to our one common father, it is plain that we must have love to that father, or else we shall fail in one of the indispensable marks of the children of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" but we cannot truly love the brethren unless we love the father; therefore, lacking love to God, we lack love to the church, which is an essential mark of grace.

Again, keeping to the run of the passage, you will find by the eighteenth verse, that love to God is a chief means of that holy peace which is an essential mark of a Christian. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord," but where there is no love there is no such peace, for fear, which hath torment, distresses the soul; hence love is the indispensable companion of faith, and when they come together, peace is the result. Where there is fervent love to God there is set up a holy familiarity with God, and from this flow satisfaction, delight, and rest. Love must co-operate with faith and cast out fear, so that the soul may have boldness before God. Oh! Christian, thou canst not have the nature of God implanted within thee by regeneration, it cannot reveal itself in love to the brotherhood, it cannot blossom with the fair flowers of peace and joy, except thine affection be set upon God. Let him then be thine exceeding joy. Delight thyself also in the Lord. O love the Lord ye his saints.

We also see, if we turn again to St. John's epistle and pursue his observations to the next chapter and the third verse, that love is the spring of true obedience. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Now a man who is not obedient to God's commandments is evidently not a true believer; for, although good works do not save us, yet, being saved, believers are sure to produce good works. Though the fruit be not the root of the tree, yet a well rooted tree will, in its season, bring forth its fruits. So, though the keeping of the commandments does not make me a child of God, yet, being a child of God, I shall be obedient to my heavenly Father. But this I cannot be unless I love God. A mere external obedience, a decent formal recognition of the laws of God, is not obedience in God's sight. He abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found. I must obey because I love, or else I have not in spirit and in truth obeyed at all. See then, that to produce the

indispensable fruits of saving faith, there must be love to God; for without it, they would be unreal and indeed impossible.

I hope it is not necessary for me to pursue this argument any further. Love to God is as natural to the renewed heart as love to its mother is to a babe. Who needs to reason a child into love? As certainly as you have the life and nature of God in you, you will seek after the Lord. As the spark, because it has in it the nature of fire, ascends aloft to seek the sun, so will your new-born spirit seek her God, from whom she has derived her life. Search yourselves, then, and see whether you love God or no. Put your hands on your hearts, and as in the sight of him, whose eyes are us a flame of fire, answer to him; make him your confessor at this hour; answer this one question: "Lovest thou me?" I trust very many of you will be able to say—

"Yes, we love thee and adore;
Oh, for grace to love thee more."

This much was necessary to bring us to the second step of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit lead us onward.

II. You see the indispensable importance of love to God: let us now learn **THE SOURCE AND SPRING OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD**. "We love him because he first loved us." Love to God, wherever it really exists, has been created in the bosom by a belief of God's love to us. No man loves God till he knows that God loves him; and every believer loves God for this reason first and chiefly, that God loves him. He has seen himself to be unworthy of divine favour, yet he has believed God's love in the gift of his dear Son, and he has accepted the atonement that Christ has made as a proof of God's love, and now being satisfied of the divine affection towards him, he of necessity loves his God.

Observe, then, that love to God does not begin in the heart from any disinterested admiration of the nature of God. I believe that, after we have loved God because he first loved us, we may so grow in grace as to love God for what he is. I suppose it is possible for us to be the subjects of a state of heart in which our love spends itself upon the loveliness of God

in his own person: we may come to love him because he is so wise, so powerful, so good, so patient, so everything that is lovable. This may be produced within us as the ripe fruit of maturity in the divine life, but it is never the first spring and fountain of the grace of love in any man's heart. Even the apostle John, the man who had looked within the veil and seen the excellent glory beyond any other man, and who had leaned his head upon the bosom of the Lord, and had seen the Lord's holiness, and marked the inimitable beauty of the character of the incarnate God, even John does not say, "We love him because we admire him," but "We love him because he first loved us." For see, brethren, if this kind of love which I have mentioned, which is called the love of disinterested admiration, were required of a sinner, I do not see how he could readily render it. There are two gentlemen of equal rank in society, and the one is not at all obliged to the other; now, they, standing on an equality, can easily feel a disinterested admiration of each other's characters, and a consequent disinterested affection; but I, a poor sinner, by nature sunk in the mire, full of everything that is evil, condemned, guilty of death, so that my only desert is to be cast into hell, am under such obligations to my Saviour and my God, that it would be idle for me to talk about a disinterested affection for him, since I owe to him my life, my all. Besides, until I catch the gleams of his mercy and his loving-kindness to the guilty, his holy, just, and righteous character are not loveable to me, I dread the purity which condemns my defilement, and shudder at the justice which will consume me for my sin. Do not, O seeker, trouble your heart with nice distinctions about disinterested love, but be you content with the beloved disciple to love Christ because he first loved you.

Again, our love to God does not spring from the self-determining power of the will. I greatly question whether anything does in the world, good or bad. There are some who set up the will as a kind of deity,—it doeth as it wills with earth and heaven; but in truth the will is not a master but a servant. To the sinner his will is a slave; and in the saint, although the will is set free, it is still blessedly under bonds to God. Men do not will a thing because they will it, but because their affections, their passions, or their judgments influence their wills in that direction. No man can stand up and truly say, "I, unbiassed and unaided, will to love God and I will not to love Satan." Such proud self-assuming language would prove him a liar;

the man would be clearly a worshipper of himself. A man can only love God when he has perceived some reasons for so doing; and the first argument for loving God, which influences the intellect so as to turn the affections, is the reason mentioned in the text, "We love him because he first loved us."

Now, having thus set the text in a negative light, let us look at it in a more positive manner.

It is certain, beloved brethren, that faith in the heart always precedes love. We first believe the love of God to us before we love God in return. And, Oh what an encouraging truth this is. I, a sinner, do not believe that God loves me because I feel I love him; but I first believe that he loves me, sinner as I am, and then having believed that gracious fact, I come to love my Benefactor in return. Perhaps some of you seekers are saying to yourselves, "Oh, that we could love God, for then we could hope for mercy." That is not the first step. Your first step is to believe that God loves you, and when that truth is fully fixed in your soul by the Spirit, a fervent love to God will spontaneously issue from your soul, even as flowers willingly pour forth their fragrance under the influence of the dew and the sun. Every man that ever was saved had to come to God not as a lover of God, but as a sinner, and to believe in God's love to him as a sinner. We all wish to take money in our sacks when we go down hungry to this Egypt to buy the bread of life; but it must not be, heaven's bread is given to us freely, and we must accept it freely without money and without price. Do you say, "I do not feel in my heart one good emotion; I do not appear to possess one good thought; I fear I have no love to God at all." Do not remain in unbelief until you feel this love, for if you do, you will never believe at all. You ought to love God, it is true, but you never will till you believe him, and especially believe in his love as revealed in his only begotten Son. If you come to God in Christ, and believe this simple message. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," you shall find your heart going out after God. "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" believest thou this? Canst thou now believe in Jesus; that is, trust him? Then, Christ died for thee; Christ the Son of God, in thy stead, suffered for thy guilt. God gave his only Son to die for

thee. "Oh," saith one, "if I believed that, how I would love God !" Yes, indeed, thou wouldst, and that is the only consideration which can make thee do so. Thou, a sinner, must take Christ to be thy Saviour, and then love to God shall spring up spontaneously in thy soul, as the grass after showers. Love believed is the mother of love returned. The planet reflects light, but first of all it receives it from the sun; the heliotrope turns its face to the orb of day, but first the sunbeams warm and woo it. You shall turn to God, and delight in God, and rejoice in God; but it must be because you first of all believe, and know, and confide in the love of God to you. "Oh," saith one, "it cannot be that God should love an unloving sinner, that the pure One should love the impure, that the Ruler of all should love his enemy." Hear what God saith: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, for the heavens are higher than the earth; so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." You think that God loves men because they are godly, but listen to this: "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Think of his "great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." God has love in his heart towards those who have nothing in them to love. He loves you, poor soul, who feel that you are most unloveable; loves you who mourn over a stony heart, which will not warm or melt with love to him. Thus saith the Lord: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." O that God's gracious voice this morning might so call some of his poor wandering ones that they may come and believe his love to them, and then cast themselves at his feet to be his servants for ever.

Brethren, rest assured that in proportion as we are fully persuaded of God's love to us, we shall be affected with love to him. Do not let the devil tempt you to believe that God does not love you because your love is feeble; for if he can in any way weaken your belief in God's love to you, he cuts off or diminishes the flow of the streams which feed the sacred grace of love to God. If I lament that I do not love God as I ought, that is a holy regret; but if I, therefore, conclude that God's love to me is the less because of this, I deny the light because my eye is dim, and I deprive

myself also of the power to increase in love. Let me rather think more and more of the greatness of God's love to me, as I see more and more my unworthiness of it; the more a sinner I am, let me the more fully see how great must be that love which embraces such a sinner as I am; and then, as I receive a deeper sense of the divine mercy, I shall feel the more bound to gratitude and constrained to affection. O for a great wave of love, to carry us right out into the ocean of love.

Observe, beloved brethren, day by day the deeds of God's love to you in the gift of food and raiment, and in the mercies of this life, and especially in the covenant blessings which God gives you, the peace which he sheds abroad in your hearts, the communion which he vouchsafes to you with himself and his blessed Son, and the answers to prayer which he grants you. Note well these things, and if you consider them carefully, and weigh their value, you will be accumulating the fuel on which love feeds its consecrated flame. In proportion as you see in every good gift a new token of your Father's love, in that proportion will you make progress in the sweet school of love. Oh, it is heavenly living to taste God's love in every morsel of bread we eat; it is blessed living to know that we breathe an atmosphere purified and made fragrant with divine love, that love protects us while we sleep, changing like a silken curtain all around our bed, and love opens the eyelids of the morning to smile upon us when we wake. Ah, even when we are sick, it is love that chastens us; when we are impoverished, love relieves us of a burden; love gives and love takes; love cheers and love smites. We are compassed about with love, above, beneath, around, within, without. If we could but recognise this, we should become as flames of fire, ardent and fervent towards our God. Knowledge and observation are admirable nurses of our infant love.

And, ah, the soul grows rich in love to God when she rests on the bosom of divine lovingkindness. You, who are tossed about with doubts and fears as to whether you are now accepted or shall persevere to the end, you can scarcely guess the ardours of heart which inflame those saints who have learned to cast themselves wholly upon Jesus, and know beyond a doubt his love immutable. Whether I sink or swim, I have no hope but in Christ, my life, my all.

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hands
Till the decisive hour:"

And in proportion as I am thus scripturally confident, and rest in my Lord, will my love to him engross all my heart, and, consecrate my life to the Redeemer's glory.

Beloved, I desire to make this very clear, that to feel love to God we must tread along the road of faith. Truly, this is not a hard or perilous way but one prepared by infinite wisdom. It is a road suitable for sinners, and indeed saints must come that way too. If thou wouldst love God, do not look within thee to see whether this grace or that be as it ought to be, but look to thy God, and read his eternal love his boundless love, his costly love, which gave Christ for thee; then shall thy love drink in fresh life and vigour.

Remember wherever there is love to God in the soul it is an argument that God loves that soul. I recollect meeting once with a Christian woman who said she knew she loved God, but, she was afraid God did not love her. That is a fear so preposterous that it ought never to occur to anybody. You would not love God in deed and in truth unless he had shed abroad his love in your heart in a measure. But on the other hand, our not loving God is not a conclusive argument that God does not love us; else might the sinner be afraid to come to God. O loveless sinner, with heart unquickened and chill, the voice of God calls even thee to Christ. Even to the dead in sin, his voice saith "Live." Whilst thou art yet polluted in thy blood, cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, the Lord of mercy passes by, and says "live." His mighty sovereignty comes forth dressed in robes of love, and he touches thee the unloveable, the loveless, the depraved, degraded sinner, at enmity with God,—he touches thee in all thine alienation and he lifts thee out of it and makes thee to love him, not for thine own sake, but for his name sake and for his mercy sake. Thou hadst no love at all to him, but all the love lay in him alone; and therefore he began to bless thee, and will continue to bless thee world without end, if thou art a believer in Jesus. In the bosom of the Eternal

are the deep springs of all love.

III. This leads us, in the third place, to consider for a moment THE REVIVAL OF OUR LOVE. It is sadly probable that there are in this house some who once loved God very earnestly, but now they have declined and become grievously indifferent; God's love to us never changes, but ours too often sinks to a low ebb. Perhaps some of you have become so cold in your affections, that it is difficult to be sure that you ever did love God at all. It may be that your life has become lax, so as to deserve the censure of the Church. You are a backslider and you are in a dangerous condition; yet, if there be indeed spiritual life in you, you will wish to return. You have gone astray like a lost sheep, but your prayer is, "seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." Now, note well, that the cause which originated your love is the same which must restore it. You went to Christ as a sinner at first, and your first act was to believe the love of God to you when there was nothing in you that evidenced it. Go the same way again. Do not stop, my dear brother, to pump up love out of the dry well within yourself! Do not think it possible that love will come at your bidding. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. Think of the Lord's unchanging grace, and you will feel the spring-time of love returning to your soul. Still doth the Lord reserve mercy for the sinful, still he waiteth to be gracious; he is as willing to receive you now that you have played the prodigal, as he was to have retained you at home in the bosom of his love. Many considerations ought to aid you, a backslider, to believe more in the love of God than ever you did. For think what love it must be that can invite you still to return, you, who after knowing so much have sinned against light and knowledge; you, who after having experienced so much, have given the lie to your profession. He might justly have cut you down, for you have cumbered the ground long enough. Surely, when Israel went astray from God, it was a clear proof to her of Jehovah's love when he graciously said, "They say if a man put away his wife, or she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again?" Why, the answer in every bosom is "No !" Who would love a wife who had so polluted herself? But thus saith the Lord, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me." What matchless love is this. Hear yet more of these gracious words, which you will find in the third chapter of Jeremiah's

prophecy. "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Can you hear these words without emotion? Backslider! I pray thee take the wings of God's love to fly back to him with. But I hear you enquiring, Will he still receive me? Shall I be once more—

"To the Father's bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed."

It shall be so. Does he not declare that he is God and changes not, and therefore you are not consumed? Rekindled are the flames of love in the backslider's bosom when he feels all this to be true; he cries, "Behold, we come to thee for thou art the Lord our God." I pray you, then, any of you who are conscious of gross derelictions of duty, and wanderings of heart, do not ask Moses to lead you back to Christ, he knows the way to Sinai's flames, but not to Calvary's pardoning blood. Go to Christ himself at once. If you go to the law and begin to judge yourself, if you get the notion that you are to undergo a sort of spiritual quarantine, that you must pass through a mental purgatory before you may renew your faith in the Saviour, you are mistaken. Come just as you are, bad as you are, hardened, cold, dead as you feel yourselves to be, come even so, and believe in the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus. Then shall come the deep repentance; then shall come the brokenness of heart; then shall come the holy jealousy, the sacred hatred of sin, and the refining of the soul from all her dross; then, indeed, all good things shall come to restore your soul, and lead you in the paths of righteousness. Do not look for these first; that would be looking for the effects before the cause. The great cause of love in the restored backslider must still be the love of God to him, to whom he clings with a faith that dares not let go its hold.

"But," saith one, "I think it is very dangerous to tell the backslider to believe in God's love, surely it will be gross presumption for him so to

believe," It is never presumptuous for a man to believe the truth: whether a statement be comfortable or uncomfortable, the presumption does not lie in the matter itself: but in its untruthfulness. I say again, it is never presumptuous to believe the truth. And this is the truth, that the Lord loves his prodigal sons still, and his stray sheep still, and he will devise means to bring his banished back again, that they perish not. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Remember here that the motive power which draws back the backslider again, is the cord of love, the band of a man, which makes him feel he must go back to God with weeping and repentance, because God loves him still. What man among you this morning hath a son who has disobeyed him and gone from him, and is living in drunkenness, and in all manner of lust? If you have in anger told him, so that he doubts it not, that you have struck his name out of your family, and will not regard him as a child any longer, do you think that your severity will induce him to return to you in love? Far from it. But suppose instead thereof, you still assure him that you love him; that there is always a place at your table for him, and a bed in your house for him, ay, and better still, a warm place in your heart for him; suppose he sees your tears and hears your prayers for him, will not this draw him? Yes, indeed, if he be a son. It is even thus between thy God and thee, O backslider. Hear ye the Lord as he argues thy case within his own heart. "My people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man." Surely, if anything will draw you back, this will. "Ah !" saith the wandering son, "my dear father loves me still. I will arise and go to him. I will not vex so tender a heart. I will be his loving son again. God does not say to you prodigals, who once professed his name, "I have unchilded you, I have cast you away," but he says, "I love you still; and for my name's sake will I restrain my wrath that I cut you not off." Come to your offended Father, and you shall find that he has not repented of his love, but will embrace you still.

IV. Time fails, but I must speak for a little, time or no time, upon the fourth point—THE PERFECTING OF OUR LOVE TO GOD.

Beloved, there are few of us who know much of the deeps of the love of God; our love is shallow; ah, how shallow! Love to God is like a great mountain. The majority of travellers view it from afar, or traverse the valley at its base: a few climb to a halting place on one of its elevated spurs, whence they see a portion of its sublimities: here and there an adventurous traveller climbs a minor peak, and views glacier and alp at closer range; fewest of all are those who scale the topmost pinnacle and tread the virgin snow. So in the Church of God. Every Christian abides under the shadow of divine love: a few enjoy and return that love to a remarkable degree: but there are few in this age sadly few, who reach to seraphic love, who ascend into the hill of the Lord, to stand where the eagle's eye hath not seen, and walk the path which the lion's welp hath never trodden, the high places of complete consecration and ardent self-consuming love. Now, mark you, it may be difficult to ascend so high, but there is one sure route, and only one, which the man must follow who would gain the sacred elevation. It is not the track of his works, nor the path of his own actions, but this, "We love him because he first loved us." John and the apostles confessed that thus they attained their love. For the highest love that ever glowed in human bosom there was no source but this—God first loved that man. Do you not see how this is? The knowledge that God loves me casts out my tormenting dread of God: and when this is expelled, there is room for abounding love to God. As fear goes out, love comes in at the other door. So the more faith in God the more room there is for soul-filling love.

Again, strong faith in God's love brings great enjoyment; our heart is glad, our soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when we know that the whole heart of God beats towards us as forcibly as if we were the only creatures he had ever made, and his whole heart were wrapt up in us. This deep enjoyment creates the flaming love of which I have just now spoken.

If the ardent love of some saints often takes the shape of admiration of God, this arises from their familiarity with God, and this familiarity they

never would have indulged in, unless they had know that he was their friend. A man could not speak to God as to a friend, unless he knew the love that God hath toward him. The more true his knowledge and the more sure, the more close his fellowship.

Brethren beloved, if you know that God has loved you, then you will feel grateful; every doubt will diminish your gratitude, but every grain of faith will increase it. Then as we advance in grace, love to God in our soul will excite desire after him. Those we love we long to be with; we count the hours that separate us; no place so happy as that in which we enjoy their society. Hence love to God produces a desire to be with him; a desire to be like him, a longing to be with him eternally in heaven, and this breaks us away from worldliness; this keeps us from idolatry, and thus has a most blessedly sanctifying effect upon us, producing that elevated character which is now so rare, but which wherever it exists is powerful for the good of the church and for the glory of God. Oh that we had many in this church who had reached the highest platform of piety. Would God we had a band of men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. It may help those who aspire to mount high in grace, if they keep in mind that every step they climb they must use the ladder which Jacob saw. The love of God to us is the only way to climb to the love of God.

And now I must spend a minute in putting the truth of my text to the test. I want you not to listen to me so much as to listen to your own hearts, and to God's word, a minute, if you are believers. What is it we have been talking about? It is God's love to us. Get the thought into your head a minute: "God loves me—not merely bears with me, thinks of me, feeds me, but loves me. Oh, it is a very sweet thing to feel that we have the love of a dear wife, or a kind husband; and there is much sweetness in the love of a fond child, or a tender mother; but to think that God loves me, this is infinitely better! Who is it that loves you? God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Almighty, All in all, does he love me? Even he? If all men, and all angels, and all the living creatures that are before the throne loved me, it were nothing to this—the Infinite loves me! And who is it that he loves? Me. The text saith, "us." "We love him because he first loved us." But this is the personal point—he loves me, an insignificant nobody, full of sin—

who deserved to be in hell; who loves him so little in return—God loves me. Beloved believer, does not this melt you? Does not this fire your soul? I know it does if it is really believed. It must. And how did he love me? He loved me so that he gave up his only begotten Son for me, to be nailed to the tree, and made to bleed and die. And what will come of it? Why, because he loved me and forgave me,—I am on the way to heaven, and within a few months, perhaps days, I shall see his face and sing his praises. He loved me before I was born; before a star begun to shine he loved me, and he has never ceased to do so all these years. When I have sinned he has loved me; when I have forgotten him he has loved me; and when in the days of my sin I cursed him, yet still he loved me; and he will love me when my knees tremble, and my hair is grey with age, "even to hoar hairs" he will bear and carry his servant; and he will love me when the world is on a blaze, and love me for ever, and for ever. Oh, chew the cud of this blessed thought; roll it under your tongue as a dainty morsel; sit down this afternoon, if you have leisure, and think of nothing but this—his great love wherewith he loves you; and if you do not feel your heart bubbling with a good matter, if you do not feel your soul yearning towards God, and heaving big with strong emotions of love to God, then I am much mistaken. This is so powerful a truth, and you are so constituted as a Christian as to be wrought upon by this truth, that if it be believed and felt, the consequence must be that you will love him because he first loved you. God bless you, brethren and sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Lovest Thou Me?

Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? Peter

was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. - John 21:15-17

How very much like to Christ before his crucifixion was Christ after his resurrection! Although he had lain in the grave, and descended into the regions of the dead, and had retraced his steps to the land of the living, yet how marvellously similar he was in his manners and how unchanged in his disposition. His passion, his death, and his resurrection, could not alter his character as a man any more than they could affect his attributes as God. He is Jesus for ever the same. And when he appeared again to his disciples, he had cast aside none of his kind manners; he had not lost a particle of interest in their welfare; he addressed them just as tenderly as before, and called them his children and his friends. Concerning their temporal condition he was mindful, for he said, "Children, have ye any meat?" And he was certainly quite as watchful over their spiritual state, for after he had supplied their bodies by a rich draught from the sea, with fish, (which possibly he had created for the occasion), he enquires after their souls' health and prosperity, beginning with the one who might be supposed to have been in the most sickly condition, the one who had denied his Master thrice, and wept bitterly—even Simon Peter. "Simon, son of Jonas," said Jesus, "lovest thou me?"

Without preface, for we shall have but little time this morning—may God help us to make good use of it!—we shall mention three things: first a *solemn question*—"Lovest thou me?" secondly, a *discreet answer*, "Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" and thirdly, a *required demonstration of the fact*, "He saith unto him, Feed my lambs;" or, again, "Feed my sheep."

I. First, then, here was A SOLEMN QUESTION, which our Saviour put to Peter, not for his own information, for, as Peter said, "Thou knowest that I love thee," but for Peter's examination. It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the wound. It is right that he should examine himself; for sin gives grave cause for suspicion, and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate, unless he occupy that hour in examination

of himself. Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian, and should be practised by him perpetually. Our Saviour, I say, asked this question of Peter, that he might ask it of himself; so we may suppose it asked of us this morning that we may put it to our own hearts. Let each one ask himself then, in his Saviour's name, for his own profit, "Lovest thou the Lord? Lovest thou the Saviour? Lovest thou the ever-blessed Redeemer?"

Note what this question was. *It was a question concerning Peter's love.* He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, fearest thou me." He did not say, "Dost thou admire me? Dost thou adore me?" Nor was it even a question concerning his faith. He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, believest thou in me?" but he asked him another question, "Lovest thou me?" I take it, that is because love is the very best evidence of piety. Love is the brightest of all the graces; and hence it becomes the best evidence. I do not believe love to be superior to faith; I believe faith to be the groundwork of our salvation; I think faith to be the mother grace, and love springs from it; faith I believe to be the root grace, and love grows from it. But, then, faith is not an evidence for brightness equal to love. Faith, if we have it, is a sure and certain sign that we are God's children; and so is every other grace a sure and certain one, but many of them cannot be seen by others. Love is a more sparkling one than any other. If I have a true fear of God in my heart, then am I God's child; but since fear is a grace that is more dim and hath not that halo of glory over it that love has, love becomes one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are alive to the Saviour. He that lacketh love, must lack also every other grace in the proportion in which he lacketh love. If love be little, I believe it is a sign that faith is little; for he that believeth much loveth much. If love be little, fear will be little, and courage for God will be little; and whatsoever graces there be, though faith lieth at the root of them all, yet do they so sweetly hang on love, that if love be weak, all the rest of the graces most assuredly will be so. Our Lord asked Peter, then, that question, "Lovest thou me?"

And note, again, that *he did not ask Peter anything about his doings.* He did not say, "Simon Peter, how much hast thou wept? How often hast thou done penance on account of thy great sin? How often hast thou on

thy knees sought mercy at my hand for the slight thou hast done to me, and for that terrible cursing and swearing wherewith thou didst disown thy Lord, whom thou hadst declared thou wouldst follow even to prison and to death?" No; it was not in reference to his works, but in reference to the state of his heart that Jesus said, "Lovest thou me?" To teach us this; that though works do follow after a sincere love, yet love excelleth the works, and works without love are not evidences worth having. We may have some tears; but they are not the tears that God shall accept, if there be no love to him. We may have some works; but they are not acceptable works, if they are not done out of love to his person. We may perform very many of the outward, ritual observances of religion; but unless love lieth at the bottom, all these things are vain and useless. The question, then, "Lovest thou me?" is a very vital question; far more so than one that merely concerns the outward conduct. It is a question that goes into the very heart, and in such a way that it brings the whole heart to one question; for if love be wrong, everything else is wrong. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Ah! dear beloved, we have very much cause for asking ourselves this question. If our Saviour were no more than a man like ourselves, he might often doubt whether we love him at all. Let me just remind you of sundry things which give us very great cause to ask this question: "Lovest thou me?" I will deal only with the last week. Come, my Christian brother, look at thine own conduct. Do not thy sins make thee doubt whether thou dost love thy Master? Come, look over the sins of this week: when thou wast speaking with an angry word and with a sullen look, might not thy Lord have touched thee, and said, "Lovest thou me?" When thou wast doing such-and-such a thing, which thou right well knewest in thy conscience was not according to his precept, might he not have said, "Lovest thou me?" Canst thou not remember the murmuring word because something had gone wrong with thee in business this week, and thou wast speaking ill of the God of providence for it? Oh, might not the loving Saviour, with pity in his languid eye, have said to thee, "What, speak thus? Lovest thou me?" I need not stop to mention the various sins of which ye have been guilty. Ye have sinned, I am sure, enough to give good ground for self-suspicion, if ye did not still hang on this; that his love to you, not your love to him, is the seal of your discipleship. Oh, do

you not think within yourselves, "If I had loved him more, should I have sinned so much? And oh, can I love him when I have broken so many of his commandments! Have I reflected his glorious image to the world as I should have done? Have I not wasted many hours within this week that I might have spent in winning souls to him? Have I not thrown away many precious moments in light and frivolous conversation which I might have spent in earnest prayer? Oh! how many words have I uttered, which if they have not been filthy, (as I trust they have not) yet have not been such as have ministered grace to the hearers? Oh, how many follies have I indulged in? How many sins have I winked at? How many crimes have I covered over? How have I made my Saviour's heart to bleed? How have I done dishonor to his cause? How have I in some degree disgraced my heart's profession of love to him?" Oh, ask these questions of thyself, beloved, and say, "Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?"

But I hope this week has been one wherein thou hast sinned little openly as to the world, or even in thine own estimation, as to open acts of crime. But now let me put another question to thee, *Does not thy worldliness make thee doubt?* How hast thou been occupied with the world, from Monday morning to the last hour of Saturday night? Thou hast scarce had time to think of him. What corners hast thou pushed thy Jesus into, to make room for thy bales of goods? How hast thou stowed him away into one short five minutes, to make room for thy ledger or thy day-book? How little time hast thou given to him! Thou hast been occupied with the shop, with the exchange, and the farmyard; and thou hast had little time to commune with him! Come, just think! remember any one day this week; canst thou say that thy goal always flew upward with passionate desires to him? Didst thou pant like a hart for thy Saviour during the week. Nay, perhaps there was a whole day went by, and thou scarcely thoughtest of him till the winding up of it; and then thou couldst only upbraid thyself, "How have I forgotten Christ to-day? I have not beheld his person; I have not walked with him; I have not done as Enoch did! I knew he would come into the shop with me; I knew he is such a blessed Christ that he would stand behind the counter with me; I knew he was such a joyous Lord Jesus that he would walk through the market with me! but I left him at home, and forgot him all the day long." Surely, surely, beloved, when thou rememberest thy worldliness, thou must say of

thyself, "O Lord, thou mightest well ask, 'Lovest thou me?'"

Consider again, I beseech thee, *how cold thou hast been this week at the mercy-seat*. Thou hast been there, for thou canst not live without it; thou hast lifted up thy heart in prayer, for thou art a Christian, and prayer is as necessary to thee as thy breath. But oh! with what a poor asthmatic breath hast thou lived this week! How little hast thou breathed? Dost not remember how hurried was thy prayer on Monday morning, how driven thou wast on Tuesday night? Canst thou not recollect how languid was thy heart, when on another occasion thou wast on thy knees? Thou hast had little wrestling, mayhap, this week; little agonising; thou hast had little of the prayer which prevaieth; thou hast scarcely laid hold of the horns of the altar; thou hast stood in the distance, and seen the smoke at the altar, but thou hast not laid hold of the horns of it. Come, ask thyself, do not thy prayers make thee doubt? I say, honestly before you all, my own prayers often make me doubt; and I know nothing that gives me more grave cause of disquietude. When I labour to pray—oh! that rascally devil!—fifty thousand thoughts he tries to inject, to take me off from prayer; and when I will and must pray, oh, what an absence there is of that burning fervent desire; and when I would come right close to God, when I would weep my very eyes out in penitence, and would believe and take the blessing, oh, what little faith and what little penitence there is! Verily, I have thought that prayer has made me more unbelieving than anything else. I could believe over the tops of my sins, but sometimes I can scarcely believe over the tops of my prayers—for oh! how cold is prayer when it is cold! Of all things that are bad when cold, I think prayer is the worst, for it becomes like a very mockery, and instead of warming the heart, it makes it colder than it was before, and seems even to damp its life and spirit, and fills it full of doubts whether it is really a heir of heaven and accepted of Christ. Oh! look at thy cold prayers, Christian, and say is not thy Saviour right to ask this question very solemnly, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

But stop, again; just one more word for thee to reflect upon. Perhaps thou hast had much prayer. and this has been a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But yet, mayhap, thou knowest, thou hast not gone so far this week as thou mightest have done, in another exercise of

godliness that is even better than prayer, I mean *communion and fellowship*. Oh! beloved, thou hast this week had but little sitting under the apple tree, and finding its shadow great delight to thee. Thou hast not gone much this week to the banqueting house, and had its banner of love over thee. Come, bethink thyself, how little hast thou seen thy Lord this week! Perhaps he has been absent the greater part of the time; and hast thou not groaned? hast thou not wept? hast thou not sighed after him? Sure, then, thou canst not have loved him as thou shouldst, else thou couldst not have borne his absence; thou couldst not have endured it calmly, if thou hadst the affection for him a sanctified spirit has for its Lord. Thou didst have one sweet visit from him in the week, and why didst thou let him go? Why didst thou not constrain him to abide with thee? Why didst thou not lay hold of the skirts of his garment, and say, "Why shouldst thou be like a wayfaring man, and as one that turneth aside, and tarrieth for a night? Oh! my lord, thou shalt dwell with me; I will keep thee; I will detain thee in my company; I cannot let thee go; I love thee, and I will constrain thee to dwell with me this night and the next day; long as I can keep thee, will I keep thee." But no; thou wast foolish; thou didst let him go. Oh! soul, why didst thou not lay hold of his arm, and say, "I will not let thee go." But thou didst lay hold on him so feebly, thou didst suffer him to depart so quickly, he might have turned round, and said to thee, as he said to Simon, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Now, I have asked you all these questions, because I have been asking them of myself. I feel that I must answer to nearly every one of them, "Lord, there is great cause for me to ask myself that question;" and I think that most of you, if you are honest to yourselves, will say the same. I do not approve of the man that says, "I know I love Christ, and I never have a doubt about it;" because we often have reason to doubt ourselves; a believer's strong faith is not a strong faith in his own love to Christ—it is a strong faith in Christ's love to him. There is no faith which always believes that it loves Christ. Strong faith has its conflicts; and a true believer will often wrestle in the very teeth of his own feelings. Lord, if I never did love thee, nevertheless, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. Lord, I still believe; help thou mine unbelief. The disciple can believe, when he feels no love; for he can believe that Christ loveth the soul; and when he

hath no evidence he can come to Christ without evidence, and lay, hold of him, just as he is, with naked faith, and still hold fast by him. Though he see not his signs, though he walk in darkness and there be no light, still may he trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God;—but to be certain at all times that we love the Lord is quite another matter; about this we have need continually to question ourselves, and most scrupulously to examine both the nature and the extent of our evidences.

II. And now I come to the second thing, which is A DISCREET ANSWER. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Simon gave a very good answer. Jesus asked him, in the first place, whether he loved him better than others. Simon would not say that: he had once been a little proud—more than a little—and thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he evaded that question; he would not say that he loved better than others. And I am sure there is no loving heart that will think it loves even better than the least of God's children. I believe the higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem; and he will be the last person to claim any supremacy over others in the divine grace of love to Jesus. But mark how Simon Peter did answer: he did not answer as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love. He would aver that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others. "Lord, I cannot say how much I love thee; but thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I do love thee. So far I can aver: as to the quantity of my love, I cannot say much about it."

But just notice, again, the discreet manner in which Peter answered. Some of us, if we had been asked that question, would have answered foolishly. We should have said, "Lord, I have preached for thee so many times this week; Lord, I have distributed of my substance to the poor this week. Blessed be thy name, thou hast given me grace to walk humbly, faithfully, and honestly and therefore, Lord, I think I can say, 'I love thee.'" We should have brought forward our good works before our Master, as being the evidences of our love; we should have said, "Lord, thou hast seen me during this week; as Nehemiah did of old, "Forget not my good works. O Lord, I thank thee; I know they are thy gifts, but I think they are proofs of my love." That would have been a very good answer if we had been questioned by our fellow man, and he had said, "You do not

always love your Saviour;" but it would be foolish for us to tell the Master that. Peter's answer was wise; "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." You know the Master might have said to Peter, had he appealed to his works, "Yes, thou mayest preach, and yet not love me; thou mayest pray, after a fashion, and yet not love me; thou mayest do all these works, and yet have no love to me. I did not ask thee what are the evidences of thy love, I asked thee the fact of it." Very likely all my dear friends here would not have answered in the fashion I have supposed; but they would have said, "Love thee Lord? Why, my heart is all on fire towards thee; I feel as if I could go to prison and to death for thee! Sometimes, when I think of thee, my heart is ravished with bliss; and when thou art absent, O Lord, I moan and cry like a dove that has lost its mate. Yes, I feel I love thee, O my Christ." But that would have been very foolish, because although we may often rejoice in our own feelings—they are joyful things—it would not do to plead them with our Lord, for he might answer, "Ah! thou feelest joyful at the mention of my name. So, no doubt, has many a deluded one, because he had a fictitious faith, and a fancied hope in Christ; therefore the name of Christ seemed to gladden him. Thou sayest, 'I have felt dull when thou hast been absent.' That might have been accounted for from natural circumstances; you had a headache, perhaps, or some other ailment. 'But,' sayest thou, 'I felt so happy when he was present that I thought I could die.' Ah! in such manner Peter had spoken many a time before; but a sorry mess he made of it when he trusted his feelings; for he would have sunk into the sea but for Christ; and eternally damned his soul, if it had not been for his grace, when, with cursing and swearing he thrice denied his Lord. But no, Peter was wise; he did not bring forward his frames and feelings, nor did he bring his evidences: though they are good in themselves, he did not bring them before Christ. But, as though he shall say, "Lord, I appeal to thine omnipotence. I am not going to tell thee that the volume of my heart must contain such-and-such matter, because there is such-and-such a mark on its cover; for, Lord, thou canst read inside of it; and, therefore, I need not tell thee what the title is, nor read over to thee the index of the contents. Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Now, could we, this morning, dear friends, give such an answer as that to the question? If Christ should come here, if he were now to walk down

these aisles, and along the pews, could we appeal to his own divine Omniscience, his infallible knowledge of our hearts, that we all love him? There is a test-point between a hypocrite and a real Christian. If thou art a hypocrite, thou mightest say, "Lord, my minister knows that I love thee; Lord, the deacons know that I love thee; they think I do, for they have given me a ticket; the members think I love thee; for they see me sitting at thy table; my friends think I love thee, for they often hear me talk about thee." But thou couldst not say, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" thine own heart is witness that thy secret works belie thy confession, for thou art without prayer in secret; and thou canst preach a twenty minutes' prayer in public. Thou art niggardly and parsimonious in giving to the cause of Christ; but thou canst sport thy name to be seen. Thou art an angry, petulant creature; but when thou comest to the house of God, thou hast a pious whine, and talkest like a canting hypocrite, as if thou wert a very gentlemanly man, and never seemed angry. Thou canst take thy Maker's name in vain; but if thou hear another do it thou wouldst be mighty severe upon him. Thou affectest to be very pious, and yet if men knew of that widow's house that is sticking in thy throat, and of that orphan's patrimony which thou hast taken from him, thou wouldst leave off trumpeting thy good deeds. Thine own heart tells thee thou art a liar before God. But thou, O sincere Christian, thou canst welcome thy Lord's question, and answer it with holy fear and gracious confidence. Yes, thou mayest welcome the question. Such a question was never put to Judas. The Lord loved Peter so much that he was jealous over him, or he never would have thus challenged his attachment. And in this kind doth he often appeal to the affections of those whom he dearly loves. The response likewise is recorded for thee, "Lord, thou knowest all things." Canst thou not look up, though scorned by men, though even rejected by thy minister, though kept back by the deacons, and looked upon with disesteem by some—canst thou not look up, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?" Do it not in brag and bravado; but if you can do it sincerely, be happy, bless God that he has given you a sincere love to the Saviour, and ask him to increase it from a spark to a flame, and from a grain to a mountain. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

III. And now here is A DEMONSTRATION REQUIRED—"Feed my

lambs: feed my sheep." That was Peter's demonstration. It is not necessary that it should be our way of showing our love. There are different ways for different disciples. There are some who are not qualified to feed lambs, for they are only little lambs themselves. There are some that could not feed sheep, for they cannot at present see afar off; they are weak in the faith, and not qualified to teach at all. They have other means, however, of showing their love to the Saviour. Let us offer a few words upon this matter.

"Lovest thou me?" Then one of the best evidences thou canst give is *to feed my lambs*. Have I two or three little children that love and fear my name? If thou wantest to do a deed, which shall show that thou art a true lover, and not a proud pretender; go and feed them. Are there a few little ones whom I have purchased with my blood in an infant class? Dost thou want to do something which shall evidence that thou art indeed mine? Then sit not down with the elders, dispute not in the temple; I did that myself; but go thou, and sit down with the young orphans, and teach them the way to the kingdom. "Feed my lambs."

Dearly beloved, I have been of late perplexing myself with one thought: that our church-government is not scriptural. It is scriptural as far as it goes; but it is not according to the whole of Scripture; neither do we practise many excellent things that ought to be practised in our churches. We have received into our midst a large number of young persons; in the ancient churches there was what was called the catechism class—I believe there ought to be such a class now. The Sabbath-school, I believe, is in the Scripture; and I think there ought to be on the Sabbath afternoon, a class of the young people of this church, who are members already, to be taught by some of the elder members. Now-a-days, when we get the lambs, we just turn them adrift in the meadow, and there we leave them. There are more than a hundred young people in this church who positively, though they are members, ought not to be left alone; but some of our elders, if we have elders, and some who ought to be ordained elders, should make it their business to teach them further, to instruct them in the faith, and so keep them hard and fast by the truth of Jesus Christ. If we had elders, as they had in all the apostolic churches, this might in some degree be attended to. But now the hands of our deacons

are full, they do much of the work of the eldership, but they cannot do any more than they are doing, for they are toiling hard already. I would that some here whom God has gifted, and who have time, would spend their afternoons in taking a class of those who live around them, of their younger brethren, asking them to their houses for prayer and pious instruction, that so the lambs of the flock may be fed. By God's help I will take care of the sheep; I will endeavour under God to feed them, as well as I can, and preach the gospel to them. You that are older in the faith and stronger in it, need not that careful cautious feeding which is required by the lambs. But there are many in our midst, good pious souls who love the Saviour as much as the sheep do; but one of their complaints which I have often heard is, "Oh I sir, I joined your church, I thought they would be all brothers and sisters to me, and that I could speak to them, and they would teach me and be kind to me. Oh ! sir, I came, and nobody spoke to me." I say, "Why did not you speak to them first ?" "Oh !" they reply, "I did not like." Well, they should have liked, I am well aware; but if we had some means of feeding the lambs, it would be a good way of proving to our Saviour and to the world, that we really do endeavour to follow him. I hope some of my friends will take that hint; and if, in concert with me, my brethren in office will endeavour to do something in that way, I think it will be no mean proof of their love to Christ. "Feed my lambs," is a great duty; let us try to practise it as we are able.

But, beloved, we cannot all do that; the lambs cannot feed the lambs; the sheep cannot feed the sheep exactly. There must be some appointed to these offices. And therefore, in the Saviour's name, allow me to say to some of you, that there are different kinds of proof you must give. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Then preserve that prayer-meeting attend to it; see that it is kept going on, and that it does not fall to the ground. "Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me?" See to thy servants; see that they go to the house of God, and instruct them in the faith. There is a sister: Lovest thou Christ? "Yea, Lord." Perhaps it is as much as you can do—perhaps it is as much as you ought to do—to train up your children in the fear of the Lord. It is of no use to trouble yourselves about duties that God never meant you to do, and leave your own vineyard at home to itself. Just take

care of your own children; perhaps that is as good a proof as Christ wants of you that you are feeding his lambs. You have your own office, to which Christ has appointed you: seek not to run away from it, but endeavour to do what you can to serve your Master therein. But, I beseech you, do something to prove your love; do not be sitting down doing nothing. Do not be folding your hands and arms, for such people perplex a minister most, and bring the most ruin on a church—such as do nothing. You are always the readiest to find fault. I have marked it here, that the very people who are quarrelling with everything are the people that are doing nothing, or are good for nothing. They are sure to quarrel with everything else, because they are doing nothing themselves; and therefore they have time to find fault with other people. Do not O Christian, say that thou lovest Christ, and yet do nothing for him. Doing is a good sign of living; and he can scarce be alive unto God that does nothing for God. We must let our works evidence the sincerity of our love to our Master. "Oh!" say you, "but we are doing a little." Can you do any more? If you can, then do it. If you cannot do more, then God requires no more of you; doing to the utmost of your ability is your best proof; but if you can do more, inasmuch as ye keep back any part of what ye can do, in that degree ye give cause to yourselves to distrust your love to Christ. Do all you can to your very utmost; serve him abundantly; ay, and superabundantly: seek to magnify his name; and if ever you do too much for Christ, come and tell me of it; if you ever do too much for Christ, tell the angels of it—but you will never do that. He gave himself for you; give yourselves to him.

You see, my friends, how I have been directing you to search your own hearts, and I am almost afraid that some of you will mistake my intention. Have I a poor soul here who really deplores the langour of her affections? Perhaps you have determined to ask yourself as many questions as you can with a view of reviving the languid sparks of love. Let me tell you then that the pure flame of love must be always nourished where it was first kindled. When I admonished you to look to yourself it was only to detect the evil; would you find the remedy, you must direct your eyes, not to your own heart, but to the blessed heart of Jesus—to the Beloved one—to my gracious Lord and Master. And wouldst thou be ever conscious of the sweet swellings up of thy heart towards him; thou canst only prove this by a constant sense of his tender love to thee. I rejoice to

know that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love, and the ministry of the Spirit is endeared to me in nothing so much as this, that he takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to me, spreading abroad the Saviour's love in my heart, until it constrains all my passions, awakens the tenderest of all tender emotions, reveals my union to him, and occasions my strong desire to serve him. Let not love appear to thee as a stern duty, or an arduous effort; rather look to Jesus, yield thyself up to his gracious charms till thou art ravished with his beauty and preciousness. But ah! if thou art slack in the proofs thou givest, I shall know thou art not walking with him in holy communion.

And allow me to suggest one profitable way of improving the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. That is: while you are partaking of it, my friends, renew your dedication to Christ. Seek this morning to give yourselves over afresh to your Master. Say with your hearts, what I shall now say with my lips: "Oh I my precious Lord Jesus, I do love thee; thou knowest I have in some degree given myself to thee up to this time, thanks to thy grace! Blessed be thy name, that thou hast accepted the deeds of so unworthy a servant. O Lord, I am conscious that I have not devoted myself to thee as I ought; I know that in many things I have come short. I will make no resolution to live better to thine honor, but I will offer the prayer that thou wouldst help me so to do. Oh! Lord, I give to thee my health, my life, my talents, my power, and all I have! Thou hast bought me, and bought me wholly: then, Lord, take me this morning, baptize me in the Spirit; let me now feel an entire affection to thy blessed person. May I have that love which conquers sin and purifies the soul—that love which can dare danger and encounter difficulties for thy sake. May I henceforth and for ever be a consecrated vessel of mercy, having been chosen of thee from before the foundation of the world! Help me to hold fast that solemn choice of thy service which I desire this morning, by thy grace to renew." And when you drink the blood of Christ, and eat his flesh spiritually—in the type and in the emblem, then I beseech you, let the solemn recollection of his agony and suffering for you inspire you with a greater love, that you may be more devoted to his service than ever. If that be done, I shall have the best of churches; if that be done by us, the Holy Spirit helping us to carry it out, we shall all be good men and true, holding fast by him, and we shall not need to be ashamed in the awful

day.

As for you that have never given yourselves to Christ, I dare not tell you to renew a vow which you have never made, nor dare I ask you to make a vow, which you would never keep. I can only pray for you, that God the Saviour would be pleased to reveal himself unto your heart, that "a sense of blood-bought pardon" may "dissolve your hearts of stone;" that you may be brought to give yourselves to him, knowing that if you have done that, you have the best proof that he has given himself for you. May God Almighty bless you: those of you who depart, may he dismiss with his blessing: and those who remain, may you receive his favour, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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Loving Advice For Anxious Seekers

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. - James 1:5

If you are acquainted with the context, you will at once perceive that this verse has a special reference to persons in trouble. Much-tempted and severely-tried saints are frequently at their wits' end, and though they may be persuaded that in the end good will come out of all their afflictions, yet for the present they may be so distracted as not to know what to do. How fitly spoken and how seasonable is this word of the apostle, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God;" and such wisdom shall the Lord afford his afflicted sons, that the trying of their faith shall produce patience, and they themselves shall count it all joy that they have fallen in divers trials.

However, the promise is not to be limited to any one particular application, for the word, "If any of you," is so wide, so extensive, that whatever may be our necessity, whatever the dilemma which perplexes us, this text consoles us with the counsel, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

This text might be peculiarly comforting to some of you who are working for God. You cannot work long for your heavenly Lord without perceiving that you need a greater wisdom than you own. Why, even in directing an enquirer to the cross of Christ, simple work as that may seem to be, we shall often discover our own inability and folly. In rebuking the backslider, in comforting the desponding, in restoring the fallen, in guiding the ignorant, we shall need to be taught of God, or else we shall meet with more failures than successes. To every honest Christian worker this text speaks with all the soft melody of an angel's whisper. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Thy lips shall overflow with knowledge, and thy tongue shall drop with words of wisdom, if thou wilt but wait on God and hear him before thou speakest to thy fellow men.

Thou shalt be made wise to win souls if thou wilt learn to sit at the Master's feet, that he may teach thee the art which he followed when on earth, and follows still.

But the class of persons who just now win my heart's warmest sympathies are those who are seeking the Saviour; and, as the text says, "If any of you," I thought I should be quite right in giving seekers a share in it. They are seeking Christ, but they are in the dark: their soul desires Him, but it has little light, little guidance, and their cry is. "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" I thought that this text might be as the balm of Gilead to some of these unwise ones, who have found out all of a sudden their own sin and folly. I thought it would say to them, "If you, poor si" Let us put ourselves, then, at once in order for this work of comforting seekers, and may God, the Holy Ghost, make it effectual.

I. First, I shall call your attention to THE GREAT LACK OF MANY SEEKERS, NAMELY, WISDOM. This lack occurs from divers reasons. Sometimes it is their pride which makes them fools. Like Naaman, they would do some great thing if the prophet had bidden them, but they will not wash and be clean.

The natural heart rebels against the simplicity of the way of salvation. "What! am I to do nothing but simply accept the righteousness already finished? Am I to leave off doing, and merely to look unto Him who was nailed to the tree, and find all my salvation in Him? "Well, then," saith the proud heart, "I cannot understand it." It cannot understand it because it doth not love it. Now, soul, if this be thy difficulty, and I believe, in nine cases out of ten, a proud heart is at the root of all difficulty about the sinner's coming to Christ—if this it is which turns you aside and makes you foolish, then go to God about it, and seek wisdom from Him. He will show you the folly of this pride of yours, and teach you that simply to trust in Jesus is at once the safest and most suitable way of salvation. He will make you see that if the way of salvation had been by doing, the method would not have suited you, for what could you do? If it had been by feeling, it would not have suited you either, for what can your hard heart feel? How can you make yourself tender of heart? But, seeing that it

is by faith, it is therefore by grace. O that you may be made wise enough to stoop and kiss the silver sceptre which is outstretched to you, to come and buy this wine and milk, without money and without price, and accept with you whole heart, with intense joy, this perfect righteousness, this finished salvation which Christ hath wrought out and brought in for every seeking soul.

Many persons also, are made foolish, so that they lack wisdom through their despair. Probably, nothing makes a man seem so much like a maniac as the loss of hope. When the mariner feels that the vessel is sinking, that the proud waves must soon overwhelm her, then he reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, because he is at his wits' end. Ah! poor heart, when thou seest the blackness of sin, I do not wonder that thou art driven to despair; and when thy sins come howling behind thee, like so many ravenous wolves, all seeking to devour thee, I do not marvel that thou shouldst be ready even to lay violent hands upon thyself. It is no strange thing for men to be sorely tempted when they are under a sense of sin. And now thou knowest not what to do. If thou couldst be calm and quiet, we could tell you plainly the way of peace, and you might understand that there is no reason for despair, since Jesus died and rose again, and is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" but you cannot give us a calm hearing, for you are distracted, and you think that this comfort applies to everybody but you. You lack wisdom because you are in such a worry and turmoil. As John Bunyan used to say, you are much troubled up and down in your thoughts. I pray you, then, ask wisdom of God, and even out of the depths if you cry unto him, he will be pleased to instruct you and bring you out into a safe way.

No doubt many other persons lack wisdom because they are not instructed in gospel doctrine. It is wonderful how Satan will plague many timid hearts with the doctrine of election. That doctrine, rightly understood, is full of comfort; but, distorted and misrepresented, it often appears to be a bolt to shut sinners out from mercy—the fact being that it shuts none out, but shuts tens of thousands in. Why, the very doctrine of the atonement is not understood by many, while they are under a sense of sin. If they could see that Christ took their sins and carried their sorrows; if they could perceive the meaning of the word, "substitution," light might

break in. The window of the understanding is blocked up with ignorance, if we could but clean away the cobwebs and filth, then might the light of the knowledge of Christ come streaming in, and they might rejoice in his salvation. Well, dear friends, if you are be-mired and be-puzzled with difficult doctrine, the text comes to you and says, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God."

Ignorance also of Christian experience is another cause for the lack of wisdom. I have seen many enquirers who have told me what they have felt, and to them it was so amazing, that they half expected to see every individual hair of my head stand upright while they told me their feelings; and when I said, "Oh! yes, yes, I have felt just like that; that is the common way of most souls that come to Christ;" they have looked surprised beyond measure. The very road which is most safe, you think to be most dangerous; and that which leads to Christ, you fancy leads to hell. Little do you know the value of that stripping work which you so much dread. "Surely," say you, "I am being stripped that I may be cast away;" whereas the Lord only strips those whom he intends afterwards to clothe with the robe of his salvation. Those cuttings of the lancet are sharp, and you think that the surgeon means to kill, but he intends to cure. When God is making you feel the burden of your guilt, you suppose that now he has forgotten to be gracious, whereas it is now that he is gracious to you in very deed, and is using the best means of making you understand and value his grace. The way of life is a new road to you, poor seeking soul, and therefore you lack wisdom in it and make many mistakes about it. The text lovingly advises, "Ask of God;" "Ask of God." Very likely, in addition to all this, which may well enough make you lack wisdom, there are certain singularities in the action of providence towards you, which will fill you with dismay. Ever since you have begun to think about the Lord Jesus, things have gone cross with you in the outward world. You have not only trouble within, but, strange as you think it is, you have now trouble without: it partly arises from friends who say you are mad—would God they were bitten with the same madness!—partly from circumstances over which you can have no control. It is not at all unusual for God to make a complete shipwreck of that vessel in which his people sail, although he fulfills his promise, that not a hair of their heads shall perish. I should not wonder if he would cause two seas to

meet around your barque, so that there should not be more than a few boards and broken pieces of the ship left to you, but oh! if you have faith in Christ, he will certainly bring you safe to shore. It is not at all an uncommon thing for the Lord to add to the inward scourgings of conscience the outward lashings of affliction. These double scourgings are meant for proud, stubborn hearts, that they may be humbly brought to Jesus' feet, for of us it may be said, in truth, as Solomon saith of the child, "Foolishness is bound in his heart; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." God is thus, dear hearer, bringing folly out of you by the smarts of his rod. It is written, "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil," and therefore the Lord is making your wounds to be black and blue, and I should not wonder if he will even let them putrefy, till you have to say with Isaiah, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." Then it is that eternal mercy will take advantage of your dire extremity, and your deep distress shall bring you to Christ who never would have been brought by any other means. To close this somewhat painful picture. Many lack wisdom because in addition to all their fears and their ignorance, they are fiercely attacked by Satan. John Bunyan tells us of Apollyon, that he said, "No king will willingly lose his subjects." Of course, he will not; and Apollyon, as he sees his subjects one after another desert him to enlist under the banner of King Jesus, howls at his losses, and he leaves no stone unturned to keep souls back from mercy. Just at that critical moment himself, "It is now or never. If I do not nip these buds, they will become flowers and fruits; but if I can bring in a withering frost, I shall kill the young plant." The great enemy makes a dead set at anxious souls. He it is who digs that Slough of Despond right in front of the wicket gate, and keeps the big dog to howl before the door, so that poor trembling Mercy may go into a fainting fit, and find herself too weak to knock at the door. "Now," saith he to all his servants, "shoot your arrows at that awakened soul; it is about to escape from me: empty your quivers, ye soldiers of the pit; launch your hot temptations, ye fiends of hell! Sting that soul with infidel insinuations and hideous blasphemies, for if I once lose it I have lost it forever; therefore, hold it, ye princes of the pit, hold it fast, if ye can." Now, in such a plight as that, with your foolish heart, and the wicked world, and the evil one, and your sins in dreadful alliance to destroy you, what could such a poor timid one as you do, if it were not for

this precious word, "If any of you"—that must mean you—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not"?

II. We shall now mention the second point in the text. THE PROPER PLACE OF A SEEKERS RESORT—"Let him ask of God."

My dear friends, bear me witness that it is my constant effort to teach you the spirituality of true religion, and the necessity of our own hearts having personal dealings with the living God. Now, though this you have heard thousands of times, I was about to say from me, yet, once again, I must remind you of it: the text says, "Let him ask of God." Now, you perceive, that the man is directed at once to God, without any intermediate object, or ceremony, or person. You are not told here to seek direction from good books; they may become very useful as auxiliary helps, but the best of human books, if followed slavishly, will mislead. For instance, I am sure that hundreds of persons have been kept in unnecessary bondage through that wonderful and admirable book, "Doddrige's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." It has been the means of the conversion of hundreds; it has been profitable to thousands more; but there is a point in which it fails, so that, if you slavishly follow it, you may read the book through, and I undertake to say, you will not find comfort by following its exhortations. It fails, as all human guides must, if we trust in them and forget the Great Shepard of Israel. When a man is really under concern of soul, he is in a condition of considerable danger. Then it is that an artful false teacher may get hold of him, and cozen him into heresy and unscriptural doctrine. Hence the text does not say, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask his priest;" that is about the worst thing he can do; for he who sets himself up for a priest, is either a deceiver or deceived. "Let him ask of God," that is the advice of the Scripture. We are all so ready to go to books, to go to men, to go to ceremonies, to anything except God. Man will worship God with his eyes, and his arms, and his knees, and his mouth—with anything but his heart—and we are all of us anxious, more or less, until we are renewed by grace, to get off the heart-worship of God. Juan de Valdey says, that, "Just as an ignorant man takes a crucifix and says, 'This crucifix will help me to think of Christ,' so he bows before it and never does think of Christ

at all, but stops short at the crucifix; so," says he, "the learned man takes his book and says, 'This book will teach me the mysteries of the kingdom,' but instead of giving his thoughts to the mysteries of godliness, he reads his book mechanically and stops at the book, instead of meditating and diving into the truth." It is the action of the mind that God accepts, not the motion of the body; it is the thought communing with him; it is the soul coming into contact with the soul of God; it is the spirit-worship which the Lord accepts. Consequently, the text does not say, "Let him ask books," nor "ask priests," but , "let him ask of God."

Above all, do not let the seeker ask of himself and follow his own imaginings and feelings. All human guides are bad, but you yourself will be your own worst guide. "Let him ask of God." When a man can fairly and honestly say, "I have bowed the knee unto the Lord God of Israel, and asked him, for Jesus' sake, to guide me and to direct me by his Spirit, and then I turned to the Book of God, asking God to be my guide into the book," I cannot believe but what such a man will soon obtain saving wisdom.

I beg to caution all of you against stopping short of really asking of God. I conjure you by the living God, do not be satisfied with asking of me. I am no priest, except as all believers are priests, thank God. I wear no title of ecclesiastical dominion. Be not content with asking my brethren, the deacons and elders: God has made many of them wise in helping souls out of difficulties; do not be satisfied with the advice of any man, however godly and holy, but go direct to the Lord God of heaven and earth, and say unto him, "Lord, teach thou me! Show me thy way, O God! Teach me in thy truth!" You are not bidden to go to any second-hand source of wisdom, but to God the only wise, who alone can direct you. "Let him ask of God."

Such advice as this must be good. You cannot suspect us of any interested motive in exhorting you to this. It is your good which we seek, and not our own glory. It must be the best to go to head-quarters: you will surely be lead aright if so you seek direction. Some say, Lo, here! others say, Lo, there! But if you go to God, and then with his guidance study his word, you shall not fail of wisdom. How can you?

Moreover, remember that there is one blessed person of the divine Unity who makes it his especial office to teach us! Hence, if you go to God for wisdom, you only go for that which it is his nature and his office to give. The Holy Ghost is given to this end: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." When you go to God, you may say to him these words, "O Father, you have been pleased to reveal to us the Holy Spirit, who is to lighten our darkness, and to remove our ignorance. Oh, let that Spirit of thine dwell in me; I am willing to be taught by thy Spirit, through thy word, or through thy ministers, but I come first to thee because I know that thy word and thy ministers, apart from thyself, cannot teach me anything. O Lord, teach thou me." I do not mean by any word of mine to make you think little of Scripture—God forbid!—nor little of those who may speak to you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, but I did mean to make you look even at that Book, and at God's ministers, as being subservient to the Holy Ghost himself. Go to him; ask him: for there in the Book is the letter that killeth; he, he alone can make you to know the living essence and the quickening power of that word. Without the Holy Ghost, my dear hearer, you must still be as blind with the light as you would have been without it. You will be as foolish after having been taught the gospel in the theory of it, as you were before you knew it. Let the Holy Spirit, however, teach you, and you shall know all things that are necessary for this life and godliness.

Thus, then, we have brought two points before you: the great lack of the seeker is "wisdom;" and the right place to get that lack removed.

III. Thirdly, THE RIGHT MODE IN WHICH TO GO TO GOD. "Let him ask." Oh! That simple word, "Let him ask"—"let him ask!" No form of asking is prescribed, no words laid down, no method dictated, no hour set apart, no rubric printed; but there it stands in gracious simplicity, "let him ask." He

who will not have mercy when it is to be had for the asking for, deserves to die without it. While I am thinking of this word, before I plunge into its fullest meaning, I may well say, if God will give wisdom to the seeker only

because he asks for it, what shall I say of the folly which will not even ask to be made wise? May God forgive you such folly for the past, and deliver you from it for the future.

The text says, "Let him ask," which is a method implying that ignorance is confessed. No man will ask wisdom till he knows that he is ignorant. Come, dear hearer, confess your ignorance into the ear of God, who is as present here as you are; say unto him, "Lord, I have discovered now that I am not so wise as I thought I was; I am foolish and vain. Lord, teach thou me." Make a full confession, and this shall be a good beginning for prayer.

Asking has also in it the fact the God is believed in. We cannot ask of a person of whose existence we have any doubt, and we will not ask of a person of whose hearing us we have serious suspicions. Who would stand in the desert of Sahara and cry aloud, where there is no living ear to hear? Now, my dear hearer, thou believest that there is a God. Ask, then! Dost thou not believe that he is here, that he will hear thy cry, that he will be pleased in answer to thy cry to give thee what thou askest for? Now, if thou canst believe that there is a God, that he is here and that he will hear thee, then confess thy ignorance, and ask him now to give thee the promised wisdom for Jesus' sake.

There is in this method of approaching God by asking, also, a clear sight that salvation is by grace. It does not say, "Let him buy of God, let him demand of God, let him earn from God." Oh! no—"let him ask of God." It is the beggar's word. The beggar asks an alms. You are to ask as the beggar asks of you in the street, and God will give to you far more liberally than ye to the poor. You must confess that you have no merit of your own. If you will not acknowledge that, neither will God hear your prayers; but come now with the acknowledgment of ignorance, with the confession of sin, and believing that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and he will even now give you the wisdom which saves the soul.

Observe here, what an acknowledgment of dependence there is. The man sees that he cannot find wisdom anywhere else, but that it must come from God. He turns his eye to the only fountain, and leaves the broken

cisterns. Do this, dear hearer. I feel as if the text did not want any explanation from me, but only wanted carrying out by you. Let him ask of God. I think I can hear fifty-thousand objections from different parts of the building. One is saying, "But I don't understand, ask of God." If thou has made some difficulties for thyself, if thou art such a fool as to be tying knots and wanting to get them untied before thou wilt believe in Jesus, then I have nothing to say to thee, except it were, beware lest thou dost tie a knot that shall destroy thy soul; but if thou be troubled with an honest objection, I say to thee now, in God's name, "Ask of God." You need not wait till you get home, you need not stay till you have left that seat, but now, silently, in your soul, as Hannah did when she went up to the tabernacle, breathe the prayer, "O God, teach thou me: lead me to the foot of the cross; help me to see Jesus; save my soul this day; end the doubtful strife; answer these questions; bring me, as an humble seeker, to lie before the footstool of thy sovereign mercy, and to receive pardon through the mediatorial sacrifice. "Let him ask—that is all—let him ask."

IV. Fourthly, the text has in it ABUNDANT ENCOURAGEMENT for such a seeker.

There are four encouragements here. "Let him ask of God, who giveth to all men." What a wide statement—Who "giveth to all men!" I will take it in its broadest extent. In natural things, God does give to all men life, health, food, raiment. Who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good;" who causeth the rain to descend upon the fields of the just and of the unjust. Every creature is favoured with divine benevolence; and there is not a creature, from the tiniest ephemera which creepeth upon the green leaf of the forest, up to the swift-winged angel who adoringly flies upon his Master's will, which is not made to partake of the gifts of the Great Father of Lights. Now, if God hath gifts for all men, how much more will he have gifts for that man who earnestly turns his tearful eye to heaven and cries, "My Father, give me wisdom, that I may be reconciled to thee through the death of thy Son"? Why, the grass, as Herbert says, never asked for the dew, and yet every blade has its own drop; and shall you daily cry for the dew of grace, and there be no drop of heaven's grace for you? Impossible. Fancy your own child saying, "My father, my father, I want to be obedient, I want to be holy;" and suppose that you have

power to make your child so, could you find it in your heart to refuse? No; it would be a greater joy to you to give than it could be to the child to accept.

But it has been said, the text ought not be understood in that broad sense. Very probably it ought not so to be. I conceive that there is implied the limitation that God giveth to all who seek. Though the limitation is not stated, yet I think it is intended, because of spiritual mercies God does not give to all men liberally. There are some men who live and die without the liberal favours of grace, because they wantonly and wickedly refuse them; but he gives to all true seekers liberally. We may take that view of it, and we may find you hundreds of witnesses to prove the truth of it, and can find them in this very place this morning. Here is one witness; I myself personally sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. My dear brethern, and my sisters too, I know that you could spring up like a great army, if it were a fitting thing to asy you to do, and you could say, "'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.' 'The God of Jacob hath not despised nor abhorred the cries of his people.'" Now, soul, if God has heard so many who sought his face, why should he not hear you? Is it not a comfort to think that hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands have gone to God, and there has never been a case in which he has refused one? Will he begin with you? Shall you be the first rejected seeker? Oh! then, what a strange destiny yours will be, to have to say to another world, "I am the first who sought grace, and found it not; I wept at the foot of the cross, and I found no mercy; I said, 'Lord, remember me,' but he would not remember me." You will never be able to say that. Hell will never make its boast over such a case; heaven will never have its honour tarnished by one such solitary instance. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face evermore. Your hearts shall live that seek him.

The next comfort is, he gives to all men liberally. God does not give as we do, a mere trifle to the beggar, but he bestows his wealth by handful. Solomon asked for wisdom: God gave him wealth and power. In nearly every instance of prayer in the Old Testament, God gives ten times as much as is asked for. Jacob asked that he might have bread to eat, and raiment to put on: God made him to be two bands. The Lord will "do

exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." This is the divine habit. He not only redeems his promises, but when he might meet them in silver he prefers to pay them in gold. He is exceedingly bountiful. Dear hearers, we have found him so when we have tried him, and do you think that he will begin to be niggardly with you? If he should liberally forgive your sins, he will be none the poorer; if he withhold forgiveness, he will be none the richer. Why should he stint his favour? You want to wash away your sins: there is a river of grace to wash in. You want grace to refresh your souls: he has floods to pour upon the dry ground. We read of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ho! ye leviathan sinners, here is an ocean of mercy for you to swim in. Ho! you elephantine sinners, here is an ark large enough to hold you and float you above the waters of the deluge! Ho! ye gigantic sinners, whose sins of pride reach up to heaven, and whose feet of lust are plunged in the mire of hell, the sacred hiding-place is large enough to hide even you. The Lord is great in mercy. Oh! who would not ask of so liberal a God, whose thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

It is added as a third comfort, "and upbraideth not." That is a sweet word. If you help a friend who is in debt, and wants to borrow money, you say, "Remember, I do not like it, you ought not to be in such a state." Your brother wants some aid; you have helped him many times, and will again, but still you upbraid him and tell him he is very imprudent; he ought not to get into these messes; he ought to manage his business better." If you do not tell him so with the mouth, you look at him, and he thinks to himself, "It's very kind of him to give me the help, but really it is very humiliating to me to have to ask him because I get so severe a lesson." I suppose we do right to upbraid. I have no doubt we do so with good motives. But God never does upbraid seeking souls. He giveth liberally, and does not dim the lustre of his grace by harsh rebukes. He does not say, "Ah! you sinner, how came you to commit such sin; I will forgive you, but ————." The Father does not talk thus to the returning prodigal. One would have supposed that when the prodigal came back, the father would have said, "Well, dear boy, you are forgiven, but never let me see you do that again. How wrong of you to take that portion of my goods, and spend it in that way! I shall never be so well off as before; you have wasted half my living; and now think where you have been: what a

dishonour you have cast upon your father's name and character through wasting your living with harlots. I forgive: I cannot forget." My brethren, it was not so. The prodigal remembered his sins, but his father forgot them all, and exclaimed with joy, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." O soul, if thou didst but know the heart of the Saviour, thou wouldst not tarry in sin. If thou couldst but know the overflowing love of the divine Father, thou wouldst not linger in unbelief."

"His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love."

Fool as thou art, be not such a fool as to be unwilling to ask for wisdom, but now breathe the prayer, "Teach me, O God, to trust thy dear Son this day."

Then comes the last encouragement. "It shall be given him." Looking through my text last night, I asked the question—Is that last sentence wanted? "Let him ask of God, which giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Now, if the Lord gives to all men, he will certainly give to the seeker. Is that last promise wanted? And I came to this conclusion, that it would have not been there if it was not required. There are some sinners that cannot be contented to draw obvious inferences; they must have it in black and white. Such is the fearfulness of their nature, they must have the promise in so many express words. Here they have it, "it shall be given him." You are not left to suppose that it shall be, or infer that it may be, but it is written, "it shall be given him."

But to whom shall it be given? If any of you lack wisdom. "Well," says one, "I am quite out of all catalogues; I am one by myself." Well, but you are surely contained in this "any of you." "Ah!" says one, "but I have a private fault, a sin, an offense which I would not dare to mention, which I believe has damned me for ever." Yet the text says, "If any of you." If I saw a door open, and it said "If any of you be hungry, let him come in here," I should not stop outside because I feared that I was not quite the person intended, I should say "It is their business who mean to keep me out, to be more specific in their invitation. They have put it 'any of you.' I

am certainly one of the sons of men, and I will step in to the feast." Ah soul! if God had meant to shut thee out, he would have been more plain about it, but here is not a shutting-out word at all. It says, "If any of you lack wisdom"—well, that is you, surely—that lack of wisdom helps to include you within the boundary. It does not limit the character; it widens it to you, because you feel how foolish you are. The promise is, "it shall be given him." "Suppose I do not get it," you say. You must not suppose God to be a liar. How can you suppose such a blasphemy? "Let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." "But," says one, "suppose my sins should prove to be too great!" I cannot, will not suppose anything which can come in conflict with the positive word of God. "Let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." Do you think God does not mean what he says? O sinner, will you add to all your other sins this sin of thinking that God would lie? O man, he invites you to ask of him wisdom, and he says he will give it to you; doubt not the Lord, distrust not the veracity of Jehovah, but come at once humbly, trembling, to the foot of the Saviour's cross. View him lifted on high, as the great atoning sacrifice; look to his streaming wounds; behold his brow still covered with the crimson drops which flow from the wounds caused by his thorny crown. Look to him and live. There's life in a look at the Crucified One: look to him, and the promise is that you should be saved. I commend the text to the careful, thoughtful, believing acceptance of every sinner here. Ask that the sun may not go down until you each and all have received the promise which the text presents to you. May the Holy Spirit now give his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Loyal To The Core

And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. - 2 Samuel 15:21

Although the courage of David appears to have failed him when he fled

from his son Absalom, yet certain other noble characteristics came out in brilliant relief, and among the rest, his large-heartedness and his thoughtfulness for others. A man in such a desperate condition as he was must have earnestly coveted many friends and have been anxious to retain them all, but yet he would not exact their services if they were too costly to themselves, and so he said to Ittai, who appears to have been a Philistine—a proselyte to Israel, who had lately come to join himself to David—"Wherefore I goest thou also with its? Thou hast newly come to me, and should I make thee wander with me in my sorrows? Return to thy place and abide with the new king, for thou art a stranger and an exile. May every blessing be upon thee. May mercy and truth be with thee." He did not send him away because he doubted him, but because he felt that he had no claim to the great sacrifices which Ittai might have to make in attending his checkered fortunes. "I do not know what may become of me," he seems to say, "but I do not want to drag you down with myself. Should my cause become desperate, I have no wish to involve you in it, and therefore with the best of motives I wish you farewell." I admire this generosity of spirit. Some men have great expectations: they live upon their friends, and yet complain that charity is cold. These people expect more from their friends than they ought to give. A man's best friends on earth ought to be his own strong arms. Loafers are parasitical plants, they have no root of their own, but like the mistletoe they strike root into some other tree, and suck the very soul out of it for their own nourishment. Sad that men should ever degrade themselves to such despicable meanness! While you can help yourselves, do so and while you have a right to expect help in times of dire necessity, do not be everlastingly expecting everybody else to be waiting upon you. Feel as David did towards Ittai—that you would by no means wish for services to which you have no claim. Independence of spirit used to be characteristic of Englishmen. I hope it will always continue to be so; and especially among children of God.

On the other hand, look at Ittai, perfectly free to go, but in order to end the controversy once for all, and to make David know that he does not mean to leave him, he takes a solemn oath before Jehovah his God, and he doubles it by swearing by the life of David that he will never leave him; in life, in death, he will be with him. He has cast in his lot with him for

better and for worse, and he means to be faithful to the end. Old Master Trapp says, "All faithful friends went on a pilgrimage years ago, and none of them have ever come back." I scarcely credit that, but I am afraid that friends quite so faithful as Ittai are as scarce as two moons in the sky at once, and you might travel over the edge of the world before you found them. I think, however, that one reason why faithful Ittai have become so scarce may be because large-hearted Davids are so rare. When you tell a man that you expect a good deal of him, he does not see it. Why should you look for so much? He is not your debtor. You have closed at once the valves of his generosity. But when you tell him honestly that you do not expect more than is right, and that you do not wish to be a tax upon him, when he sees that you consult his welfare more than your own, that is the very reason why he feels attached to you, and counts it a pleasure to serve such a generous-hearted man. You will generally find that when two people fall out there are faults on both sides: if generous spirits be few, it may be because faithful friends are rare, and if faithful friends are scarce it may be because generous spirits are scarce too. Be it ours as Christians to live to serve rather than to be served, remembering that we are the followers of a Master who said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." We are not to expect others to serve us, but our life is to be spent in endeavoring to serve them.

I am going to use Ittai's language for a further purpose. If Ittai, charmed with David's person and character, though a foreigner and a stranger, felt that he could enlist beneath his banner for life—yea, and declared that he would do so there and then—how much more may you and I, if we know what Christ has done for us, and who He is and what He deserves at our hands, at this good hour plight our troth to Him and vow, "As the Lord liveth, surely in whatsoever place my Lord and Saviour shall be, whether in death or life, even there also shall His servant be."

And so, I shall begin by noticing first in what form this declaration was made, that we may learn from it how to make the same declaration.

I. IN WHAT FORM AND MANNER WAS THIS DECLARATION MADE?

It was made, first, at a time when David's fortunes were at their lowest

ebb, and consequently it was made unselfishly, without the slightest idea of gain from it. David was now forsaken of everybody. His faithful bodyguard was all that he had on earth to depend upon, and then it was that Ittai cast in his lot with David. Now beloved, it is very easy to follow religion when she goes abroad in her silver slippers, but the true man follows her when she is in rags, and goes through the mire and the slough. To take up with Christ when everybody cries up his name is what a hypocrite would do, but to take up with Christ when they are shouting, "Away with him! away with him!" is another matter. There are times in which the simple faith of Christ is at a great discount. At one time imposing ceremonies are all the rage, and everybody loves decorated worship, and the pure simplicity of the gospel is overloaded and encumbered with meretricious ornaments; it is such a season that we must stand out for God's more simple plan, and reject the symbolism which verges on idolatry and hides the simplicity of the gospel.

At another time the gospel is assailed by learned criticisms and by insinuations against the authenticity and inspiration of the books of Scripture, while fundamental doctrines are undermined one by one, and he who keeps to the old faith is said to be behind the age, and so on. But happy is that man who takes up with Christ, and with the gospel, and with the truth when it is in its worst estate, crying, "If this be foolery, I am a fool, for where Christ is there will I be; I love Him better at His worst than others at their best, and even if He be dead and buried in a sepulchre I will go with Mary and with Magdalene and sit over against the sepulchre and watch until He rise again, for rise again He will; but whether He live or die, where He is there shall his servant be." Ho, then, brave spirits, will ye enlist for Christ when His banner is tattered? Will you enlist under Him when His armor is stained with blood? Will you rally to Him even when they report Him slain? Happy shall ye be! Your loyalty shall be proven to your own eternal glory. Ye are soldiers such as He loves to honor.

Ittai gave himself up wholly to David when he was but newly come to him, David says, "Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? But Ittai does not care whether he came yesterday or twenty years ago, but he declares, "Surely in what

place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." It is best to begin the Christian life with thorough consecration. Have any of you professed to be Christians, and have you never given yourselves entirely to Christ? It is time that you began again. This should be one of the earliest forms of our worship of our Master—this total resignation of ourselves to Him. According to His Word, the first announcement of our faith should be by baptism, and the meaning of baptism, or immersion in water, is death, burial, and resurrection. As far as this point is concerned, the avowal is just this. "I am henceforth dead to all but Christ, whose servant I now am. Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The watermark is on me from head to foot. I have been buried with Him in baptism unto death to show that henceforth I belong to Him." Now, whether you have been baptized or not I leave to yourselves, but in any case this must be true—that henceforth you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. As soon as ever Christ is yours you ought to be Christ's. "I am my Beloved's" should be linked with "My Beloved is mine," in the dawn of the day in which you yield to the Lord.

Again, Ittai surrendered himself to David in the most voluntary manner. No one persuaded Ittai to do this; in fact, David seems to have persuaded him the other way. David tested and tried him, but he voluntarily out of the fullness of his heart said, "Where, my lord, the king, is, there, also shall his servant be." Now, dear young people, if you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is yours, give yourselves up to Him by a distinct act and deed. Feel that one grand impulse without needing pressure or argument—"The love of Christ constraineth me"; but do not wait to have your duty urged upon you, for the more free the dedication the more acceptable it will be. I am told that there is no wine so delicious as that which flows from the grape at the first gentle pressure. The longer you squeeze the harsher is the juice. We do not like that service which is pressed out of a man: and certainly the Lord of love will not accept forced labor. No; let your willingness show itself. Say -

Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, ALL for thee.

My heart pants after the service after of her Lord. With the same spontaneity which Ittai displayed make a solemn consecration of yourselves to David's Lord.

I used a word then which suggests another point, namely, that Ittai did this very solemnly. He took an oath which we Christians may not do, and may not wish to do, but still we should make the surrender with quite as much solemnity. In Dr. Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" there is a very solemn form of consecration, which he recommends voting men to sign when they give themselves to Christ. I cannot say that I can recommend it, though I practiced it, for I fear that there is something of legality about it, and that it may bring the soul into bondage. I have known some write out a deed of dedication to Christ and sign it with their blood. I will neither commend nor censure, but I will say that a complete dedication must be made in some manner, and that it should be done deliberately and with grave thought. You have been bought with a price, and you should, therefore, in a distinct manner own your Lord's property in you, and transfer to Him the title-deeds of your body, spirit, and soul.

And this, I think, Ittai did publicly. At any rate, he so acted that everybody saw him when David said, "Go over," and march in front—the first man to pass the brook, Oh yes, dear friend, you must publicly own yourself a Christian. If you are a Christian you must not try to sneak to heaven round the back alleys, but march up the narrow way like a man and like your Master. He was never ashamed of you, though He might have been: how can you be ashamed of Him when there is nothing in Him to be ashamed of? Some Christians seem to think that they shall lead an easier life if they never make a profession. Like a rat behind the wainscot they come out after candlelight and get a crumb, and then slip back again. I would not lead such a life. Surely, there is nothing to be ashamed of. A Christian—let us glory in the name! A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—let them write it on our door plates, if they will. Why should we blush at that? "But," says one, "I would rather be a very quiet one." I will now place a torpedo under this cowardly quietness. What saith the Lord Jesus? Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven; but he that shall confess me before men,

him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Take up your cross and follow Him, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." When our Master ascended up on high He told us to preach the gospel to every creature; and how did He put it? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There must be, therefore, the believing and the acknowledgment of believing. "But cannot I be saved as a believer if I do not openly confess Christ?" Dear friend, you have no business to tamper with your Master's command, and then say, "Will He not graciously forgive this omission?" Do not neglect one of the two commands, but obey all His will. If you have the spirit of Ittai you will say, "Wheresoever my lord the king is, there also shall thy servant be."

I leave the matter with the consciences of those who may be like Nicodemus, coming to Jesus by night, or may be like Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. May they come out and own their Master, believing that then He will own them.

II. Secondly, WHAT DID THIS DECLARATION INVOLVE? As to Ittai, what did it involve?

First, that he was henceforth to be David's servant. Of course, as his soldier, he was to fight for him, and to do his bidding. What sayest thou, man? Canst thou lift thy hand to Christ, and say, "Henceforth I will live as thy servant, not doing my own will, but thy will. Thy command is henceforth my rule?" Canst thou say that? If not, do not mock Him, but stand back. May the Holy Ghost give thee grace thus to begin, thus to perserve, and thus to end.

It involved, next, for Ittai that he was to do his utmost for David's cause, not to be his servant in name, but his soldier, ready for scars and wounds and death, if need be, on the king's behalf. That is what Ittai meant as, in tough soldier-tones, he took the solemn oath that it should be so. Now, if thou wouldst be Christ's disciple, determine henceforth by His grace that thou wilt defend His cause; that if there be rough fighting thou wilt be in it; and if there be a forlorn hope needed thou wilt lead it, and go through floods and flames if thy Master's cause shall call thee. Blessed is the man

who will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, giving himself wholly up to his Lord to serve Him with all His heart.

But Ittai in his promise declared that he would give a personal attendance upon the person of his master. That was, indeed, the pith of it, "In what place my lord, the king, shall be, even there also will thy servant be." Brethren, let us make the same resolve in our hearts, that wherever Christ is, there we will be. Where is Christ? In heaven. We will be there by-and-by. Where is He here, spiritually? Answer: in His church. The church is a body of faithful men; and where these are met together, there is Jesus in the midst of them. Very well, then, we will join the church, for wherever our Lord, the King, is, there also shall His servants be. When the list of the redeemed is read we will be found in the register, for our Lord's name is there.

Where else did Jesus go? In the commencement of His ministry He descended into the waters of baptism. Let us follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. At the close of His ministry He brake bread, and said, "This do ye in remembrance of me." Be often at His table, for if there is a place on the earth where He manifests Himself to His children it is where bread is broken in His name. Let me now tell a secret. Some of you may have heard it before, but you have forgotten it. Here it is—my Lord it generally here at prayer-meetings on Monday nights, and, indeed, whenever His people come together for prayer, there He is. So I will read you my text, and see ether you will come up to it—"Surely in what place my Lord the King shall be, whether it be in a prayer-meeting or at a sermon, even there also will thy servant be. "If you love your Lord, you know where His haunts are; take care that you follow hard after Him there.

Where is the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, brethren, He is wherever the truth is, and I pray God that He may raise up a race of men and women in England who are determined to be wherever the truth of God is. We have a host of molluscous creatures about who will always be where the congregation is the most respectable: respectability being measured by clothes and cash. Time was in the church of God when they most esteemed the most pious men; has it come to this that gold takes

precedence of grace? Our fathers considered whether a ministry was sound, but now the question is—Is the man clever? Words are preferred to truth, and oratory takes the lead of the gospel. Shame on such an age. O you who have, not altogether sold your birthrights, I charge you keep out of this wretched declension.

The man who loves Christ thoroughly will say, "Wheresoever the Lord the King is, there also shall His servant be, if it be with half a dozen poor Baptists or Methodists, or among the most despised people in the town." I charge you, beloved, in whatever town or country your lot is cast, be true to your colors, and never forsake your principles. Wherever the truth is, there go, and where there is anything contrary to truth, do not go, for there your Master is not to be found.

What next? Well, our Master is to be found wherever there is anything to be done for the good of our fellow-men. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be found wherever there is work to be done in seeking after His lost sheep. Some people say that they have very little communion with Christ, and when I look at them, I do not wonder. Two persons cannot walk together if they will not walk at the same pace. Now, my Lord walks an earnest pace whenever He goes through the world, for the King's business requires haste; and if His disciples crawl after a snail's fashion they will lose His company. If some of our groaning brethren would go to the Sunday-school, and there begin to look after the little children, they would meet with their Lord who used to say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." If others were to get together a little meeting, and teach the ignorant, they would there find Him who had compassion on the ignorant on those that are out of the way. Our Master is where there are fetters to be broken, burdens to be removed, and hearts to be comforted, and if you wish to keep with Him you must aid in such service.

Where is our Master? Well, He is always on the side of truth and right. And, O, you Christian people, mind that in everything@politics, business, and everything you keep to that which is right,]lot to that which is popular. Do not bow the knee to that which for a little day may be cried up, but stand fast in that which is consistent with rectitude, with humanity, with the cause and honor of God, and with the freedom and

progress of men. It can never be wise to do wrong. It can never be foolish to be right. It can never be according to the mind of Christ to tyrannize and to oppress. Keep you ever to whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report, and you will so far keep with Christ. 'Temperance, purity, justice-these are favorites with Him; do your best to advance them for His sake.

Above all, remember how Jesus loved secret prayer, and if you resolve to keep with Him you must be much at the throne of grace.

I will not detain you over each of these points, but simply say that Ittai's declaration meant also this—that he intended to share David's condition. If David was great, Ittai would rejoice. If David was exiled, Ittai would attend his wanderings. Our point must be to resolve in God's strength to keep to Christ in all weathers and in all companies, and that whether in life or death. Ah that word "death" makes it sweet, because then we reap the blessed result of having lived with Christ. We shall go upstairs for the last time and bid good-bye to all, and then we shall feel that in death He is still with us as in life we have been with Him. Though our good works can never be a ground of confidence when we are dying, yet if the Lord enables us to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and so to lead a decided, positive, downright, upright Christian life, our death pillow will not be stuffed with thorns of regret, but we shall have to bless God that we bore a faithful witness as far as were able to do so. In such a case we shall not when the dying wish to go back again to rectify the mistakes and insincerities of our lives. No, beloved, it will be very, very sweet to be alone with Jesus in death. He will make all our bed in our sickness; He will make our dying pillow soft, and our soul shall vanish, kissed away by His dear lips, and we shall be with Him forever and forever. Of those that are nearest to Him it is said, "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They shall walk with him in white, for they are worthy."

I conclude with this observation. Will our Lord Jesus Christ accept at our hands tonight such a consecrating word? If we are trusting in Him for salvation will He permit us to say that we will keep with Him as long as we live?

We reply, He will not permit us to say it in our own strength. There was a young man who said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," but Christ gave him a cool reception: and there was an older man who said, "Though all men shall forsake thee yet will not I," and in reply his Master prayed for Him that his faith should not fail. Now, you must not promise as Peter did, or you will make a greater failure. But, beloved, this self-devotion is what Christ expects of us if we are His disciples. He will not have us love father or mother more than Him; we must be ready to give up all for His sake. This is not only what our Master expects from us, but what He deserves from us.

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

This, also, is what the Lord will help us to do, for He will give us grace if we will but seek it at His hands: and this it is which He will graciously reward, and has already rewarded, in that choice word of His in the twelfth of John, where He says of His disciples in the twenty-sixth verse, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." Oh, to be honored of God in eternity when He shall say, "Stand back, angels; make way, seraphim and cherubim; here comes a man that suffered for the sake, of my dear Son. Here comes one that was not ashamed of my Only-begotten when his face was smeared with the spittle. Here comes one that stood in the pillory with Jesus, and was called ill names for His sake. Stand back, ye angels, these have greater honor than you." Surely the angels of heaven as they traverse the streets of gold and meet the martyrs will ask them about their sufferings, and say, "You are more favored than we, for you have had the privilege of suffering and dying for the Lord." O brothers and sisters, snatch at the privilege of living for Jesus; consecrate yourselves this day unto Him; live from this hour forward, not to enrich yourselves, nor to gain honor and esteem, but for Jesus, for Jesus alone. Oh, if I could set Him before you here; if I could cause Him to stand on this platform just as He came from Gethsemane with His bloody sweat about Him, or as He came down from the cross with wounds so bright with glory and so fresh with bleeding out our redemption, I think I should

hear you say, each one of you, "Lord Jesus, we are thine, and in what place Thou shalt be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servants be." So may the Lord help us by His most gracious Spirit who hath wrought all our works in us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Lydia, The First European Convert

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose hearts the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. - Acts 16:14

We may laudably exercise curiosity with regard to the first proclamation of the gospel in our own quarter of the globe. We are happy that history so accurately tells us, by the pen of Luke, when first the gospel was preached in Europe, and by whom, and who was the first convert brought by that preaching to the Savior's feet. I half envy Lydia that she should be the leader of the European band; yet I feel right glad that a woman led the van, and that her household followed so closely in the rear.

God has made great use of women, and greatly honored them in the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Holy women ministered to our Lord when he was upon the earth, and since that time much sacred work has been done by their patient hands. Man and woman fell together; together they must rise. After the resurrection, it was a woman who was first commissioned to carry the glad tidings of the risen Christ; and in Europe, where woman was in future days to be set free from many of the trammels of the East, it seems fitting that a woman should be the first believer. Not only, however, was Lydia a sort of first-fruit for Europe, but she probably also became a witness in her own city of Thyatira, in Asia. We do not know how the gospel was introduced into that city; but

we are informed of the existence of a church there by the message of the ascended Christ, through his servant John, to "the angel of the church in Thyatira." Very likely Lydia became the herald of the gospel in her native place. Let the women who know the truth proclaim it; for why should their influence be lost? "The Lord giveth the word; the women that publish the tidings are a great host." Woman can be as powerful for evil as for good: we see it in this very church of Thyatira, where the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, sought to seduce many from the truth. Seeing, then, that the devil employs women in his service, let those women whom God has called by his grace be doubly earnest in seeking to prevent or undo the mischief that others of their sex are working. If not called to public service, all have the home-sphere wherein they can shed forth the aroma of a godly life and testimony.

If the gospel does not influence our homes, it is little likely to make headway amongst the community. God has made family piety to be, as it were, a sort of trade-mark on religion in Europe; for the very first convert brings with her all her family. Her household believed, and were baptized with her. You shall notice in Europe, though I do not mean to say that it is not the same anywhere else, that true godliness has always flourished in proportion as family religion has been observed. They hang a bell in a steeple, and they tell us that it is our duty to go every morning and every evening into the steeple-house there to join in prayer; but we reply that our own house is better for many reasons; at any rate, it will not engender superstition for us to pray there. Gather your children together, and offer prayer and supplication to God in your own room.

"But there is no priest." Then there ought to be. Every man should be a priest in his own household; and, in the absence of a godly father, the mother should lead the devotions. Every house should be the house of God, and there should be a church in every house; and when this is the case, it will be the greatest barrier against priestcraft, and the idolatry of holy places. Family prayer and the pulpit are the bulwarks of Protestantism. Depend upon it, when family piety goes down, the life of godliness will become very low. In Europe, at any rate, seeing that the Christian faith began with a converted household, we ought to seek after the conversion of all our families, and to maintain within our houses the

good and holy practice of family worship.

Lydia, then, is the first European convert, and we will review her history so far as we have it in Holy Writ. Towards her conversion four things co-operated, upon which we will speak briefly. First, the working of providence; secondly, the working of Lydia herself; thirdly, the working of Paul; and fourthly, the working of the Holy Spirit.

I. First, notice THE WORKING OF PROVIDENCE. When I was in Amsterdam, I visited the works of a diamond-cutter, where I saw many large wheels and much powerful machinery at work; and I must confess that it seemed very odd that all that great array of apparatus should be brought to bear upon a tiny bit of crystal, which looked like a fragment of glass. Was that diamond worth so much that a whole factory should be set to work to cut its facets, and cause it to sparkle? So the diamond-cutter believed. Within that small space lay a gem which was thought worthy of all this care and labor. That diamond may be at this time glistening upon the finger or brow of royalty! Now, when I look abroad upon providence, it seems preposterous to believe that kingdoms, dynasties, and great events should all be co-operating and working together for the accomplishment of the diving purpose in the salvation of God's people. But they are so working. It might have seemed preposterous, but it was not so, that these great wheels should all be working for the cutting of a single diamond; and it is not preposterous, however it may seem so, to say that all the events of providence are being ordered by God to effect the salvation of his own people, the perfecting of the precious jewels which are to adorn the crown of Christ for ever and ever.

In the case before us, the working of God's providence is seen, first of all, in bringing Paul to Philippi. Lydia is there. I do not know how long she had been there, nor exactly what brought her there; but there she is, selling her purple, her Turkey-red cloth. Paul must come there, too, but he does not want to come; he has not, indeed, had any desire to come there. He has a kind of prejudice hanging about him still, so that, though he is willing to preach to the Gentiles, he scarcely likes to go out of Asia among those Gentiles of the Gentiles over in Europe. He wants to preach

the word in Asia. Very singularly, the Spirit suffers him not, and he seems to have a cold hand laid on him to stop him when his heart is warmest. He is gagged; he cannot speak. "Then I will go into Bithynia," he says; but when he starts on the journey, he is distinctly told that there is no work for him to do there. He must not speak for his Master in that region, at least not yet: "the Spirit suffered him not." He feels himself to be a silenced man. What is he to do? He gets down to Troas on the verge of the sea, and there comes to him the vision of a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." He infers that he must go across to Macedonia. A ship is ready for him; he has a free course, a favorable passage, and he soon arrives at Philippi. God brings Paul to the spot where Lydia was, in this strange and singular manner.

But the working of providence was quite as much manifested in bringing Lydia there; for Lydia was not originally at Philippi. She was a seller of purple, of Thyatira. Thyatira was a city famous for its dyers. They made a peculiar purple, which was much prized by the Romans. Lydia appears to have carried on this business. She was either a widow, or perhaps had had no husband, though she may have gathered a household of servants about her. She comes over to Philippi across the sea. I think I see them bringing the great rolls of red cloth up the hill, that she may sell at Philippi the cloth which she has made and dyed at Thyatira. Why does she come just at this season? Why does she come just when Paul is coming? Why does she come to Philippi? Why not to Neapolis? Why not press on to Athens? Why not sell her cloth over at Corinth? Whatever reason she might have given for her choice, there was one cause, of which she was ignorant, which shaped her action, and brought her to Philippi at that time. God had a surprise in store for her. She and Paul have to meet. It does not matter what their will is; their wills shall be so moved and actuated by the providence of God that they shall cross each other's path, and Paul shall preach the gospel to Lydia. I wot it never entered into Lydia's heart, when she left Thyatira with her purple bales, that she was going to find Jesus Christ over at Philippi; neither did Paul guess, when he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia, and heard him say, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," that the first person he would have to help would not be a man of Macedonia at all, but a woman of Thyatira and

that the congregation he should preach to would be just a handful of women gathered by the side of the little stream that runs through Philippi. Neither Paul nor Lydia knew what God was about to do; but God knew. He understands the end from the beginning, and times his acts of providence to meet our deepest needs in the wisest way.

"His wisdom is sublime,
His heart profoundly kind;
God never is before his time,
And never is behind."

What an odd thing it seemed that this woman should be a woman of Thyatira in Asia, and Paul must not go and preach in Asia; and yet, when he comes to Macedonia, the first person who hears him is a woman of Asia! Why, you and I would have said, "If the woman belongs to Thyatira, let her stop at home, and let Paul go there; that is the shortest cut." Not so. The woman of Thyatira must go to Philippi, and Paul must go to Philippi too. This is God's plan; and if we knew all the circumstances as God knows them, we should doubtless admire the wisdom of it. Perhaps the very peculiarity of the circumstances made Paul more alert to seize the opportunity at Philippi than he would have been had he gone on to Thyatira; perhaps the isolation of the strange city made Lydia yearn more after spiritual things. God can answer a dozen ends by one act. One of our evangelists tells of a man who was converted in a small Irish town, and it was afterwards discovered that he, and the preacher who led him to Christ, resided but a few hundred yards from each other in London. They had never met in this great city, where neighbors are strangers to each other; nor was it likely that they ever would have been brought into contact with one another here; for the man, who was a commercial traveler, was too careless ever to attend a place of worship in London. But to sell his goods he went to Ireland, where, also, went the evangelist to preach the gospel; and being somewhat at a loss to know what to do with his time, he no sooner saw the name of a preacher from London announced, than he determined to attend the service, and there he met with Christ. We can see how natural this was in the case of which we know all the particulars, and it was doubtless as well arranged in the case of Lydia and Paul.

Now, I should not wonder to-night if there are a number of providences that have worked together to bring some of my hearers into their places at this time. What brought you to London, friend? It was not your intention to be in this city. Coming to London, what brought you to this part of it? What led you to be at this service? And why was it that you did not come on one of the Sundays when the preacher would have been here if he could, but could not be here by reason of his weakness? Because, it may be, that only from these lips can the word come to you, and only to-night, and you must come to this place. Perhaps there is some one who preaches the gospel much better in the town where you live; or, peradventure, you have had opportunities of hearing the same preacher near your on-n door, and you did not avail yourself of them; and yet God has brought you here. I wish we watched providences more. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." If the Lord should meet with you, and convert you tonight, I will warrant you that you will be a believer in providence, and say, "Yes, God guided my steps. He directed my path, and he brought me to the spot where Jesus met with me, and opened my heart that I might receive the gospel of his grace." Be of good courage, you ministers of the gospel! Providence is always working with you while you are working for God. I have often admired the language of Mahomet, when in the battle of Ohod he said to his followers, pointing to their foes, "Charge them! I can hear the wings of the angels as they hasten to our help." That was a delusion on his part, for he and his men were badly beaten; but it is no delusion in the case of the servants of Christ. We can hear the wings of the angels. We may hear the grinding of the great wheels of providence as they revolve for the help of the preacher of the gospel. Everything is with us when we are with God. Who can be against us? The stars in their courses fight for the servants of God; and all things, great and small, shall bow before the feet of him who trod the waves of the Sea of Galilee, and still is Master of all things, and ruleth all things to the accomplishment of his diving purposes.

So much, then, for the working of providence.

II. The next thing is, THE WORKING OF LYDIA. God's intention is that

Lydia shall be saved. Yet, you know, no woman was ever saved against her will. God makes us willing in the day of his power, and it is the way of his grace not to violate the will, but sweetly to overcome it. Never will there be anybody dragged to heaven by the ears: depend upon that. We shall go there with all our hearts and all our desires. What, then, was Lydia doing?

Having by God's grace been made willing, the first thing was that she kept the Sabbath. She was a proselyte, and she kept the seventh day. She was away from Thyatira, and nobody would know what she would do, yet she observed the Lord's-day carefully. She was abroad when she was at Philippi, but she had not left God behind her. I have known some English people, when they once reached the Continent, go rattling along, Sundays and week-days, as if God did not live on the Continent, and as if at home they only observed the Sabbath because they happened to be in England, which is very probably the case with a good many. When they get away they say, "When you are at Rome, you must do as Rome does;" and so they take their pleasure on God's day. It was not so with Lydia. There was no selling of purple that day; she regarded the Sabbath. Oh, I would to God that every one would regard the Sabbath! May God grant that it may never be taken away from us! There is a plot now to make some of you work all the seven days of the week, and you will not get any more pay for seven days than you get for six. Stand out against it, and preserve your right to rest upon God's day. The observance of one day in seven as a day of rest materially helps towards the conversion of men, because then they are inclined to think. They have the opportunity to hear, and, if they choose to avail themselves of it, the probabilities are that God will bless the hearing, and they will be saved.

Now, notice next that, not only did Lydia observe the Sabbath, but she went up to the place of worship. It was not a very fine place. I do not suppose there was any building. It may have been a little temporary oratory put up by the river side; but very probably it was just on the bank of the river that they met together. It does not appear that there were any men, but only a few women. They only held a prayer-meeting: "where prayer was wont to be made." But Lydia did not stop away from the gathering. She might easily have excused herself after her long journey,

and the wearying work of setting up a new establishment; but her heart was in this matter, and so she found it no drudgery to meet where prayer was offered. She did not say "I can read a sermon at home," or, "I can read in the Book of the Law indoors." She wished to be where God's people were, however few, or however poor they might be. She did not go to the gorgeous heathen temple at Philippi, but she sought out the few faithful ones that met to worship the true God. Now, dear friends, do the same. You that are not converted, still attend the means of grace, and do not go to a place simply because it is a fine building, and because there is a crowd, but go where they are truly worshipping God in spirit and in truth. If they should happen to be very few and very poor, yet go with them, for in so doing you are in the way of blessing. I think you will yet have to say, "Being in the way, God met with me." If it is what some call "only a prayer-meeting", you will do well to go. Some of the best blessings that men have ever gained have been received at prayer-meetings. If we would meet with God, let us seek him diligently, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Though you cannot save yourself, or open your own heart, you can at least do what Lydia did: observe the Sabbath, and gather together with God's people.

Lydia being there with the assembly, when Paul began to speak, we find that she attended to the things that were spoken, which is another thing that we can do. It is very ill when people come up to the house of God, and do not attend. I have never had to complain of people not attending in this house since the day I first preached in it; but I have been in places of worship where there seemed to be anything but attention. How can it be expected that there will be a blessing when the pew becomes a place to slumber in, or when the mind is active over the farm, or in the kitchen, or in the shop, forgetting altogether the gospel which is being preached to the outward ear? If you want a blessing, attend with all your might to the word that is preached; but of that we will speak more by-and-by.

So far we have spoken upon the working of providence and the working of Lydia.

III. Now, next, THE WORKING OF PAUL; for this was necessary too. In order to the conversion of men, it is necessary that the person who aims

at their conversion should work as if it all depended upon him, though he knows that he cannot accomplish the work. We are to seek to win souls with as much earnestness, and prudence, and zeal, as if everything depended upon ourselves; and then we are to leave all with God, knowing that none but the Lord can save a single soul.

Now, notice, Paul, wishing for converts, is judicious in the choice of the place where he will go to look after them. He goes to the spot where there should be a synagogue. He thinks that where people have a desire to pray, there he will find the kind of people who will be ready to hear the word. So he selects devout people, devout worshippers of the one God, that he may go and speak to them about Christ. It is sometimes our plain duty to publish the word from the housetop to the careless crowd; but I think you will generally find that more success comes when those, on whose hearts the Spirit of God has already begun to work, are sought out and instructed. When Christ sent out his disciples on their first journey, he told them, when they entered a town, to "Enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence;" evidently showing that, even amongst those who do not know the truth, there are some whose hearts are prepared to receive it, who are of a devout spirit, and in that sense are worthy. These are the people who should first be sought after. In the same limited sense was Cornelius, to whom Peter was sent, worthy to hear the glad tidings of great joy. His reverent spirit was well pleasing to God; for we read, "Thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." We must not, of course, think that these things give any claim to salvation; but rather that they are the expression of hearts prepared to receive the message of salvation, seeking the Lord, "if haply they might feel after him, and find him." One of our greatest difficulties in these days is, that so many have lost all reverence for authority of any kind, even God's: having risen against human despotism, they also foolishly try to break God's bands asunder. We are cast back on the infinite power of God when we come to deal with such people; but when we meet with others who are willing to listen and pray, we know that God has already begun to work. Now, dear worker, choose the person who is evidently pointed out to you by God's gracious providence. Choose judiciously, and try to speak with those with whom you may hopefully speak, and trust that God will bless the word.

When Paul goes down to the river, you notice that he is very judicious as to his manner of introducing his subject. He did not preach at all. He found only a few women; and to stand up and preach to them, as he did to the crowds at Corinth, or at Athens, might have seemed absurd; but we read this: "We sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." He took his seat on the river's bank, where they were all sitting still, and at prayer, and he began just to have a talk. A sermon would have been out of place; but a talk was the right sort of thing. So he talked the gospel into them. Now, be careful of the way in which you go to work with people; for much of the result must depend upon that. Some people can be preached right away from Christ; for the moment you begin to preach they say, "Oh, thank you, I do not want any of your sermon!" Perhaps you could slip a word in edgewise; just drop a seed in a crack; or leave a word with them, just one word. Say at once, "If you do not want any preaching, I do not want to preach to you: I am not so fond of preaching as all that; but I read a very curious story in the newspapers the other day!" And then tell the story, and wrap the gospel up in it. If they do not want pills, do not give them pills. Give them a bit of sugar. They will take the sugar, and when they got it, there will be a pill inside. I mention this, because we may miss opportunities of doing good through not being wide awake. "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Paul therefore just sit down, and has a friendly talk with the women who resorted thither.

But whether Paul preached, or whether Paul talked, it was all the same: he was judicious as to the matter of his discourse. He had but one subject, and that was Christ; the Christ who had met him on the way to Damascus, and changed his heart; the Christ who was able still to save; the Christ who bled upon the cross, to bring men to God, and cleanse them in his blood; the Christ in heaven, interceding for sinners; the Christ waiting to be gracious. Paul would not end his talk without saying, "Trust him: trust him. He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." So, whether he preached or whether he talked, it was the same story of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. That is how Paul worked. He might have acted very differently. If his heart had not been all aflame for Jesus, he would very likely not have spoken at all, or if he had, it would have been a commonplace remark about the weather. He might have been eager to

learn the method by which the beautiful purple dye was obtained, and not have remembered that gospel message, written by Isaiah long ago, which would come with special force to the hearts of his hearers: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He might have been so interested in his enquiries about Thyatira as to forget to speak of the way to the city of light. A dozen subjects might have claimed attention, if his heart had not been set upon one object. He could have spoken of his journeys, and even of his plans, without actually preaching Christ to her. He might have spoken about the gospel, as I fear we often do, and not have spoken the gospel itself. Some sermons which I have heard, though faultlessly orthodox, have contained nothing that could convert anybody; for there has been nothing to touch the conscience or heart. Others, though very clever and profound, have had no possible bearing on the needs of the hearers; and so it was little wonder that they were without result. But I am sure Paul's talk would aim straight at the center of the target: it was evidently addressed to the heart, for we are told that it was with the heart Lydia heard it. After all, it is not our most orderly discourses, nor our aptest illustrations, which bring people to Christ; but some little sentence which is slipped in unawares, or some burning word which comes straight out of our own heart's experience. There would be sure to be many such that day in that earnest simple talk by the river side. Let us multiply such conversations, if we would win more Lydias for the church.

IV. But, now, fourthly—and here is the main point—let us notice THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Providence brings Paul and Lydia together. Lydia comes there because she observes the Sabbath, and loves the place of worship. Paul comes there because he loves to win souls, and, like his Master, is on the watch for stray sheep. But it would have been a poor meeting for them if the Spirit of God had not been there also. So we next read of Lydia: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." It is not wonderful that the Lord can open a human heart; for he who made the lock knows well what key will fit it. What means he made use of in the case of Lydia, I do not know; but I will tell you what might have happened. Perhaps she had lost her husband; many a woman's heart has been opened by that great gash. The joy of her soul has been taken away, and she has turned to God. Perhaps

her husband was spared to her; but she had lost a child. Oh, how many a babe has been sent here on purpose to entice its mother to the skies; a lamb taken away that the sheep might follow the Shepherd! Perhaps she had had bad trade; the price of purple may have fallen. She may have been half afraid she would fail in business. I have known such trouble open some people's hearts. Perhaps she had had prosperity; possibly the purple had gone up in price. I have known some so impressed with God's temporal blessings that they have been ready to think of him, and to turn to him. I do not know; I cannot guess, and I have no right to guess what it was. But I know that God has very wonderful ploughs, with which he breaks up the hard soil of human hearts. When I have been through the Britannia Iron Works, at Bedford, I have wondered at the strange clod-crushers, clod-breakers, and ploughs, made there by the Messrs. Howard; and God has some marvellous machines in his providence for turning up the soil of our hearts. I cannot tell what he has done to you, dear friend, but I do trust that whatever has happened has been opening the soil, so that the good seed may drop in. It was the Spirit of God who did it, whatever the instrument may have been, and Lydia's heart was "opened." Opened to what? To attend. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

So, first, her heart was opened to listen very intently. She wanted to catch every word. She did as some of you do, put her hand to her ear, for fear she should not hear all that was spoken. There are many ways of listening. Some people listen with both their ears, allowing it to go in at one ear and out at the other; like that wit, who, when he was being seriously spoken to, and yet seemed very inattentive, at length wearied the friend who was discoursing. "I am afraid it is not doing you much good," he said. "No," came the reply; "but I think it will do this gentleman some good," pointing to one who sat beside him, "for as it has gone in at this side it has gone out at the other." Oh, how I wish that you had only one ear, so that the truth you hear could never get out again after it had once got in! Well did the Lord speak through Isaiah the prophet unto the people, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good." Many people can listen for an hour or two to a scientific lecture, or a political speech, without feeling in the least weary; they can even go to the theater, and sit there a whole evening without dreaming of being tired;

yet they complain if the sermon is a minute beyond the appointed time. They seem to endure the preaching as a sort of penance, scarcely hearing the words, or, at least, never imagining that the message can have any application to their own case.

Lydia's heart was so opened "that she attended", that is, she listened to the word of salvation until she began to desire it. It is always a pleasure to entertain guests who relish the food placed before them; and it is a great joy to preach to those who are eagerly hungering after the truth. But how heart-breaking a task it is to keep continually praising the pearl of great price to those who know not its value, nor desire its beauty! Daniel was a man "greatly beloved"; the Hebrew word there employed means "a man of desires." He was not one of your conceited, self-satisfied individuals. He longed and yearned for better things than he had yet attained, and hence was "greatly beloved." God loves people to thirst after him, and to desire to know his love and power. Let us explain the gospel as we may, if there is no desire in the heart, our plainest messages are lost. A man said, about something he wished to make clear, "Why, it is as plain as A B C!" "Yes," said a third party, "but the man you are talking to is D E F." So, some of our hearers seem to turn away from the Word of God. But when a person says, "I want to find salvation; I want to get Christ this very day; and I am going to listen with the determination that I will find out the way of salvation;" surely, if the things spoken are the same things that Paul spoke of, few in that condition will go out of the house without finding salvation. Lydia's heart was opened to attend to the gospel, that is, to desire it.

But, next, her heart was opened to understand it. It is wonderful how little even well-educated people sometimes understand of the gospel when it is preached in the simplest manner. One is constantly being astounded by the misapprehensions that persons have as to the way of salvation. But Lydia had grasped the truth. "Thanks be to God," she said, "I see it. Jesus Christ suffered in our stead; and we, by an act of faith, accept him as our Substitute, and we are saved thereby. I have it. I never saw it before. I read about a paschal lamb, and the sprinkling of the blood, and the passing over of the houses where the blood was sprinkled. I could not quite make it out. Now I see, if the blood be sprinkled upon

me, God will pass over me, according to his word, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.'" She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, so as to understand them.

But more than that; her heart was so opened that she attended to the gospel so as to accept it. "Ah!" she said, "now I understand it, I will have it. Christ for me! Christ for me! That blessed Substitute for sinners! Is that all I have to do, simply to trust him? Then I will trust him. Sink or swim, I will cast myself upon him now." She did so there and then. There was no hesitating. She believed what Paul said; that Jesus was the Son of God, the appointed propitiation for sin, and that whose ever believed on him should then and there be justified; and she did believe in him, and she was justified; as you will be, my friend, if you will believe in him at this moment. You, too, shall have immediate salvation, my dear sister sitting yonder, if you will come, like this Lydia of old, and just take Christ to be yours, and trust him now. She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, so that she accepted Christ.

Having done that, she went further: her heart was so won, that she was, by the Spirit, led to obey the word, and avow her faith. Paul told her that the gospel was this—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He said to her, "My commission is, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'" Perhaps she said, "But why must I be baptized?" He said, "As a testimony of your obedience to Christ, whom you take to be your Master and your Lord; and as a type of your being one with him in his burial. You are to be buried in water as he was buried in the tomb of Joseph; and you are to be raised up out of the water even as he rose again from the dead. This act is to be a token and type to you of your oneness with him in his death and burial and resurrection." What did Lydia say? Did she say, "Well, I think I must wait a little while: the water is cold"? Did she say, "I think I must ask about it; I must consider it"? No, not at all. Paul tells her that this is Christ's ordinance, and she at once replies, "Here am I, Paul, let me be baptized, and my servants, too, and all that belong to my household, for they also believe in Jesus Christ. Let us have the baptism at once." There and then "she was baptized, and her household." She did at once obey the heavenly message, and she became a baptized believer.

She was not ashamed to confess Christ. She had not known him long; but what she did know of him was so blessed and joyous to her soul, that she would have said, if she had known the hymn -

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes;
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose."

You can imagine her saying, "Did he go down into the Jordan, and say, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness'? Then I will go where he leads the way, and be obedient to him, and say to all the world, 'I, too, am a follower of the crucified Christ.'"

Now, lastly, after Lydia was baptized, she became an enthusiastic Christian. She said to Paul, "You must come home with me. I know you have not anywhere to go. Come along; and there is your friend Silas. I have plenty of room for him; and Timothy too; and Luke also. We can make room for the four of you among the purple bales, or somewhere; but, at any rate, I have house-room for you four, and I have heart-room for forty thousand of you. I wish I could take in the whole church of God." Dear good woman that she was, she felt that she could not do too much for the men who had been made a blessing to her; for she regarded what she did to them as done to their Lord and Master. They might have said, "No, really, we cannot trouble you. You have the household. You have all this business to look after." "Yes," she would answer, "I know that. It is very kind of you to excuse yourselves; but you must come." "No," Paul might urge, "my dear good woman, I am going to find out some tent-makers, and make tents with them. We will find a lodging where we have been." "Ah!" she would say, "but I mean to have you. You must come to my home." "She constrained us." She would probably put it thus: "Now, I shall not think that you fully believe in me if you do not come home with me. Come, you baptized me, and by that very act you professed that you considered that I was a true believer. If you do really believe it, come and stay in my house as long as you like, and I will make you as comfortable as ever I can." So at last Paul yields to her constraint, and goes to her home. How glad they would all be, and what praise to Christ would rise

from that household! I hope that the generous spirit, which glowed in the heart of the first convert in Europe, will always continue amongst the converts of Europe till the last day. I trust that when they are called not merely to entertain God's ministers, but to help all God's people of every sort, they may be ready and willing to do it for Christ's sake; for love shall fill them with a holy hospitality, and an earnest desire to bless the children of God. Love one another, brothers and sisters, and do good to one another, as you have opportunity; for so will you be worthy followers of Lydia, the first European convert, whose heart the Lord opened.

The Lord open your hearts, for his name's sake! Amen.

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Magnificat

Awake, awake, Deborah; quake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. - Judges 5:12

Many of the saints of God are as mournful as if they were captives in Babylon, for their life is spent in tears and sighing. They will not chant the joyous psalm of praise, and if there be any that require of them a song, they reply, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" But, my brethren, we are not captives in Babylon; we do not sit down to weep by Babel's streams; "the Lord hath broken our captivity, he hath brought us up out of the house of our bondage. We are freemen; we are not slaves; we are not sold into the hand of cruel taskmasters, but we that have believed do enter into rest:" Hebrews 4:3. Moses could not give rest to Israel; he could bring them to Jordan, but across the stream he could not conduct them; Joshua alone could lead them into the lot of their inheritance, and our Joshua, our Jesus, has led us into the land of promise. He hath brought us into a land which the Lord our God thinketh on; a land of hills and valleys; a land that floweth with milk and honey;

and though the Canaanites still be in the land, and plague us full sore, yet is it all our own, and he hath said unto us, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's:" 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. We are not, I say, captives, sold under sin; we are a people who sit every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none making us afraid. We dwell in "a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks:" Isaiah 26:1. We have come unto Zion, the city of our solemnities, and the mourning of Babylon is not suitable to the palace of the great King, which is beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. "Let us serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with singing:" Psalm 100:2. Many of God's people live as if their God were dead. Their conduct would be quite consistent if the promises were not yea and amen; if God were a faithless God. If Christ were not a perfect Redeemer; if the Word of God might after all turn out to be untrue; if he had not power to keep his people, and if he had not love enough with which to hold them even to the end, then might they give way to mourning and to despair; then might they cover their heads with ashes, and wrap their loins about with sackcloth. But while God is Jehovah, just and true; while his promises stand as fast as the eternal mountains; while the heart of Jesus is true to his spouse; while the arm of God is unpalsied, and his eye undimmed; while his covenant and his oath are unbroken and unchanged; It is not comely, it is not seemly for the upright to go mourning all their days. Ye children of God, refrain yourselves from weeping, and make a joyful noise unto the Rock of your salvation; let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.

"Your harps, ye trembling saints,
Down from the willows take;
Loud to the praise of love divine,
Bid every string awake."

First, I shall urge upon you a stirring up of all your powers to sacred song. "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song." In the second place, I shall persuade you to practice a sacred leading of your captivity captive. "Arise, Barrak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."

I. First, then, A STIRRING UP OF ALL OUR POWERS TO PRAISE GOD, according to the words of the holy woman in the text, "Awake, awake,"—repeated yet again "Awake, awake."

1. WHAT is there that we need to awaken if we would praise God? I reply, we ought to arouse all the bodily powers. Our flesh is sluggish; we have been busy with the world, our limbs have grown fatigued, but there is power in divine joy to arouse even the body itself, to make the heavy eyelids light, to reanimate the drowsy eye, and quicken the weary brain. We should call upon our bodies to awake, especially our tongue, "the glory of our frame." Let it put itself in tune like David's harp of old. A toilworn body often makes a mournful heart. The flesh has such a connection with the spirit, that it often boweth down the soul. Come, then, my flesh, I charge thee, awake. Blood, leap in my veins? Heart, let thy pulsings be as the joy-strokes of Miriam's timbrel! Oh, all my bodily frame, stir up thyself now, and begin to magnify and bless the Lord, who made thee, and who has kept thee in health, and preserved thee from going down into the grave.

Surely we should call on all our mental powers to awake. Wake up my memory and find matter for the song. Tell what God has done for me in days gone by. Fly back ye thoughts to my childhood; sing of cradle mercies. Review my youth and its early favors. Sing of longsuffering grace, which followed my wandering, and bore with my rebellions. Revive before my eyes that gladsome hour when first I knew the Lord, and tell o'er again the matchless story of the "Streams of mercy never ceasing," which have flowed to me since then, and which "Call for songs of loudest praise." Awake up my judgment and give measure to the music. Come forth my understanding, and weigh his lovingkindness in scales, and his goodness in the balances. See if thou canst count the small dust of his mercies. See if thou canst understand the riches unsearchable which he hath given to thee in that unspeakable gift of Christ Jesus my Lord. Reckon up his eternal mercies to thee—the treasures of that covenant which he made on thy behalf, ere thou wast born. Sing, my understanding, sing aloud of that matchless wisdom which contrived—of that divine love which planned, and of that eternal grace which carried

out the scheme of thy redemption. Awake, my imagination, and dance to the holy melody. Gather pictures from all worlds. Bid sun and moon stay in their courses, and join in thy new song. Constrain the stars to yield the music of the spheres; put a tongue into every mountain, and a voice into every wilderness; translate the lowing of the cattle and the scream of the eagle; hear thou the praise of God in the rippling of the rills, the dashing of the cataracts, and the roaring of the sea, until all his works in all places of his dominion bless the Lord.

But especially let us cry to all the graces of our spirit—"awake." Wake up, my love, for thou must strike the key-note and lead the strain. Awake and sing unto thy beloved a song touching thy well-beloved. Give unto him choice canticles, for he is the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Come forth then with thy richest music, and praise the name which is as ointment poured forth. Wake up, my hope, and join hands with thy sister—love; and sing of blessings yet to come. Sing of my dying hour, when he shall be with me on my couch. Sing of the rising morning, when my body shall leap from its tomb into her Savior's arms! Sing of the expected advent, for which thou lookest with delight! And, O my soul, sing of that heaven which he has gone before to prepare for thee, "that where he is, there may his people be." Awake my love—awake my hope—and thou my faith, awake also! Love has the sweetest voice, hope can thrill forth the higher notes of the saved scale; but thou, O faith—with thy deep resounding base melody—thou must complete the song. Sing of the promise sure and certain. Rehearse the glories of the covenant ordered in all things, and sure. Rejoice in the sure mercies of David! Sing of the goodness which shall be known to thee in all thy trials yet to come. Sing of that blood which has sealed and ratified every word of God. Glory in that eternal faithfulness which cannot lie, and of that truth which cannot fail. And thou, my patience, utter thy gentle but most gladsome hymn. Sing to-day of how he helped thee to endure in sorrows' bitterest hour. Sing of the weary way along which he has borne thy feet, and brought thee at last to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. Oh, all my graces, heaven-begotten as ye are, praise him who did beget you. Ye children of his grace, sing unto your Father's name, and magnify him who keeps you alive. Let all that in me is be stirred up to magnify and bless his holy name.

Then let us wake up the energy of all those powers—the energy of the body, the energy of the mind, the energy of the spirit. You know what it is to do a thing coldly, weakly. As well might we not praise at all. You know also what it is to praise God passionately—to throw energy into all the song, and so to exult in his name. So do ye, each one of you, this day; and if Michal, Saul's daughter, should look out of the window and see David dancing before the ark with all his might, and should chide you as though your praise were unseemly, say unto her, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, therefore will I play before the Lord:" 2 Samuel 6:21. Tell the enemy that the God of election must be praised, that the God of redemption must be extolled,—that if the very heathen leaped for joy before their gods, surely they who bow before Jehovah must adore him with rapture and with ecstasy. Go forth, go forth with joy then, with all your energies thoroughly awakened for his praise.

2. But you say unto me, "WHY and wherefore should we this day awake and sing unto our God?" There be many reasons; and if your hearts be right, one may well satisfy. Come, ye children of God, and bless his dear name; for doth not all nature around you sing? If you were silent, you would be an exception to the universe. Doth not the thunder praise him as it rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies? Doth not the ocean praise him as it claps its thousand hands? Doth not the sea roar, and the fullness thereof? Do not the mountains praise him when the shaggy woods upon their summits wave in adoration? Do not the lightnings write his name in letters of fire upon the midnight darkness? Doth not this world, in its unceasing revolutions, perpetually roll forth his praise? Hath not the whole earth a voice, and shall we be silent? Shall man, for whom the world was made, and suns and stars were created,—shall he be dumb? No, let him lead the strain. Let him be the world's high priest, and while the world shall be as the sacrifice, let him add his heart thereto, and thus supply the fire of love which shall make that sacrifice smoke towards heaven.

But, believer, shall not thy God be praised? I ask thee. Shall not thy God be praised? When men behold a hero, they fall at his feet and honor him. Garibaldi emancipates a nation, and lo, they bow before him and do him

homage. And thou Jesus, the Redeemer of the multitudes of thine elect, shalt thou have no song? Shalt thou have no triumphal entry into our hearts? Shall thy name have no glory? Shall the world love its own, and shall not the Church honor its own Redeemer? Our God must be praised. He shall be. If no other heart should ever praise him, surely mine must. If creation should forget him, his redeemed must remember him. Tell us to be silent? Oh, we cannot. Bid us restrain our holy mirth? Indeed you bid us do an impossibility. He is God, and he must be extolled; he is our God, our gracious, our tender, our faithful God, and he must have the best of our songs.

Thou sayest, believer, why should I praise him? Let me ask thee a question too. Is it not heaven's employment to praise him? And what can make earth more like heaven, than to bring down from heaven the employment of glory, and to be occupied with it here? Come, believer, when thou prayest, thou art but a man, but when thou praisest, thou art as an angel. When thou asketh favor, thou art but a beggar, but when thou standest up to extol, thou becomest next of kin to cherubim and seraphim. Happy, happy day, when the glorious choristers shall find their numbers swelled by the addition of multitudes from earth! Happy day when you and I shall join the eternal chorus. Let us begin the music here. Let us strike some of the first notes at least; and if we cannot sound the full thunders of the eternal hallelujah, let us join as best we may. Let us make the wilderness and the solitary place rejoice, and bid the desert blossom as the rose.

Besides, Christian, dost thou not know that it is a good thing for thee to praise thy God? Mourning weakens thee, doubts destroy thy strength; thy groping among the ashes makes thee of the earth, earthy. Arise, for praise is pleasant and profitable to thee. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." "Delight thyself in the Lord and he will give thee the desire of thine heart." Thou growest in grace when thou growest in holy joy; thou art more heavenly, more spiritual, more Godlike, as thou gettest more full of joy and peace in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. I know some Christians are afraid of gladness, but I read, "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." If murmuring were a duty, some saints would never sin, and if mourning were commanded by God they would certainly be

saved by works, for they are always sorrowing, and so they would keep his law. Instead thereof the Lord hath said it, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice;" and he has added, to make it still more strong, "Rejoice evermore."

But I ask you one other question, believer. Thou sayest, "Why should I awake, this morning to sing unto my God?" I reply to thee, "Hast thou not a cause?" Hath he not done great things for thee, and art thou not glad thereof? Hath he not taken thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; hath he not set thy feet upon a rock and established thy goings, and is there no new song in thy mouth? What, art thou bought with blood, and yet hast thou a silent tongue? Loved of thy God before the world began and yet not sing his praise! What, art thou his child, an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ, and yet no notes of gratitude? What I has he fed thee this day? Did he deliver thee yesterday out of many troubles? Has he been with thee these thirty, these forty, these fifty years in the wilderness, and yet hast thou no mercy for which to praise him? O shame on thy ungrateful heart, and thy forgetful spirit; come pluck up courage, think of thy mercies and not of thy miseries, forget thy pains awhile and think of thy many deliverances. Put thy feet on the neck of thy doubts and thy fears, and God the Holy Ghost, being thy Comforter, begin from this good hour to utter a song.

3. "But," saith one, "WHEN shall I do this? When shall I praise my God?" I answer, praise ye the Lord all his people, at all times, and give thanks at every remembrance of him. Extol him even when your souls are drowsy and your spirits are inclined to sleep. When we are awake there is little cause to say to us four times, "Awake, awake, awake, awake, utter a song;" but when we feel most drowsy with sorrow and our eyelids are heavy, when afflictions sore are pressing us down to the very dust, then is the time to sing psalms unto our God and praise him in the very fire. But this takes much grace, and I trust brethren you know that there is much grace to be had. Seek it of your divine Lord, and be not content without it; be not easily cast down by troubles, nor soon made silent because of your woes; think of the martyrs of old, who sang sweetly at the stake; think of Ann Askew, of all the pains she bore for Christ, and then of her courageous praise of God in her last moments. Often she had been

tortured, tortured most terribly; she lay in prison expecting death, and when there she wrote a verse in old English words and rhyme,

"I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall,
For every dryslynge myst;
My shippe's substancyal."

Meaning thereby, that she would not stop her course and cast her anchor for every drizzling mist; she had a ship that could bear a storm, one that could break all the waves that beat against it, and joyously cut through the foam. So shall it be with you. Give not God fine weather songs, give him black tempest praises; give him not merely summer music, as some birds will do and then fly away; give him winter tunes. Sing in the night like the nightingales, praise him in the fires, sing his high praises even in the shadow of death, and let the tomb resound with the shouts of your sure confidence. So may you give to God what God may well claim at your hands.

When shall you praise him? Why, praise him when you are full of doubts, even when temptations assail you, when poverty hovers round you, and when sickness bows you down. They are cheap songs which we give to God when we are rich; it is easy enough to kiss the hand of a giving God, but to bless him when he takes away—this is to bless him indeed. To cry like Job, "though he slay me yet will I trust in him," or to sing like Habukkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Oh Christian, thou askest me when thou shalt rejoice, I say to-day, "Awake, awake, O Deborah, awake, awake, utter a song."

4. Yet once more, you reply to me, "But HOW can I praise my God?" I will be teacher of music to thee, and may the Comforter be with me. Wilt thou think this morning how great are thy mercies. Thou art not blind, nor deaf, nor dumb; thou art not a lunatic; thou art not decrepid; thou art not vexed with piercing pains; thou art not full of agony caused by disease;

thou art not going down to the grave; thou art not in torments, not in hell. Thou art still in the land of the living, the land of love, the land of grace, the land of hope. 'Even if this were all, there were enough reason for thee to praise thy God. Thou art not this day what thou once wert, a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious; the song of the drunkard is not on thy lips, the lascivious desire is not in thy heart. And is not this a theme for praise. Remember but a little while ago, with very many of you, all these sins were your delight and your joy. Oh! must not you praise him, ye chief of sinners, whose natures have been changed, whose hearts have been renewed. Ye sons of Korah, lead the sacred song! Bethink you of your iniquities, which have all been put away, and your transgressions covered, and none of them laid to your charge; think of the privileges you this day enjoy; elect, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, adopted, and preserved in Christ Jesus. Why man, if a stone or rock could but for a moment have such privileges as these, the very adamant must melt and the dumb rock give forth hosannas. And will you be still when your mercies are so great! Let them not lie—"Forgotten in unthankfulness, and without praises die." Bethink thee yet again how little are thy trials after all. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. Thou art poor, it is true, but then thou art not sick; or thou art sick, but still thou art not left to wallow in sin; and all afflictions are but little when once sin is put away. Compare thy trials with those of many who live in thine own neighborhood. Put thy sufferings side by side with the sufferings of some whom thou hast seen on their dying bed; compare thy lot with that of the martyrs who have entered into their rest; and oh I say, thou wilt be compelled to exclaim with Paul, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." Come, now, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, be of good cheer, and rejoice in the Lord your God, if it were for no other reason than that of the brave-hearted Luther. When he had been most slandered—when the Pope had launched out a new bull, and when the kings of the earth had threatened him fiercely—Luther would gather together his friends, and say, "Come let us sing a psalm and spite the devil." He would ever sing the most psalms when the world roared the most. Let us today join in that favourite psalm of the great German, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be

carried in the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—Psalm 46:I say, then, sing to make Satan angry. He has vexed the saints; let us vex him.

Praise ye the Lord to put the world to the blush. Never let it be said that the world can make its votaries more happy than Christ can make his followers. Oh, let your songs be so continual, and so sweet, that the wicked may be compelled to say, "That man's life is happier than mine; I long to exchange with him. There is a something in his religion which my sin and my wicked pleasures can never afford me." O praise the Lord ye saints, that sinners' mouths may be set a watering after the things of God. Specially praise him in your trials, if you would make the world wonder—strike sinners dumb, and make them long to know and taste the joys of which you are a partaker.

"Alas!" said one, "but I cannot sing; I have nothing to sing of, nothing without for which I could praise God." It is remarked by old commentators that the windows of Solomon's temple were narrow on the outside, but that they were broad within, and that they were so cut, that though they seemed to be but small openings, yet the light was well diffused. (See Hebrew of 1 Kings 6:4.) So is it with the windows of a believer's joy. They may look very narrow without, but they are very wide within; there is more joy to be gotten from that which is within us than from that which is without us. God's grace within, God's love, the witness of his Spirit in our hearts, are better themes of joy than all the corn and wine, and oil, with which God sometimes increases his saints. So if thou hast no outward mercies, sing of inward mercies. If the water fail without, go to that fons perennis, that perpetual fountain which is within thine own soul. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." Proverbs 14:14. When thou seest no cheering providence without, yet look at grace within. "Awake, awake, Deborah! awake, awake, utter a song."

II. I now turn to the second part of my subject, upon which very briefly. I know not whether you feel as I do, but in preaching upon this theme, I mourn a scantiness of words, and a slowness of language. If I could let my heart talk without my lips, methinks with God's Spirit I could move you

indeed with joy. But these lips find that the language of the heart is above them. The tongue discovereth that it cannot reach the fullness of joy that is within. Let it beam from my face, if it cannot be spoken from my mouth.

And now the second part of the subject. "ARISE, BARAK, AND LEAD THY CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, THOU SON OF ABINOAM."

You understand the exact picture here. Barak had routed Sisera, Jabin's captain, and all his hosts. She now exhorts Barak to celebrate his triumph. "Mount, mount thy car, O Barak, and ride through the midst of the people. Let the corpse of Sisera, with Jael's nail driven through its temples, be dragged behind thy chariot. Let the thousand captives of the Canaanites walk all of them with their arms bound behind them. Drive before thee the ten thousand flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle which thou hast taken as a spoil. Let their chariots of iron, and all their horses be led captive in grand procession. Bring up all the treasures and the jewels of which thou hast stripped the slain; their armor, their shields, their spears, bound up as glorious trophies. Arise, Barak, lead captive those who led thee captive, and celebrate thy glorious victory."

Beloved, this is a picture which is often used in Scripture. Christ is said to have led captivity captive, when he ascended on high. He led principalities and powers captive at his chariot-wheels. But here is a picture for us—not concerning Christ, but concerning ourselves. We are exhorted to-day to lead captivity captive. Come up, come up, ye grim hosts of sins, once my terror and dismay. Long was I your slave, O ye Egyptian tyrants; long did this back smart beneath your lash when conscience was awakened, and long did these members of my body yield themselves as willing servants to obey your dictates. Come up ye sins, come up for ye are prisoners now; ye are bound in fetters of iron, nay, more than this, ye are utterly slain, consumed, destroyed; you have been covered with Jesus' blood; ye have been blotted out by his mercy ye have been cast by his power into the depths of the sea, yet would I bid your ghosts come up, slain though ye be, and walk in grim procession behind my chariot. Arise, celebrate your triumph, oh ye people of God. Your sins are many, but they are all forgiven. Your iniquities are great, but they are

all put away. Arise and lead captive those who led you captive—your blasphemies, your forgetfulness of God, your drunkenness, your lust, all the vast legion that once oppressed you. They are all clean destroyed. Come and look upon them, sing their death psalm, and chant the life psalm of your grateful joy; lead your sins captive this very day.

Bring hither in bondage another host who once seemed too many for us, but whom by God's grace we have totally overcome. Arise my trials; ye have been very great and very numerous; ye came against me as a great host, and ye were tall and strong like the sons of Anak. Oh! my soul, thou hast trodden down strength; by the help of our God have we leaped over a wall; by his power have we broken through the troops of our troubles, our difficulties, and our fears. Come now, look back, and think of all the trials you have ever encountered. Death in your family; losses in your business; afflictions in your body; despair in your soul; and yet here you are, more than conquerors over them all. Come, bid them all walk now in procession. To the God of our deliverances—who has delivered us out of deep waters—who has brought us out of the burning, fiery furnace, so that not the smell of fire has passed upon us—to him be all the glory, while we lead our captivity captive.

Arise and let us lead captive all our temptations. You, my brethren, have been foully tempted to the vilest sins. Satan has shot a thousand darts at you, and hurled his javelin multitudes of times; bring out the darts and snap them before his eyes, for he has never been able to reach your heart. Come, break the bow and cut the spear in sunder; burn the chariot in the fire. "Thy right hand, O Lord, thy right hand O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy; thou hast broken, thou hast put to confusion them that hated us; thou hast scattered the tempters, and driven them far away "Come, ye children of God, kept and preserved where so many have fallen, lead now this day your temptations captive.

I think that you as a church, and I as your minister, can indeed lead captivity captive this day. There has been no single church of God existing in England for these fifty years which has had to pass through more trial than we have done. We can say, "Men did ride over our heads." We went through fire and through water, and what has been the result of it all?

God hath brought us out into a wealthy place and set our feet in a large room, and all the devices of the enemy have been of none effect. Scarce a day rolls over my head in which the most villainous abuse, the most fearful slander is not uttered against me both privately and by the public press; every engine is employed to put down God's minister—every lie that man can invent is hurled at me. But hitherto the Lord hath helped me. I have never answered any man, nor spoken a word in my own defense. from the first day even until now. And the effect has been this: God's people have believed nothing against me; they who feared the Lord have said often as a new falsehood has been uttered, "This is not true concerning that man; he will not answer for himself, but God will answer for him." They have not checked our usefulness as a church; they have not thinned our congregations; that which was to be but a spasm—an enthusiasm which it was hoped would only last an hour—God has daily increased; not because of me, but because of that gospel which I preach; not because there was anything in me, but because I came out as the exponent of plain, straight-forward, honest Calvinism, and because I seek to speak the Word simply, not according to the critical dictates of man, but so that the poor may comprehend what I have to say. The Lord has helped us as a church; everything has contributed to help us; the great and terrible catastrophe invented by Satan to overturn us, was only blessed of God to swell the stream; and now I would not stay a liar's mouth if I could, nor would I stop a slanderer if it were in my power, except it were that he might not sin, for all these things tend to our profit, and all these attacks do but widen the stream of usefulness. Many a sinner has been converted to God in this hall who was first brought here, because of some strange anecdote, some lying tale which had been told of God's servant, the minister. I say it boasting in the Lord my God, this morning, though I become a fool in glorying, I do lead in God's name my captivity captive. Arise! arise! ye members of this church, ye who have followed the son of Barak, and have gone up as the thousands at his feet; arise and triumph for God is with us, and his cause shall prosper; his own right arm is made bare in the eyes of all the people, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

As it is in this single church, and in our own individual sphere, so shall it be in the church at large. God's ministers are all attacked; God's truth is

everywhere assailed. A terrible battle awaits us; but oh! Church of God, remember thy former victories. Awake, ministers of Christ, and lead your captivity captive. Sing how the idols of Greece tottered before you. Say, "Where is Diana? Where now the gods that made glad Ephesus of old?" And thou, O Rome, was not thine arm broken before the majesty of the Church's might? Where now is Jupiter; where Saturn, where Venus? They have ceased to be. And thou Juggernaut—them Bramah—ye Gods of China and Hindostan—ye too must fall, for this day the sons of Jehovah arise and lead their captivity captive. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He breaketh the bow, he cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth." Church of God, come forth with songs, come forth with shouting to your last battle. Behold the battle of Armageddon draweth nigh. Blow ye the silver trumpets for the fight, ye soldiers of the cross. Come on, come on, ye leagured hosts of hell. Strong in the strength of God most High, we shall dash back your ranks as the rock breaketh the waves of the sea. We shall stand against you and triumph, and tread you down as ashes under the soles of our feet. "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."

Would to God that the joy of heart which we feel this morning may tempt some soul to seek the like. It is to be found in Christ at the foot of his dear cross. Believe on him, sinners and thou art saved.

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The Majestic Voice

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. - Psalm 29:4

All God's works praise him, whether they be magnificent or minute, they all discover the wisdom, the power, and the benevolence of their Creator. "All thy works praise thee, O God." But there are some of his more

majestic works which sing the song of praise louder than others. There are some of his doings, upon which there seems to be graven in larger letters than usual the name of God. Such are the lofty mountains, which worship God with uncovered heads both night and day; such are the rolling seas, too mighty to be managed by man, but held in check by God, and such, especially, are the thunders and the lightnings. The lightnings are the glances of the eyes of God, and the thunders are the utterings of his voice. The thunder has been usually attributed to God more especially, though philosophers assure us that it is to be accounted for by natural causes. We believe them, but we prefer, ourselves, to look to the first great cause, and we are content with that old and universal belief, that the thunder is the voice of God. It is marvellous what effect the thunder has had upon all kinds of men. In reading an ode of Horace the other day, I found him in the first two verses, singing like a true Ithurean, that he despised God, and intended to live merrily; but by-and-bye he hears the thunder, and acknowledging that there is a Jehovah, who lives on high, he trembles before him. The most wicked of men have been obliged to acknowledge that there must be a Creator, when they have heard that marvellous voice of his sounding through the sky. Men of the stoutest nerve and the boldest blasphemy have become the weakest of all creatures, when God has in some degree manifested himself in the mighty whirlwind, or in the storm. "He breaketh the cedars of Lebanon;" he bringeth down the stout hearts; he layeth down the mighty, and he obliges those who never acknowledged him to reverence him when they hear his voice. The Christian will acknowledge the thunder to be the voice of God, from the fact, that if he be in the right frame of mind, it always suggest to him holy thoughts. I do not know how it may be with you, but I scarce ever hear the rolling thunder, but I begin to forget earth and look upwards to my God. I am unconscious of any feeling of terror or pain; it is rather a feeling of delight that I experience, for I like to sing that verse -

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when he please,
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas;
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love,

He shall send down his heavenly powers
To carry us above."

He is our God, and I like to sing that, and think of it: but there is something so terrible in the tone of that voice when God is speaking, something so terrific to other men, and humbling to the Christian, that he is obliged to sink very low in his own estimation; then he looks up to God, and cries, "infinite Jehovah, spare a worm, crush not an unworthy wretch. I know it is thy voice; I reverence thee with solemn awe; I prostrate myself before thy throne; thou art my God, and beside thee there is none else." It might well have occurred to a Jewish mind to have called the thunder the voice of God, when he considered the loudness of it, when all other voices are hushed; even if they be the loudest voices mortals can utter, or the most mighty sounds; yet are they but indistinct whispers, compared with the voice of God in the thunder; and indeed, they are entirely lost when God speaks from his throne, and makes even the deaf hear, and those who are unwilling to acknowledge him hear his voice.

But we need not stop to prove, that the thunder is the voice of God, from any natural feeling of man; we have Scripture to back us up, and therefore we shall do our best to appeal to that. In the first place, there is a passage in the book of Exodus where I would refer you; where, in the margin, we are told that the thunder is the voice of God. In the 9th chapter and the 28th verse, Pharaoh says, "Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail." The original Hebrew has it, and my margin has it, and the margin of all you who are wise enough to have marginal Bibles - "Voices of God." "Let there be no more voices of God and hail." So that it is not a mere illusion, but we are really warranted by Scripture, in saying, that "the thunder is the voice of God lifted up in the sky." Now, for another proof; to what shall we refer you unless we send you to the book of Job? In his 37th chapter, 3rd verse, he says, "he directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency: and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend." And so he says in the 40th chapter, at the 9th

verse, "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" I am glad, in this age, when men are seeking to forget God, and put him entirely out of the creation, and trying to put laws in the place of God, as if laws could govern a universe without some one to execute those laws, and put power and force into them - I am glad, I say, to be able to bear testimony to something which men cannot deny to be caused immediately by God the mighty One himself.

There is one striking proof I would offer to you, that the thunder is the voice of God; and that is the fact, that when God spake on Sinai, and gave forth his law, his voice is then described, if not in the first passage, yet in the reference to it, as being great thunders. "There were thunders and lightnings, exceedingly loud and long." God spoke then, and he spoke so terribly in thunder, that the people requested that they might hear that voice no more. And I must refer you to one passage in the New Testament, which will bear me out thoroughly in describing the thunder to be, indeed, the voice of God; and that is in the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, where Jesus lifted up his voice to heaven at the tomb of Lazarus, and asked his Father to answer him; and then a voice came from heaven, and they that stood by said, "that it thundered;" it was the voice of God which was then heard, and they ascribed it to the thunder. Here is a remarkable proof when God's voice has been heard on any remarkable occasion, it has always been accompanied by the sound of thunder, or, rather, has been the sound of thunder itself.

Well, now, leaving these considerations altogether, we come to make some remarks, not upon the voice of God in the thunder, but upon the voice of God as elsewhere heard; for it is not only heard there naturally, but there are spiritual voices and other voices of the Most High. "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty." God has spoken in various ways to man, in order that man might not think him a God so engrossed with himself that he does not observe his creatures. It has graciously pleased the Divine Being, sometimes to look upon man, at other times to stretch out his hand to man, sometimes to reveal himself in mortal appearance to man, and frequently to speak to man. At sundry times he has spoken absolutely without the use of means - by his own voice, as for instance, when he spoke from Sinai's blazing mountain-top, or when he spoke to

Samuel in his bed, and said unto him several times, "Samuel, Samuel;" or when he spoke to Elijah, and Elijah said, "he heard the whirlwind, and he saw the fire;" and after that there was "a still small voice." He has spoken immediately from heaven by his own lips on one or two occasions in the life of Christ. He spoke to him at the waters of Jordan, when he said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He spoke to him on another occasion, to which we have already referred. He spoke - it was God that spoke, though it was Jesus Christ - he spoke to Saul, when on his way to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He has spoken several times immediately by his own voice, without the intervention of means at all; at other seasons, God has been pleased to speak to men by angels. He has, as it were, written the message, and sent it down by his messenger from on high: he hath told to man many wonders and secrets by the lips of those glorious beings, who are flaming spirits of his, that do his pleasure. As frequently, perhaps, God has spoken to men in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon them. Then, when the natural ear hath been closed, he hath opened the ear of the spirit, and he hath taught truths which, otherwise, men could never have known. More frequently still, God hath spoken to men by men. From the days of Noah even until now, God has raised up his prophets, by whose lips he hath spoken. It was not Jeremiah who uttered that lament which we read, but it was Jehovah, the God in Jeremiah, speaking through the natural organs of his voice. It was not Isaiah who foresaw the future, and foretold the doom of nations, it was God in Isaiah thus speaking. And so with every prophet of the Lord now living, and every minister whom God hath raised up to speak: when we speak with power and efficacy, and unction, it is not we that speak, but it is the Spirit of our Father who dwelleth in us. God speaks through men; and now also, we know that God speaks through his own written Word of Inspiration. When we turn to the page of Scripture, we must not look upon these words as being in any degree the words of men, but as being the words of God. And though they be silent, yet do they speak; and though they cause no noise, yet, verily, "their sound hath gone forth throughout all the world, and their noise unto the ends of the earth." And yet, again, God even now speaks himself by the use of means; he does not make man speak, he does not make the Bible speak merely of itself, but he speaks through the Bible, and through the man, and there be times when the

Spirit of God speaks in the heart of man without the use of means. I believe there be many secret impulses, many solemn thoughts, many mysterious directions given to us without a single word having been uttered, but by the simple motions of God's Spirit in the heart. This thing I know, that when I have neither heard nor read, I have yet felt the voice of God within me, and the Spirit hath, himself, revealed some dark mystery, opened some secret, guided me into some truth, given me some direction, led me in some path, or in some other way hath immediately spoken to me himself; and I believe it is so with every man at conversion; with every Christian, as he is carried on through his daily life, and especially as he nears the shores of the grave - that God, the Everlasting One, speaks himself to his soul, with a voice that he cannot resist, although he may have resisted the mere voice of man. The voice of the Lord is still heard, even as it was heard aforetime. Glory be to his name!

And now, my beloved, I come to the doctrine, "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty." First of all, *essentially*, "The voice of the Lord" *must* be "full of majesty;" secondly, *constantly*, "the voice of the Lord is full of majesty;" thirdly, *efficaciously*, in all it does, "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

I. First, then, "THE VOICE OF THE LORD IS FULL OF MAJESTY." Ay, and so it should be. Should not that voice be full of majesty which comes from Majesty? Is not God the King of kings, and the Ruler of the whole earth? Should he, then, speak with a voice below his own dignity? Should not the king speak with the voice of a king? Should not a mighty monarch speak with a monarch's tongue? And surely, if God be God, and if he be the Master of all worlds, and the Emperor of the universe, he must, when he speaks, speak with the monarch's tongue and with a majestic voice. The very nature of God requires that all he does should be God-like. His looks are looks divine; his thoughts are thoughts divine; and should not his words be words divine, since they come from him? Verily, from the very essence of God, we might infer that his voice would be full of majesty.

But what do we mean by a voice having majesty? I take it that no man's voice can have majesty in it unless it is true; a lie, if it should be spoken in

the noblest language, would never be majestic; a falsehood, if it be uttered by the most eloquent lips, would be a mean and paltry thing, however it might be spoken; and an untruth, wherever uttered, and by whomsoever, is not majestic; it never can be truth, and truth only can ever have majesty about it; and because God's word are pure truth, unalloyed with the least degree of error, therefore does it come to pass that his words are full of majesty. Whatever I hear my Father say in Scripture, whatever he speaks to me by the ministry, or by his Spirit, if he speaks it, there is not the slightest alloy of untruth about it. I may receive it just as it is.

"My faith may on his promise live,
May on his promise die."

I need not reason about it; it is enough for me to take it and believe it, because he has said it. I need not try to prove it to the worldling: if I were to prove it, he would believe it none the better; if the voice of God's majesty doth not convince him, sure the voice of my reasoning never can. I need not stand and cut and divide between the voice of God and the other; I know it must be true, if he has said it; and therefore I will believe all that I believe God has said, believing that his voice is full of majesty.

Then, again, when we speak of a majestic voice, we mean by it, that it is a *commanding voice*. A man may speak truth, and yet there may be but little majesty in what he says, because he speaks it in a tone that never can command attention and catch the ear of his fellow creatures. In fact, there are some men, expounders of truth, who had better hold their tongues, for they do truth an injury. We know full many who affect to preach God's truth, who go out to battle, who take the lance in their hands to defend the honor of Christ, but who wield the lance so ill, and who have so little of God's Spirit, that they do but disgrace his holy name, and it would have been better had they remained at home. Oh! beloved, God's voice, when he speaks, is always a commanding voice. Let the monarch arise in the midst of his creatures; they may have been conversing with each other before; but hush! his majesty is about to speak. It is so with the majesty of God; if he should speak in heaven the angels would hush their hallelujahs, and suspend the notes of their

golden harps, to hear him; and when he speaks on earth, it is at all times becoming in all his creatures to hush their rebellious passions, and make the voice of their reason be silent. When God speaks, either from the pulpit or from his Word, I hold it to be my duty to keep silence. Even while we sing the glories of our God, our soul stands trembling; but when he speaks forth his own glories, who is he that dares to reply? Who is he that shall lift up his voice against the majesty of heaven? There is something so majestic in the voice of God, that when he speaks, it commands silence everywhere, and bids men hear.

But there is something *very powerful* in the voice of God, and that is the reason why it has majesty in it. When God speaks, he speaks not weakly, but with a voice full of power. We poor creatures, at times, are clothed by God with that might, and when we speak grace comes pouring from our lips; but there are oftentimes seasons when we meet with small success; we talk and talk, and have not our Master's feet behind us, nor our Master's spirit within us, and therefore but little is done. It is not so with God: he never wasted a word yet; never spoke a solitary word in vain. Whatever he intended he had but to speak and it was accomplished. Once he said, "Let there be light," and instantly light was. So he said in past eternity that Christ should be his first elect, and Christ was his first elect. He decreed out salvation; he spake the word, and it was done. He sent his Son to redeem, and proclaimed to his elect justification in him. And his voice was a powerful voice, for it did justify us. Any other man's voice could not pardon sin; none but the voice of the monarch can speak pardon to the subject; and God's is a majestic voice, for he has only to speak, and our pardon is at once signed, sealed, and ratified. God is not magniloquent in his words; he does not speak big, sounding words, without meaning. The simplest word he utters may have little meaning to man, but it has a power and meaning in it equal to the omnipotence of God. There is a majesty about the voice of God which might suffice to nerve my soul to fight the dragon; to say, "Where is thy boasted victory, death? Where is the monster's sting?" That one promise hath majesty enough in it to make the dwarf a giant, and the weakling one of the mighties of the Most High. It has might enough in it to feed a whole host in the wilderness; to guide a whole company through the mazes of mortal life; majesty enough to divide the Jordan, to open the gates of heaven,

and admit the ransomed in. Beloved, I cannot tell you how it is that God's voice is so majestic, except from the fact, that he is so mighty himself, and that his words are like him.

But just one thought more concerning the voice of God being essentially majestic; and I must trouble you to remember that, if you forget everything else that I have said. In some sense Jesus Christ may be called the voice of God, for you know he is called the Word of God frequently in Scripture; and I am sure this Word of God "is full of majesty." The voice and the word are very much the same thing. God speaks: it is his Son. His Son is the Word; the Word is his Son, and the voice is his Son. Ah! truly the voice, the Word of God, "is full of majesty." Angels! ye can tell what majesty sublime invested his blest person when he reigned at his Father's right hand; ye can tell what were the brightnesses which he laid aside to become incarnate; ye can tell how sparkling was that crown, how mighty was that sceptre, how glorious were those robes bedecked with stars. Spirits! ye who saw him when he stripped himself of all his glories, ye can tell what was his majesty. And oh! ye glorified, ye who saw him ascend up on high, leading captivity captive - ye beloved songsters, who bow before him, and unceasingly sing his love! ye can tell how full of majesty he is. High above all principalities and powers ye see him sit; angels are but servants at his feet; and the mightiest monarchs like creeping worms beneath his throne. High there, where God alone reigns, beyond the ken of angels or the gaze of immortal spirits - there he sits, not majestic merely, but full of majesty. Christian! adore your Saviour; adore the Son of God; reverence him, and remember at all seasons and times, how little so ever you may be, your Saviour, with whom you are allied, the Word of God, is essentially full of majesty.

II. Now the second point, IT IS CONSTANTLY FULL OF MAJESTY. God's voice, like man's voice, has its various tones and degrees of loudness; but it is full of majesty, constantly so - whatever *tone* he uses, it is always full of majesty. Sometimes God speaks to man with a harsh voice, threatening him for sin; and then there is majesty in that harshness. When man is angry with his fellows, and he speaks harshly and severely, there is little majesty in that; but when the just God is angry with sinful mortals, and he says, "I will by no means spare the guilty;" "I,

the Lord, am a jealous God;" when he declares himself to be exceedingly wroth, and asks who can stand before the fury of his countenance - when the rocks are cast down by him - there is a majesty in that terrific voice of his. Then he adopts another voice. Sometimes it is a gentle didactic voice, teaching us what he would have us learn. And then how full of majesty it is! He explains, he expounds, he declares: he tells us what we are to believe; and what a majesty there is in his voice then! Men may explain God's Word, and have no majesty in what they say; but when God teaches what his people are to hold to be truth, what majesty there is in it! So much majesty, that if any man take away from the words that are written in this Book, God shall take away his name out of the book of life and out of the holy city - so much majesty, that to seek to mend the Bible is a proof of a blasphemous heart, that to seek to alter one word of Scripture is a proof of alienation from the God of Israel. At another time God uses another voice - a sweet consoling voice. And oh! ye mourners that have ever heard God's comforting voice, is not that full of majesty! There is nothing of the mere trifling that sometimes we employ to comfort poor sick souls. Mothers will often talk to those who are sick in some gentle strain; but somehow it appears to be affected, and is, therefore, not full of majesty; but when God speaks to comfort, he uses his majestic words. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Oh! is there not majesty in this sweet voice? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I never forget thee." How sweet, but yet how majestic! We cannot avoid being comforted by it if God speaks it to our souls. Sometimes God's voice is a reproving voice; and then it is full of majesty. "The ox knoweth his owner," he says, "and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider;" and he speaks reprovingly, as if he had a controversy with them, and calls the mountains and the hills to hear his reproof of them on account of sin; "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me." But God's reproving voice is always full of majesty. At other times it is a voice of command to his children, when he appears to them and says, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," And how majestic are God's commands, how mighty is his voice, when he tells us what to

do! Some of you have a very poor estimation of what God's voice is. God tells you to be baptized in honor of your Lord and Master; he speaks to you, and he tells you to come round his table, and to remember his dying sufferings; but you do not think much of it: it seems to be lost upon you. But let me tell you, that God's voice of command is as full of majesty, and ought to be as much regarded by his people as his word of promise or his word of doctrine. Whenever he speaks there is a majesty about his voice, whatever tone he may adopt. Ah! beloved, and there are times coming when God will speak words which will be evidently full of majesty - when he will speak and say, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." There will be majesty in that voice; for Hades shall then be unlocked, and the gates of the grave sawn in twain; the spirits of the dead shall again be clothed with flesh, and the dry bones shall be made alive once more. And he will speak by-and-bye, and summon all men to stand before his bar; and there will be majesty in his voice then, when he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" and oh! dread thought, there will be tremendous majesty in his voice, when he shall exclaim, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Again. God's voice is full of majesty *in all the different degrees of its loudness*. Even in calling there is a difference in the loudness of God's voice; many of you were called gently to Christ, and you did not seem to hear the thunders of Sinai, like many of God's people; but whether the voice be loud or soft, it is always full of majesty.

And *in all its mediums* it is full of majesty. God has sometimes chosen the poor to speak his wisdom by. If I go and hear a countryman or an untaught man preach, who makes many mistakes in grammar, yet if it is God's word that he preaches, it "is full of majesty." And sometimes, when a little child has repeated a text, we have not noticed the child, by reason of the majesty of the voice. In fact, the meaner the instrument employed, the greater the majesty in the voice itself. I have noticed a tendency in many to despise their poorer brethren, members of smaller churches, where there is a more humble minister than one they are in the habit of hearing; but this is all wrong, for God's voice is full of majesty; and he can as well speak by one as the other.

III. In the last place, I must briefly refer to the majesty of God's voice WHEN IT IS REVEALED IN ITS EFFECTS - when it is spoken home to the heart of man. Just look at the Psalm, and let me briefly refer to the facts here mentioned. I shall not understand them naturally, though, doubtless, they were so intended by David, but I shall understand them spiritually. As Dr. Hawker remarks, "Doubtless they were intended to set out gracious operations, as well as natural ones."

First, the voice of the Lord is a *breaking* voice. "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." The proudest and most stubborn sinner is broken before him when he speaks. I believe that even the spirit of Voltaire, stubborn as that spirit was, and hard as a millstone, would have been broken in a single instant, if God had but spoken to him; the hardest heart I have here needs only one syllable from God to break it in a moment. I might hammer away to all eternity, but I could not do it; but "the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon."

In the next place it is a *moving* voice, an overcoming voice. "He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn." Who would ever think of a mountain moving? It stands so fast and firm. But God's voice, like his voice in Zerubbabel, speaks to that mountain, and says, "Who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." There is not a mountain standing in this world that God cannot move away by his voice, whether it be the mountains of Rome, or the mountain of the false prophet, or the mountains of colossal systems of heresy, or infidelity, or idolatry. God has only to speak the word, and the idols shall fall from their thrones, and the firm mountains of priest-craft shall skip like a calf.

In the next place, the voice of God is a *dividing* voice. "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire;" or, as it should be, "The voice of the Lord cutteth out with flames of fire." You saw the lightning on Friday, and you remarked then, when God's voice was heard, that the flash seemed to part the cloud and divide the sky. Just so with God's word. Where God's word is faithfully preached, and his voice is spiritually heard, it is always a dividing voice. You bring all kinds of different

characters into a chapel, and God's word splits them all in twain. It is in this place God divides you. The son of God holds his throne, and sits in judgment here. It divides men from men; it divides sinners from their sins; it divides sinners from their righteousness; it splits through clouds and darkness; it divides our troubles, breaks a way for us to heaven. In fact, there is nothing that the voice of God cannot divide. It is a dividing voice.

And then, again, the voice of the Lord is such a loud voice, that it is said to shake the wilderness. "The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." Stand in the middle of a wilderness or a desert, and conceive if you would make anything hear; but when God speaks, his voice ringeth through the wilderness, and startleth the desert itself. Minister of God! you have only to speak God's voice, and you will be heard; if you have only half-a-dozen to hear you, you will be heard further than you know of. None of us can preach a gospel sermon, but it is heard and talked of more than we imagine. Yea, there is not a pious conversation with a poor woman but may be carried all over the world, and produce the most wonderful effects. Nobody can tell how loud is God's voice, and how far it may be heard. "Lift up thy voice; lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God." And your voice may be ever so weak, and your ability ever so little: only lift it up, and God Almighty, by his grace, may make the very wilderness to shake, yea, he may make the very wilderness of Kadesh to tremble.

And then in the 9th verse there is another idea, which I must not pass over, although I might have preferred to do so, possibly. "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." By this I understand what the ancients believed - that so affrighted were the hinds by the noise of the thunder, that the period of calving was often hastened on, and frequently prematurely. It is just so with God's voice. If a man has in him a desire towards Christ, the voice of God makes him bring forth that desire, to the joy and rejoicing of his soul. And very frequently, when a man has a bad design towards God, God has only to speak, and his design becomes abortive. It is brought forth, as it were, before its time, and falls like an untimely fruit to the ground. Whatever man has within him, God can make it come out of him in a single moment: if he has a desire towards

God, God can bring forth that desire, and he can bring forth the soul, and make it alive; and if it be a desire against God, God can frustrate that desire, kill it, overwhelm it, and overthrow it; for "the voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve."

And in the next place, the voice of God is *a discovering voice*. It "discovereth the forests." The trees were your former hiding-place; but in the forest, however thick it may be, there doth the lightning gleam; and under the mighty trees, however thick their covering, the voice of the Lord is heard. God's voice is a discovering voice. You hypocrites! you get hiding yourselves under the trees of the forest; but God's voice thundereth after you when it speaks. Some of you get hiding under ceremonies, good lives, resolutions, and hopes; but God's voice will discover the forests; and recollect, there will be a day with some of you, when you will hide yourselves, or seek to do it, under rocks and mountains, or in the deepest parts of the forests; but when he sits upon his throne, the voice of the Lord will discover the forests. Ye may stand under the old oak, or creep within its trunk, and feel that there you are hidden; but his eyes like balls of fire, shall see you through and through, and his voice, like a voice of thunder, shall say, "Come forth, culprit; come forth, man; I can see thee;

'Mine eye can pierce the shades, and find thy soul as soon
In midnight's darkness as in blazing noon.'

Come forth, come forth!" And vain then will be thy disguises, vain thy subterfuges. "The voice of the Lord discovereth the forests." Oh! I would to God that he would speak to some of you this morning, and discover your souls! I wish he would discover to you your lost and hopeless condition; that you are damned without Christ, every one of you! Oh that he would discover to you how horrible is your position, considered apart from the Saviour; discover to you the fallacy of all your legal hope, and of all your experiences, if they are not experiences allied to Christ! I pray that he would discover to you that all your good works will come tumbling on your head at last, if you build them for a house, and that you must stand surrounded by no covering, but unveiled before the God who discovers the forests.

I would have preached to you this morning; but I cannot. Yet, perhaps, amidst the multitude of my words there may be some still small voice of God, which shall reach your heart. And if the rest of you should despise it, what of that? The voice of God will be as full of majesty in the reprobate as in the elect; and if ye be cast away into hell, God shall get as much glory from the voice which ye heard and which ye despised, as he does from his voice which the elect heard, and at which they trembled and fled to God. Do not think that your damnation will rob God of any of his honor. Why, sirs, he can be as much glorified in your destruction as in your salvation. You are but little creatures in the account of his glory. He can magnify himself anyhow. Oh! humble yourselves, therefore, before God; bow down yourselves before his love and his mercy; and hear now what the plan of salvation is, whereby God brings out his elect. It is this: "He that believeth," in that voice, that Word, that Son of his; "He that believeth," - not merely he that hopeth; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Ah! hearers, if I could leap out of my body, and could lay aside the infirmities of my spirit, methinks that then I might preach to you; but I know right well that even then it must be God that speaks; and therefore I leave the words. My God! My God! Save these my people; for Jesus' precious name's sake. Amen and Amen.

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Making Light Of Christ

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. - Matthew 22:5

Man is not much changed since the days of Adam. In his bodily frame he appears to be exactly similar, for skeletons many hundred years' old are the exact counterparts of ours; and sure enough that which was recorded in history as having been done by man centuries ago, might be written

again, for "there is nothing new under the sun." The same class of men is still to be discovered (although, perhaps, differently dressed) as that which existed ages long gone by. There are still men who answer the character given to others, in his day, by the Saviour, "They go their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, making light of the glorious things of the gospel. I am certain I have many such characters here to-night, and I pray the Lord that I may be enabled to discourse to them very solemnly and very pointedly. And I must ask all you who understand the heavenly art of prayer, to pray that God would be pleased to send home every thought into the breast where he intends it to lodge, that it may bring forth the comfortable fruit of righteousness in the salvation of many souls. "They made light of it;" so do too many in this day; and so will a large portion of my hearers to-night. I believe that to think lightly of Christ is a sin; and at all risks of being falsely called legalist, or free-willer, by those who are wise above what is written, I shall charge it upon you as such, for I hope I shall never belong to that class of Calvinists who do the devil's work by excusing sinners in their sins.

In the first place, we shall have a few words with you, concerning *what it is that the sinner makes light of*; secondly, *how it is that he makes light of it*; and thirdly, *why it is that he makes light of it*. Then a general observation or two, and we shall not weary you.

In the first place, WHAT IS IT THAT THE SINNER MAKES LIGHT OF? According to the parable, the person alluded to made light of a marriage banquet which a king had provided, with all kinds of dainties, to which they were freely invited, and from which they willfully absented themselves. The spiritual meaning of this is easy to discover. Sinners who make light of Christ express their contempt of a glorious banquet which God has provided at the marriage of His Son. This is solemn ground to tread upon. Oh! for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Taking this parable as the basis of our remarks, we may observe, first, that the sinner makes light of *the messenger who brings him the news that the marriage supper is prepared*. These men refused to come; they went—"One to his farm, another to his merchandise," and so made light of the messenger; and every sinner who neglects the great salvation of

Jesus Christ, makes light of the gospel minister, which is no little insult in God's esteem. It is never reckoned a small offence by our great nation, if our ambassador is treated with indifference; and take it for a truth, it is no light thing with God if you despise the ambassadors he sends to you. But this is comparatively little; the ambassadors are men like yourselves, who can well afford to be contemned, if that were all. In fact, we should be glad enough to forgive you if it were in our power to do so, and if this were all your guilt.

But these people *despised the feast*. Some of them fancied that the fatlings, and other provisions that would be upon the table, would be no better than what they had at home. They thought that the royal banquet would be no very great thing for which to give up their merchandise for a day, or to renounce their farming even for an hour. Oh! sinner, when thou neglectest the great salvation, remember what thou dost despise; when thou makest light of God's gospel, thou makest light of justification by faith; thou makest light of washing in the blood of Jesus; thou makest light of the Holy Spirit; thou makest light of the road to heaven; and then thou makest light of faith, and hope, and love; thou makest light of all the promises of the eternal covenant, of all the glorious things that God has laid up for them that love him, and of everything which he hath revealed in his Word as being the promised gift to those who come unto him. It is a solemn thing to make light of the gospel, for in that Word, God's-spell—good tidings, is summed up all that human nature can require, and all that even the saints in bliss can receive. Oh! to despise the gospel of the blessed God, how mad! how worse than folly! Despise the stars, and thou art a fool; despise God's earth, with its glorious mountains, with its flowing rivers, and its fair meads, and thou art a maniac; but despise God's gospel, and thou art ten thousand maniacs in one. Make light of that, and thou art far more foolish than he who sees no light in the sun, who beholds no fairness in the moon, and no brilliancy in the starry firmament. Trample, if you please, his lower works; but oh! remember, when you make light of the gospel, you are making light of the masterpiece of your great Creator—that which cost him more than to create a myriad of worlds—the bloody purchase of our Saviour's agonies.

And, again, these people *made light of the King's Son*. In was *his*

marriage, and inasmuch as they absented themselves, they did dishonour to that glorious One in whose honour the supper was prepared. They slighted him whom his Father loved. Ah! sinner, when thou makest light of the gospel, thou makest light of Christ—of that Christ before whom glorious cherubs bow themselves—of that Christ at whose feet the high archangel thinks it happiness to cast his crown; thou makest light of him with whose praise the vault of heaven rings; thou makest light of him whom God makes much of, for he has called him, "God over all, blessed for ever." Ah! it is a solemn thing to make light of Christ. Despise a prince, and ye shall have little honour at the king's hand for it; but despise the Son of God, and the Father will have vengeance on you for his slighted Son. Oh! my dear friends, it seems to me to be a sin, not unpardonable, I know, but still most heinous, that men should ever despise my blessed Lord Jesus Christ and treat him with cruel scorn. Make light of thee, sweet Jesus! Oh! when I see thee with thy shirt of gore, wrestling in Gethsemane, I bow myself o'er thee, and I say, "O, Redeemer, bleeding for sin, can any sinner make light of thee?" When I behold him with a river of blood rolling down his shoulder, beneath the cursed flagellation of Pilate's whip, I ask, "Can a sinner make light of such a Saviour as this?" And when I see him yonder, covered with his blood, nailed to a tree, expiring in torture, shrieking, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," I ask myself, "Can any make light of this?" Ay, if they do, then, indeed, it were sin enough to damn them, if they have no other sin—that they have lightly esteemed the Prince of Peace, who is glorious and altogether lovely. Oh! my friend, if thou makest light of Christ, thou hast insulted the only one who can save thee—the only one who can bear thee across the Jordan—the only one who can unbolt the gates of heaven, and give thee welcome. Let no preacher of smooth things persuade thee that this is not crime. O, sinner, think of thy sin, if thou art making light of him, for then art thou making light of the King's only Son.

And yet again, these people *made light also of the King* who had prepared the banquet, Ah! little dost thou know, O sinner, when thou dost trifle with the gospel, that thou art insulting God. I have heard some say, "Sir, I do not believe in Christ, but still I am sure I try to reverence God; I do not care about the gospel, I do not wish to be washed in Jesu's blood, nor to be saved in free grace fashion; but I do not despise God; I

am a natural religionist!" Nay, sir, but thou dost insult the Almighty, inasmuch as thou dost deny his Son. Despise a man's offspring, and thou hast insulted the man himself; reject the only begotten Son of God, and thou hast rejected the eternal one himself. There is no such thing as true natural religion apart from Christ; it is a lie and a falsehood, it is the refuge of a man who is not brave enough to say he hates God, but it is only a refuge of lies; for he who denieth Christ in that act offendeth God, and shutteth up heaven's gates against himself. There is no loving the Father except through the Son; and there is no acceptable worship of the Father, except through the Great High Priest the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Oh! my friend, remember thou hast not merely despised the gospel, but thou hast despised the gospel's God. In laughing at the doctrines of revelation, thou hast laughed at God; in reviling the truth of the gospel, thou hast reviled God himself, thou hast bent thy fist in the face of the Eternal; thine oaths have not fallen upon the church, they have fallen upon God himself. Oh! remember, ye that mock at the message of Christ! Oh! remember, ye that turn away from the ministry of truth! God is a mighty one; how severely *can* he punish! God is a jealous God; oh! how severely *will* he punish! Make light of God, sinner? Why, this above all things is a damning sin, and in committing it, it may be thou wilt one day sign thine own death-warrant; for making light of God, of Christ, and of his holy gospel, is destroying one's own soul, and rushing headlong to perdition. Ah! unhappy souls, most unhappy must ye be, if ye live and die making light of Christ, and preferring your farms and your merchandise to the treasures of the gospel.

Again: bethink thee, my poor, pitiable friend, in that thou makest light of all the things I have mentioned, *thou art making light of the great solemnities of eternity*. The Man who lightly esteems the gospel makes light of hell; he thinks its fires are not hot, and its flames not such as Christ has described them; he makes light of the burning tears that scald despairing cheeks for ever; he makes light of the yells and shrieks that must be the doleful songs and terrible music of perishing souls. Ah! it is no wise thing to make light of hell.

Consider again: thou makest light of heaven—that place to which the blest ones long to go, where glory reigns without a cloud, and bliss

without a sigh. Thou puttest the crown of everlasting life beneath thy feet; thou treadest the palm-branch beneath thine unhallowed foot and thou thinkest it little to be saved, and little to be glorified. "Ah! poor soul, when thou art once in hell, and when the iron key is turned for ever in the lock of inevitable destiny, thou wilt find hell to be a something not so easy to despise; and when thou hast lost heaven and all its bliss, and canst only hear the song of the blessed, sounding faintly in the distance, increasing thy misery by contrast with their joy, then thou wilt find it no little thing to have made light of heaven. Every man who makes light of religion makes light of these things. He misjudges the value of his own soul, and the importance of its eternal state.

This is what men make light of, "Oh! sir," says one, "I never indulge in any words hostile to God's truth, I never laugh at the minister, nor do I despise the Sabbath." Stop, my friend, I will acquit thee of all that; and yet I will solemnly lay to thy charge this great sin of making light of the gospel. Hear me then!

II. HOW IS IT THAT MEN MAKE LIGHT OF IT?

In the first, it is making light of the gospel and of the whole of God's glorious things, *when men go to hear and yet do not attend*. How many frequent churches and chapels to indulge in a comfortable nap! Think what a fearful insult that is to the King of heaven. Would they enter into Her Majesty's palace, ask an audience, and then go to sleep before her face? And yet the sin of sleeping in Her Majesty's presence, would not be so great, even against her laws, as the sin of wilfully slumbering in God's sanctuary. How many go to our houses of worship who do not sleep, but who sit with vacant stare, listening as they would to a man would could not play a lively tune upon a good instrument. What goeth in at one ear goeth out at another. Whatever entereth the brain goeth out without ever affecting the heart. Ah, my hearers, you are guilty of making light of God's gospel, when you sit under a sermon without attending to it! Oh! what would lost souls give to the hear another sermon! What would yonder dying wretch who is just now nearing the grave, give for another Sabbath! And what will you give, one of these days, when you shall be hard by Jordan's brink, that you might have one more warning, and listen once

more to the wooing voice of God's minister! We make light of the gospel when we hear it, without solemn and awful attention to it.

But some say they *do* attend. Well, it is possible to attend to the gospel, and yet to make light of it. I have seen some men weep beneath a powerful sermon; I have marked the tears chase each other—tears, blessed tell-tales of emotions within. I have sometimes said to myself, it is marvellous to see these people weep under some telling word from God, which is alarming them, as if Sinai itself were thundering in their ears. But there is something more marvellous than men's weeping under the word. It is the fact that they soon, too soon, wipe all their tears away. But ah! my dear hearer, recollect that if thou hearest of these things and shakest off a solemn impression, thou art, in doing that, slighting God and making light of his truth; and take heed how you do that, lest your own garments be red with the blood of your soul, and it be said, "Oh, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

But there are others who make light of it in a different fashion. They hear the word and attend to it; but, alas! *they attend to something else with it.*

Oh! my hearer, thou makest light of Christ, if thou puttest him anywhere save in the centre of thine heart. He who gives Christ a little of his affections, makes light of Christ; for Christ will have the whole heart or none at all. He who gives Christ a portion, and the world a portion, despises Christ, for he seems to think that Christ does not deserve to have the whole. And inasmuch as he says that, or thinks that, he hath mean and unholy thoughts of Christ. Oh! carnal man, thou who art half religious, and half profane; thou who art sometimes serious, but as often frivolous; sometimes apparently pious, but yet so often unholy, thou makest light of Christ. And ye who weep on the Sunday, and then go back to your sins on the Monday; ye who set the world and its pleasures before Christ, ye think less of him than he deserves; and what is that but to make light of him? Oh! I charge you, ask yourself, my hearer this night, art not thou the man? dost thou not thou thyself make light of Christ? The self-righteous man who sets himself up as a partner with Christ in the matter of salvation, notwithstanding all his trumpety good works, is such a ringleader among despisers, that I would gibbet him in the very middle of

them, and bid all like him tremble, lest they also be found slights of Jesus.

He makes light of Christ, again, *who makes a profession of religion, and yet does not live up to it.* Ah! church members, ye want a great deal of sifting; we have an immense quantity of chaff now mixed with the wheat; and sometimes I think we have something worse than that. We have some in our churches that are not so good as chaff, for they do not seem to have been near the wheat at all; they are nothing better than tares. They have come into our churches, just as they would into a trade-association, because they think it will improve their business. It gives respectability to their name to take the sacrament; it makes them esteemed to have been baptized, or to be a member of a Christian church; and so they come in by shoals after the loaves and fishes, but not after Jesus Christ. Ah! hypocrite, thou makest light of Christ if thou thinkest that he is a stalkinghorse to get thee wealth. If thou drest that thou art to saddle and bridle Christ, and ride to wealth upon him, thou makest a grand mistake, for he was never meant to carry men anywhere except to heaven. If you suppose that religion was intended to gild your homes, to carpet your floors, and line your purses, you have greatly erred. It was intended to be profitable to the soul; and he who thinks to use religion to his own personal advantage thinks lightly of Christ: and at the last day this crime shall be laid to his charge—that he has made light of it;" and the King shall send his armies to cut him in pieces, among those who have despised his Majesty, and would not obey his laws.

III. And now, in the third place, I will tell you WHY THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT. They did so from different reasons.

Some of them made light of it *because they were ignorant;* they did not know how good the feast was; they did not know how gracious the king was; they did not know how fair the Prince was, or else they might have thought differently. Now, there are many present to-night, I dare say, who think lightly of the gospel, because they do not understand it. I have often heard people laugh at religion; but ask them what it is, and they know no more about religion than a horse, and worse than that, for they believe untruths about it, and a horse does not do that. They laugh at it,

simply because they do not comprehend it; it is a thing beyond them. We have heard of a foolish man who, whenever he heard a piece of Latin mentioned, laughed at it, because he thought it was a joke, at any rate it was a very outlandish way of talking—and so he laughed. So it is with many when they hear the gospel; they do not know what it is, and so they laugh at it. "Oh!" they say, "the man is mad." But why is he mad? Because you do not understand him. Are you so conceited as to suppose that all wisdom and all learning must rest with you? I would hint to you that the madness is on the other side. And though you may say of him, "Much learning hath made thee mad;" we would reply, "It is quite as easy to be made mad with none at all." And those who have none, and especially those who have no knowledge of Christ, are the most likely to despise him. Well did Watts say -

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure, the whole earth would love him too."

Oh! dear friends, if you once knew what a blessed master Christ is, if you once knew what a blessed thing the gospel is, if you could once be brought to believe what a blessed God our God is, if you could only have one hour's enjoyment such as the Christian experiences, if you could only have one promise applied to your heart, you would never make light of the gospel again. Oh! you say you do not like it! Why, you have never tried it? Should a man despise the wine of which he has never sipped. It may be sweeter than he dreams? Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good, and so sure as ever you taste, you will see his goodness. I will venture to say, again, that there are many who make light of the gospel, simply through ignorance; and if that is so, I am somewhat in hopes that when they are a little enlightened by sitting under the Word, the Lord may be pleased graciously to bring them to himself; and then I know they will never make light of Christ again. Oh! do not be ignorant, "for that the soul be without knowledge is not good." Seek to know him whom to know aright is life eternal; and when you know him you will never make light of him.

Other people make light of it *because of pride*. "What is the good," said one, "of bringing me that invitation? Step into my house, my man, I will

show you a feast quite as good as any you can tell me of. Look here! there is good cheer for you; my table is as well spread as any man's; begging his Majesty's pardon, the King cannot give a better feast than I; and I do not see why I should drag my bones about to get nothing better than I can get at home." So he would not go, out of pride. And so with some of you. *You* want to be washed! No, you were never filthy; were you? *You* need to be forgiven! Oh no! you are rather too good for that. Why, you are so awfully pious in your own conceit, that if it were all true, you would make even the angel Gabriel blush to think of you. You do not think even an angel capable of holding a candle to you. What! you seek for mercy? It is an insult to you. "Go and tell the drunkard," you say, "go and fetch the harlot; but I am a respectable man; I always go to church or chapel; I am a very good sort of fellow; I may frolic now and then, but I make it up some other day; I am sometimes a little slack, but then I rein the horses in, and make up the distance afterwards; and I dare say I shall get to heaven as soon as anybody else. I am a very good sort." Well, my friend, I do not wonder that you despise the gospel, for the gospel just tells you that you are entirely lost. It tells you that your very righteousness is full of sin. That, as for any hope of your being saved by it, you might as well try to sail across the Atlantic on a sere leaf as try to get to heaven by your righteousness. And as for it being a garment fit to cover you, you might as well get a spider's web to go to court in, and think it a dress fit to appear in before her Majesty. Ah! my hearer, I know why thou despisest Christ; it is because of thy Satanic pride. May the Lord pull the pride out of thee; for if he do not, it will be the faggot that shall roast thy soul for ever. Take heed of pride; by pride fell the angels—how can men, then, though the image of their Maker, hope to win by it? Shun it, flee from it; for so sure as thou art proud, wilt thou incur the guilt of making light of Christ.

Perhaps quite as many made light of the good news, because *they did not believe the messenger*. "Oh!" said they, "stop a moment. What! a dinner to be given away? I do not believe it. What! the young Prince going to be married? Tell that to fools, we do not believe any such thing. What! we all invited? We do not believe it; the story is incredible." The poor messenger went home and told his Master that they would not believe him. That is just another reason why many men make light of the gospel, because they do not believe it. "What!" they say, "Jesus Christ died to wash men from

their sins? We do not believe it. What! A heaven. Who ever saw it? A hell! Who ever heard its groans? What! Eternity. Who ever returned from that last hope of every spirit. What! Blessedness in religion? We do not believe it—it is a moping, miserable thing. What! Sweetness in the promises? No there is not; we believe there is sweetness in the world, but we do not believe there is any in the wells the Lord has digged." And so they despise the gospel, because they do not believe it. But, I am sure, that when a man once believes it, he never thinks lightly of it. Once let me have the solemn conviction in my heart by the Holy Spirit, that if unsaved, there is a gaping gulf that shall devour me; do you think I can go to rest till I have trembled from head to foot? Once let me heartily believe that there is a heaven provided for those who believe on Christ, do you think I could give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, till I have wept because it is not mine? I believe not. But damnable unbelief thrusts his hand into the mouth of an, and plucks up his heart, and so destroys him, for it will not let him believe, and, therefore, he cannot feel, because he believeth not. Oh! my friends, it is unbelief that makes men think lightly of Christ; but unbelief will not do so by-and-bye. There are no infidels in hell; they are all believers there. There are many that were infidels here, but they are not so now; the flames are too hot to make them doubt their existence. It is hard for a man, tormented in the flame, to doubt the existence of the fire. It would be difficult for a man, standing before the burning eyes of God, to doubt the existence of a God after that. Ah! unbelievers, turn ye, or rather, may the Lord turn you from your unbelief, for this makes you think lightly of Christ; and this is it that is taking away your life, and destroying your souls.

Another set of people thought lightly of this feast *because they were so worldly*; they had so much to do. I have heard of a rich merchant who was waited on one day by a godly man, and when he stopped him, he said to him, "Well, sir, what is the state of your soul?" "Soul!" he said, "bother you, I have no time to take care of my soul; I have enough to do to take care of my ships." About a week after, it so happened that he had to find time to die, for God took him away. We fear he said to him, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast hoarded up for thyself?" Ye merchants of London, there are many of you who read your ledgers more than your Bibles.

Perhaps you must, but ye do not read your Bibles at all, while ye read your ledgers every day. In America, it is said, they worship the almighty dollar; I believe that in London many men worship the almighty sovereign; they have the greatest possible respect for an almighty bank note; that is the god which many men are always adoring. The prayer-book they carry so religiously in their hands is their cash-book. Even on Sunday, there is a gentleman over there, he does not think his foreman knows it, but he was sitting in doors all this morning, because it was wet, casting up his accounts; and now he comes here in the evening, because he is a very pious man—extraordinarily so. He would shut the parks up on a Sunday, he would—he would not let a soul get a breath of fresh air, because he is so pious, but he himself may sit for half-a-day in the counting-house and yet think it no sin. But many are too busy to think of these things. "Pray!" they say, "I have no time for that; I have to pay. What! read the Bible? No I cannot; I have to be looking over this thing and that thing, and seeing how the markets go. I find time to read the *Times*, but I could not think of reading the Bible." It will be marvellously unfortunate for some of you, that you will find the lease of your lives rather shorter than you expected. If you had taken a lease of your lives for eighty-eight years from this date, you would be foolish enough, perhaps, to spend forty-four in sin. But considering that you are a tenant at will, and liable to be turned out any day, it is the height of folly, the very climax of absurdity, excelling all that the fool, with his cap and bells, ever did, to be living just to gather up the pelf of this world, and not for things to come. Worldliness is a demon that hath wrung the neck of many souls; God grant that we may not perish through our worldliness!

There is another class of people that I can only characterize in this way: *they are altogether thoughtless*. If you ask them concerning religion, they have no opinion at all about it. They do not positively detest it, they do not mock at it; but they have not a thought about it. The fact of it is, they intend thinking about it by-and-bye. Theirs is a kind of butterfly existence; they are always moving about, never doing anything, neither for others or themselves. And these are very amiable people, who are always ready to give a guinea for a charity; they never refuse anybody, and they would give their guinea all the same, whether it was for a cricket match or a church. Now, if I were forced to go back to the world, and had

to chose the character I would wish to be, the last position I would wish to occupy would be that of the thoughtless man. I believe thoughtless persons are in the most danger of being lost of any class I know. I like, sometimes to get under the word a thoroughly stout, stiff, hater of the gospel, for his heart is like a flint, and when it is struck with the hammer of the gospel the flint goes to pieces in a moment. But these thoughtless people have india-rubber hearts—you hit them, and they give way; you strike them again, and they give way. If they are sick, and you visit them, they say "yes." You talk to them about the importance of religion; they say "yes." You talk to them about escaping from hell and entering heaven, they say "Yes." You preach a sermon to them when they are better, and remind them of the vows they made in their sickness; "it is quite right, sir," they say. And they say the same whatever you may tell them. They are always very polite to you; but whatever you say to them is put aside. If you begin talking to them about drunkards; oh! they are not drunkards; they may have accidently got drunk once, but that was a little thing out of the usual way. And bring whatever sin you like to them, you may hit them, and hit them, but it is no good, for they are not half so easily broken (speaking after the manner of men) as the real stout-hearted hater of the gospel. Why, there is a sailor comes rolling home from sea, swearing, blaspheming, cursing; he comes into the house of God, and almost the first word is applied by the Spirit for the breaking of Jack's heart. Another young man says, "I know as much as any minister can tell me; for my own mother taught me, and my old father used to read the Bible to me till, I believe, I have got every bit of it in my head. I go to chapel out of respect to his memory, but I really don't care at all about it; it is very good for old people, it is quite right for old women, and those who are dying, and in time of cholera. It is a very good thing, but I don't care anything about it just now." Now, I tell you, careless people, most solemnly, that you are the very devil's lifeguards; you are his reserve; he keeps you away from the battle, he does not send you out like he does a blasphemer, for he fears that a shot may haply light upon you, and you may be saved. But he says, "Stand by here, and if you have to go out I will give you an impenetrable coat of mail." The arrows go rattling against you; they all hit you; but alas! there is not one of them that penetrates your heart, for that is left elsewhere. You are only an empty chrysalis, and when you come to God's house, and his word is preached, you make light

of it, because it is your habit to be thoughtless about everything.

Very briefly I must touch another case, and then I must dismiss you. You may make light of the gospel *out of sheer presumption*. They are like the foolish man who goes on, and is punished; not like the prudent man, who "forseeth the evil, and hideth himself." They go on; that step is safe—they take it; the next step is safe—they take it; their foot hangs over a gulf of darkness; but they will try one step, and as that is safe, they think they will try the next; and as the last has been safe, and as for many years they have been safe, they suppose they always shall be; and because they have not died yet, they think they will never die. And so out of sheer presumption, thinking "all men mortal but themselves," they go on making light of Christ. Tremble, ye presumptuous, you will not always be able to do that.

And, lastly, I fear there are a great many who make light of Christ *because of the commonness of the gospel*. It is preached everywhere, and that is why you make light of it. You can hear it at the corner of every street; you can read it in this widely circulated Bible; and because the gospel is so common, therefore, you don't care for it. Ah! my dear friends, if there were only one gospel minister in London that could tell you the truth; if there were only one Bible in London, I believe you would be rushing to hear that Bible read; and the man who had the message would have no sinecure of it, he would be obliged to work from morning to night, to tell it out to you. But now, because you have so many Bibles you forget to read them; because you have so many tracts you pack up any article in them; because you have so many sermons you do not think anything at all of them. But what is that? Dost thou think the less of the sun because he scatters his beams abroad? Dost thou think the less of bread because it is the food which God gives to all his children? Dost thou think the less of water, when thou art thirsty, because every rill will afford it to thee? No. If thou wert athirst after Christ, thou wouldst love him all the better, because he is preached everywhere; and thou wouldst not think lightly of him because of that.

"They made light of it." How many of my hearers to-night, I ask again, are making light of Christ? Many of you are, no doubt. I will give you, then,

just one warning, and then farewell. Make light of Christ, sinner! let me say, again, to thee, and thou wilt rue the day, when thou comest on thy death-bed. It will go hard with thee when the bony monster has got the grip of thee, and when he is bringing thee down to the river, to steep thee in the lake of death. It will go hard with thee, when thy eye-strings break, and when thy death-sweat stands upon the brow. Remember, last time thou hadst a fever; ah! how thou didst shake. Remember, last night, how thou didst quake in thy bed, when flash after flash of lightning came through thy window; and how thou didst tremble when the deep-mouthed thunder spake out the voice of God. Ah! sinner, thou wilt tremble worse then when thou shalt see death for thyself, and when the bony rider, on his white horse, shall grasp his dart and plunge it in thy bowels. It will go hard with thee if thou hast despised Christ, and shalt die a despiser. See that flying angel? his wings are made of flame, and in his hand he grasps a sharp two-edged sword. O angel, wherefore dost thou wing thy speedy flight? "Hark!" says he, "this trump shall tell you." And he puts a trumpet to his lips, and

"Blows a blast so loud and dread,
Ne'er were prophetic sounds so full of woe."

Look! the sheeted dead have started from their graves. Behold, the cloudy chariot of wheeled along by cherub's hand. Mark! there upon the throne there sits the King—the Prince. O angel, what in this terrible day must become of the man that has thought lightly of Christ? See there, he unleashes his sword. "This blade," says he, "shall find and pierce him through. This blade, like a sickle, shall reap each tare from the wheat, and this strong arm shall bind him up in his bundle to be burned; and this great arm of mine shall grasp him, and hurl him down, down, down, where flames for ever burn, and hell for ever howls." It will go hard with you then. Mark this man's word to-night; go away and laugh at it; but remember, I say to you again, it will be a solemn thing for you when Christ shall come to judgment, if you have made light of him, and worse than all, if you should ever be locked up in the caverns of despair, if you should ever hear it said, "Depart ye cursed," if you should ever mingle your awful shrieks with the doleful howls of lost myriads, if you should see the pit that is bottomless, and the gulf that has walls of fire. It will be

a fearful thing to find thyself in there, and to know that thou canst ne'er get out again! Sinner, this night I preach the gospel to thee. E'er thou goest, hear it, and believe it; may God grant thee grace to receive it, so thou shalt be saved. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believeth not," so saith the Scripture, "shall be damned." To believe, is to put your trust in Christ; to be baptized, is to be plunged in water in the name of the Lord Jesus, as a profession that you are already saved, and that you love Christ. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." O may you never know the meaning of that last word. Farewell!

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Manasseh

Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. - 2 Chronicles 33:13

Manasseh is one of the most remarkable characters whose history is written in the sacred pages. We are accustomed to mention his name in the list of those who greatly sinned, and yet found great mercy. Side by side with Saul of Tarsus, with that great sinner who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and with the thief that died upon the cross—a forgiven sinner at the eleventh hour—we are wont to write the name of Manasseh, who "shed innocent blood very much," and notwithstanding that, was forgiven and pardoned, finding mercy through the blood of a Saviour who had not then died, but whom God foresaw should die, and the merits of whose sacrifice he therefore imputed to so great a transgressor as Manasseh.

Without preface we shall enter on the history of Manasseh this morning, and consider him in a threefold light: first, as *a sinner*, then as *an unbeliever*, and thirdly, as a convert. It may be there shall be some Manasseh within these walls now; and if in describing the case of this ancient king of Israel I shall in some degree describe him, I trust he will

take to himself the same consoling truths which were the means of the comfort of Manasseh when in the dungeon of repentance.

I. First, then, we shall consider MANASSEH IN HIS SIN.

1. And we note, first, that he belonged to that class of sinners who stand first in the phalanx of evil—namely, those *who sin against great light, against a pious education and early training*. Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, a man who had some faults, but of whom it is nevertheless said, "He did right in the sight of the Lord." To a great degree he walked before God with a perfect heart, even as did David his father. We can not suppose that he neglected the education of his son Manasseh. He was the son of his old age. You will remember that at a time of heavy sickness God promised him that he should have his life prolonged fifteen years. Three years after that event Manasseh was born, and he was, therefore, only twelve years old when his father died; still he was old enough to remember the pious prayers of a father and a mother, and had arrived at sufficient maturity to understand right from wrong, and to have received those early impressions which we believe are, in most cases, eminently useful for after life. And yet Manasseh pulled down what his father had built up, and built up the idol temples which his father had pulled down. Now, it is a notorious fact, that men who do go wrong after a good training, are the worst men in the world. You may not know, but it is a fact, that the late lamented murder of Williams at Erromanga, was brought about by the evil doings of a trader who had gone to the island, and who was also the son of a missionary. He had become reckless in his habits, and treated the islanders with such barbarity and cruelty, that they revenged his conduct upon the next white man who put his foot on their shore; and the beloved Williams, one of the last of the martyrs, died a victim of the guilt of those who had gone before him. The worst of men are those who, having much light, still run astray. You shall find among the greatest champions of the camp of hell, men who were brought up and educated in our very ranks. It is not necessary that I should mention names; but any of you that are acquainted with those who are the leaders of infidelity at the present time will at once recognize the fact. And such men actually make the very worst of infidels; while the best of Christians often come from the very worst of sinners. Our John Bunyans have come

from the pot-house and the taproom, from the bowling-alley, or places lower in the scale; our best of men have come from the very worst of places, and have been the best adapted to reclaim sinners, because they themselves had stepped into the kennel, and had nevertheless been washed in a Saviour's cleansing blood. And so it is true that the worst of the enemies of Christ are those who are nourished in our midst, and like the viper of old, which the husbandman nursed in his bosom, turn round to sting the bosom which has nurtured them. Such a one was Manasseh.

2. In the next place, *Manasseh as a sinner was a very bold one*. He was one of those men who do not sin covertly, but who, when they transgress, do not seem to be at all ashamed, who are born with brazen foreheads, and lift their faces to heaven with insolence and impudence. He was a man who, if he would set up an idol, as you would see by reading this chapter, did not set it up in an obscure part of the land, but put it in the very temple of God; and when he would desecrate the name of the Most High, he did not privily go to his chapel, where he might worship some evil deity, but he put the deity into the very temple itself, as if to insult God to his very face. He was a desperado in sin, and went to the utmost limit of it, being very bold, and desperately set on mischief. Now, whether it be for right or wrong, boldness is always sure to win the day. Give me a coward—you give me nothing; give me a bold man, and you give me one that can do something, whether for Christ's cause or for the devil's. Manasseh was a man of this kind. If he cursed God, it was with a loud voice; it was not in hole or corner, but upon his throne, that he issued proclamations against the Most High, and in the most daring manner insulted the Lord God of Israel. And yet, dear friends, this man was saved, notwithstanding all this. This greatest sinner, this man who had trampled on his father's prayers, who had wiped from his brow the tears which had been shed there by an anxious parent, who had stifled the convictions of his conscience, and had gone to an extremity of guilt, in bold, open, and desperate sin, yet this man was at last, by divine grace, humbled and brought on his knees to acknowledge that God was God alone. Let no man, therefore, despair of his fellow. I never do, since I think and hope that God has saved me. I am persuaded that, live as long as I may, I shall never see the individual of whom I can say "That man is a hopeless case" I may peradventure meet with the person who has been so

exhorted and so warned, and has so put off all the sweet wooings of his conscience, that he has become seared and hardened, and consequently apparently hopeless; but I shall never meet a man who has sinned so desperately that I can say of him he never can be saved. Ah! no; that arm of mercy which was long enough to save me is long enough to save you; and if he could redeem you from your transgression, assuredly there are none sunk lower than you were, and therefore you may believe that his arm of mercy can reach them. Above all, let no man despair of himself. Whilst there is life there is hope. Give not up yourselves into Satan's arms. He tells you that your death-warrant is sealed, that your doom is cast, and that you never can be saved. Tell him to his face that he is a liar, for that Jesus Christ "is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

3. Again, Manasseh was a sinner of that peculiar caste which we suspect is not to be found very frequently. He was one of those who *had the power of leading others* to a very large extent astray from the truth and religion of God. He was a king, and had, therefore, great influence; what he commanded was done. Among the rank of idolaters Manasseh stood first, and it was the song and glory of the false priests that the king of Judah was on the side of the gods of the heathen. He was the leader—the first man in the battle. When the troops of the ungodly went to war against the God of the whole earth, Manasseh led the vanguard and cheered them on. He was their great Goliath, challenging all the armies of the living God. Many among the wicked stood back and feared the conflict; but he never feared. "He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;" and therefore he was bold and arrogant in leading others astray. There are some such still alive—men not content with treading the broad road themselves, but seeking to entice others into it. And O, how active they are in their efforts! They will go from house to house, and distribute those publications which are impure and polluting; they will stand in our streets and endeavor to draw around them the young, ay, men and women just fresh come from the house of God, or going to God's sanctuary, to tell them that dreary story that there is no God, or the dismal falsehood that there is no future, but that we must all die like dogs and suffer annihilation. There are some such who never

seem to be happy unless when they are leading others astray. It is not enough for them to go alone against God, but they must sin in company. Like the woman in the Proverbs, they hunt for precious life, and like hounds thirsting for blood, they are seeking after men to destroy them. Society now is like Prometheus: it is, to a great extent, bound hand and foot by the very customs that surround it, and like Prometheus, we have upon us the winged hound of hell perpetually tapping at our heart and swallowing the life-blood of our spirit. I mean we have that accursed infidelity which seeks to lead men from God and drive them from their Maker. But, nevertheless, leaders among them have yet been saved. Manasseh, the leader of those who hated God, was yet humbled, and made to love the Most High.

Do you ask me whether such cases ever occur now? I answer, yes they do; too rarely, but they do happen. Yesterday I received something which cheered my heart very much, and made me bless my God, that notwithstanding all opposition, he had still made me of some little use in the world. I received a long letter from a certain city, from one who has been one of the leaders of the secular society in that place. The writer says, "I purchased one of the pamphlets entitled 'Who is this Spurgeon?' and also your portrait (or a portrait sold as yours) for 3d. I brought these home, and exhibited them in my shop window. I was induced to do so from a feeling of derisive pleasure. The title of the pamphlet is, naturally, suggestive of caricature, and it was especially to incite that impression that I attached it to your portrait and placed it in my window. But I also had another object in view. I thought by its attraction to improve my trade. I am not at all in the book or paper business, which rendered its exposure and my motive the more conspicuous. I have taken it down now: *I am taken down too.* * * * I had bought one of your sermons of an old infidel a day or two previous. In that sermon I read these words: —'They go on; that step is safe—they take it; the next is safe—they take it; their foot hangs over a gulf of darkness.' I read on, but the word darkness staggered me. It was all dark with, me. 'True, the way has been safe so far, but I am lost in bewilderment. No, no, no, I will not risk it.' I left the apartment in which I had been musing, and as I did so, the three words, 'Who can tell?' seemed to be whispered at my heart. I determined not to let another Sunday pass without visiting a place of worship. How soon my

soul might be required of me I knew not, but felt that it would be mean, base, cowardly, not to give it a chance. Ay, my associates may laugh, scoff, deride, call me coward, turncoat, I will do an act of justice to my soul. I went to the chapel; I was just stupefied with awe. What could I want there? The door keeper opened his eyes wider, and involuntarily demanded, 'It's Mr.—isn't it ?' 'Yes,' I said, 'it is.' He conducted me to a seat, and afterward brought me a hymn-book. I was fit to burst with anguish. 'Now,' I thought, 'I am here, if it be the house of God, heaven grant me an audience, and I will make full surrender. O God, show me some token by which I may know that thou art, and that thou wilt in no wise cast out the vile deserter who has ventured to seek thy face and thy pardoning mercy.' I opened the hymn-book to divert my mind from feelings that were rending me, and the first words that caught my eyes were

"Dark, dark indeed the grave would be,
Had we no light O God, from thee."

After giving some things which he looks upon as evidences that he is a true convert of religion, he closes up by saying, "O sir, tell this to the poor wretch whose pride, like mine, has made him league with hell; tell it to the hesitating and to the timid; tell it to the cooling Christian, that God is a very present help to all that are in need. Think of the poor sinner who may never look upon you in this world, but who will live to bless and pray for you here, and long to meet you in the world exempt from sinful doubts, from human pride, and backsliding hearts." Ah, he need not ask my forgiveness; I am happy, too happy, in the hope of calling him "brother" in the Christian church. This letter is from a place many miles from this city and from a man who had no small standing among the ranks of those who hate Christ. Ah! there have been Manassehs saved, and there shall be yet. There have been men who hated God, who have leaped for joy, and said -

"I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven,
I'm a miracle of grace,"

and have kissed the very feet which once they scorned and scoffed, and

could not bear to hear the mention of.

There is one fact concerning Manasseh which stamps him as being a very prince of sinners, namely this : "He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom," and dedicated his sons unto Tophet. This was a dreadful sin; for though Manasseh repented, we find that his son Amon followed in the steps of his father in his wickedness but not in his righteousness. Listen! "Amon was two-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more." Children will imitate their fathers in their vices, seldom in their repentance; if parents sin, their children will follow them, without much doubt; but when they repent and turn to God, it is not easy to lead a child back in the way which it has once forsaken. Are there any here, who, like that ancient Carthaginian, have dedicated their sons to the opposition of their enemy. You remember one who dedicated his son Hannibal from his very birth to be the everlasting enemy of the Romans. There may be such a man here, who has dedicated his offspring to Satan, to be the everlasting enemy of Christ's gospel, and is trying to train up and tutor him in a way which is contrary to the fear of the Lord. Is such a man hopeless? His sin is dreadful, his state is dreary, his sin without repentance will assuredly damn him; but so long as he is here, we still will preach repentance to him, knowing that Manasseh was brought to know God, and was forgiven all his manifold sins.

II. The second aspect in which we are to regard Manasseh is as an UNBELIEVER; for it appears that Manasseh did not believe that Jehovah was God alone; he was, therefore, a believer in false gods, but an unbeliever, so far as the *truth* is concerned. Now, does it not strike you at the outset, that while Manasseh was an unbeliever in the truth, he must have been a very credulous person to believe in the all imaginary deities of the heathen? In fact, the most credulous persons in the world are unbelievers. It takes ten thousand times more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer in revelation. One man comes to me and tells me I

am credulous, because I believe in a great First Cause who created the heavens and the earth, and that God became man and died for sin. I tell him I may be, and no doubt am very credulous, as he conceives credulity, but I conceive that which I believe is in perfect consistency with my reason, and I therefore receive it. "But," saith he, "*I am not credulous—not at all.*" Sir, I say, I should like to ask you one thing. You do not believe the world was created by God? "No." You must be amazingly credulous, then, I am sure. Do you think this Bible exists without being made? If you should say I am credulous because I believe it had a printer and a binder, I should say you were infinitely more credulous, if you assured me that it was made at all. And should you begin to tell me one of your theories about creation—that atoms floated through space, and came to a certain shape, I should resign the palm of credulity to you. You believe, perhaps, moreover, that man came to be in this world through the improvement of certain creatures. I have read, you say, that there were certain monads—that these monads improved themselves until they came to be small animalculae—that afterward they grew into fishes—that these fishes wanted to fly, and then wings grow—that by-and-by they wanted to crawl, and then legs came, and they became lizards, and by divers steps they then became monkeys, and then the monkeys became men, and you believe yourself to be cousin-german to an ourang-outang. Now, I may be very credulous, but really not so credulous as you are. I may believe very strange things; I may believe that, with the jaw-bone of an ass, Samson slew a thousand men; I may believe that that the earth was drowned with water, and many other strange things, as you call them; but as for your creed, your non-creed, "'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful," and it as much outvies mine in credulity, if I be credulous, as an ocean outvies a drop. It requires the hardest faith in the world to deny the Scriptures, because the man, in his secret heart, knows they are true, and, go where he will, something whispers to him, "You may be wrong—perhaps you are," and it is as much as he can do, to say, "Lie down, conscience! down with you; I must not let you speak, or I could not deliver my lecture to-morrow, I could not go among my friends, I could not go to such-and-such a club; for I can not afford to keep a conscience, if I can not afford to keep a God."

And now let me tell you what I conceive to be the reasons why Manasseh

was an unbeliever. In the first place, I conceive that the *unlimited power* which Manasseh possessed had a very great tendency to make him a disbeliever in God. I should not wonder if an autocrats man with absolute dominion, should deny God; I should think it only natural. You remember that memorable speech of Napoleon's. He was told that man proposed, but that God disposed. "Ah!" said Napoleon, "I propose and dispose too;" and therein he arrogated to himself the very supremacy of God. We do not wonder at it, because his victories had so speedily succeeded each other, his prowess had been so complete, his fame so great, and his power over his subjects so absolute. Power al—ways, as I believe, except in the heart which is rightly governed by grace, has a tendency to lead us to deny God. It is that noble intellect of such-and-such a man which has led him into discussion; he has twice, thrice, four, five, six, seven times, come off more than conqueror in the field of controversy; he looks round and says, "I am, there is none beside me; let me sake up whatever I please, I can defend it; there is no man can stand against the blade of my intellect; I can give him such a home thrust as will assuredly overcome him;" and then, like Dr. Johnson, who often took up the side of the question he did not believe, just because he liked to get a victory that was hard to win, so do these men espouse what they believe to be wrong, because they conceive it gives them the finest opportunity of displaying their abilities. "Let me," says some mighty intellect, "fight with a Christian; I shall have hard enough work to prove my thesis, I know I shall have a great difficulty to undermine the bastions of truth which he opposes to bear against me; so much the better; it were worth while to be conquered by so stout an opposition and if I can overcome my antagonist, if I can prove myself to have more logic than he has, then I can say, 'tis glorious; 'tis glorious to have fought against an opponent with so much on his side, and yet to have come off more than conqueror." I do believe the best man in the world is very hard to be trusted with power; he will, unless grace keeps him, make a wrong use of it before long. Hence it is that the most influential of God's servants are almost invariably the most tried ones, because our heavenly Father knows that if it were not for great trials and afflictions we should begin to set ourselves up against him, and arrogate to ourselves a glory which we had no right to claim.

But another reason why Manasseh was an unbeliever, I take it, was

because he was proud. Pride lieth at the root of infidelity; pride is the very germ of opposition to God. The man saith, " Why should I believe? The Sunday-school child reads his Bible, and says it is true. Am I, a man of intellect, to sit side by side with him, and receive a thing as true simply at the dictum of God's Word? No, I will not; I will find it out for myself, and I will not believe simply because it is revealed to me, for that were to make myself a child." And when he turns to the page of revelation, and reads thus, " Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye can in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven," he says, " Pshaw! I shall not be converted then; I am not going to be a child; I am a man, and a man I will be, and I would rather be lost a man than saved a child. What I am I to surrender my judgment, and sit down tacitly to believe in God's Word?" " Yes," says God's Word, "thou art; thou art to become as a child, and meekly to receive my Word." "Then," says he, in his arrogance and pride, "I will not," and like Satan, he declares it were better to rule in hell than serve in heaven, and he goes away an unbeliever, because to believe is too humbling a thing.

But perhaps the most potent reason for Manasseh's unbelief lies here; *that he loved sin too well.* When Manasseh built the altars for his false gods, he could sin easily, and keep his conscience; but he felt Jehovah's laws so stringent, that if he once believed in the one God he could not sin as he did. He read it thus: "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal;" and so on. Manasseh wanted to do all these things, and therefore he would not believe because he could not believe and keep his sin. The very reason why we have much unbelief is because we have much love of sin. Men will have no God, because God interferes with their lusts. They could not go on in their sins, if they once believed there was an everlasting God above them, or professed to believe it, for all do believe it, whether they say so or not; and because the thought of God checks them in their impiety and their lust, therefore they cry out, "There is no God," and say it with their lips as well as in their hearts. I believe it was this that led Manasseh to persecute the saints of God; for among his sins it is written, " he shed innocent blood very much." It is a tradition among the Jews that the prophet Isaiah was sawn in sunder by Manasseh, on account of a rebuke which he gave him for his sin. Isaiah was not wont to be very timid, and he told the king of his lusts,

and therefore placing him between two planks, he cut him in sunder from head to foot. It is just the reason why men hate God, and bate his servants, because the truth is too hot for them. Send you a preacher who would not tell you of your sins and you would hear him peaceably; but when the gospel comes with power, then it is that men can not bear it; when it trenches upon that pleasure, that sin, or that lust, then they will not believe it. Ye would believe the gospel if ye could believe it and live in your sins too. O! how many a drunken reprobate would be a Christian, if he might be a drunkard and a Christian too! How many a wicked wretch would turn believer, if he might believe and yet go on in his sins! But because faith in the everlasting God can never stand side by side with sin, and because the gospel cries, "Down with it! down with it! down with your sin," therefore it is that men turn round and say, "Down with the gospel." It is too hot for you, O ye sinful generation; therefore ye turn aside from it, because it will not tolerate your lusts, nor indulge your iniquity.

III. We look, then, at Manasseh as an unbeliever, and now we have our last most pleasing task of looking at Manasseh as A CONVERT. Hear it, O heavens, and listen, O earth! The Lord God hath said it. Manasseh shall be saved. He on his throne of cruelty has just appended his name to another murderous edict against the saints of God; yet he shall be humbled; he shall ask for mercy and shall be saved. Manasseh hears the decree of God; he laughs. "What! I play the hypocrite, and bend my knee? Never! It is not possible; and when the godly hear of it, they all say, 'It is not possible.' What! Saul among the prophets? Manasseh regenerated? Manasseh made to bow before the Most High? The thing is impossible." Ah! it is impossible with man, but it is possible with God; God knows how to do it. The enemy is at the gates of the city; a hostile king has just besieged the walls of Jerusalem; Manasseh flees from his palace and hides himself among the thorns; he is there taken, carried captive to Babylon, and shut up in prison. And now we see what God can do. The proud king is proud no longer, for he has lost his power; the mighty man is mighty no more, for his might is taken from him; and now in a low dungeon listen to him. It is no more the blasphemer, no more the hater of God; but see him cold on the floor! Manasseh bows his knee, and with the tears rolling down his cheeks, he cries, "O God! my father's God! an

outcast comes to thee; a hell-hound stained with blood throws himself at thy feet; I, a very demon, full of filthiness, now prostrate myself before thee! O my God, canst thou, wilt thou have mercy on such a wretch as I?" Hear it, ye heavens! Listen yet again. See, from the skies the angel flies with mercy in his hand. Ah! whither speeds he? It is to the dungeon of Babylon. The proud king is on his knee, and mercy comes and whispers in his ear—"Hope!" He starts from his knees, and cries, "Is there hope?" And down he falls again. Once more he pleads, and mercy whispers that sweet promise, uttered once by the murdered Isaiah—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins." O! do you see him? His very heart is running over in his eyes. O! how he weeps for joy, and yet for sorrow that he ever could have sinned against a God so kind. A moment more, and the dungeon is opened; the king of Babylon, moved by God, bids him go free, and he returns to his kingdom and throne, a happier and a better man than he had ever been before. I think I see him coming into Jerusalem. There are his statesmen and favorites, crying to him, "Come in, Manasseh; the bowl shall be filled, and we will have a merry night to-night; we will bow before the shrine of Ashtaroth, and thank her that she has set thee at liberty; lo, the horses of the sun are ready; come and pay thy devotions to him that shines on the earth, and leads the host of heaven!" Methinks I see their astonishment when he cries, "Stand back! stand back! ye are my friends no longer, until ye become God's friends; I have dandled you on my knees, and, vipers, you have stung me with the poison of asps; I made you my friends, and you have led me down to the gulf of hell. But I know it now. Stand back till ye are better men; and I will find others to be my courtiers." And there the poor saints, hidden in the back streets of the city, so frightened because the king has come back, are holding meetings of solemn prayer, crying unto God that no more murderous, persecuting edicts might go forth. And lo, a messenger comes and says? "The king is returned;" and while they are looking at him, wondering what the messenger is about to say, he adds, "He has returned, not Manasseh as he went, but as a very angel. I saw him with his own hands dash Ashtaroth in pieces; I heard him cry, 'The horses of the sun shall be hoofed; sweep out the house of God; we will hold a passover there; the morning and evening lamb shall again burn on Jehovah's altars, for he is God, and beside him there is none else.'" O! can you conceive the joy of believers on that

auspicious day? Can you think how they went up to God's house with joy and thanksgiving? And on the next Sabbath they sung, as they had—never sung before, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation," while they remembered that he who had persecuted the saints of God aforetime, now defended that very truth which once he abhorred. There was joy on earth, ay, and there was joy in heaven too; the bells of heaven rang merry peals the day Manasseh prayed; the angels of heaven flapped their wings with double alacrity the day Manasseh repented; earth and heaven were glad, and even the Almighty on his throne smiled gracious approbation, while he again said, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins."

And now are you curious to know what were the bases of the faith of Manasseh—what were the rocks on which he built his trust in God? I think they were two. He believed in God, first, *because he had answered his prayer*; and secondly, *because he had forgiven his sin*. I have sometimes said, when I have become the prey of doubting thoughts, "Well, now I dare not doubt whether there be a God, for I can look back in my diary and say, on such a day in the depths of trouble I bent my knee to God, and or ever I had risen from my knees the answer was given me." And so can many of you say; and therefore whatever others may say, you know there is a God, because he answered your prayer. You heard of that holy man, Mr. Müller, of Bristol.* If you were to tell George Müller there was not a God, he would weep over you. "Not a God?" he would say; "why, I have seen his hand. Whence came those answers to my prayers?" Ah! sirs, ye may laugh at us for credulity; but there are hundreds here who could most solemnly assert that they have asked of God for divers matters, and that God has not failed them, but granted their request. This was one reason why Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.

The other reason was, that *Manasseh had a sense of pardoned sin*. Ah! that is a delightful proof of the existence of a God. Here comes a poor miserable wretch: his knees are knocking together, his heart is sinking within him, he is giving himself up to despair. Bring the physicians to him! they cry, "We fear his mind is infirm. We believe he will at last have to be taken to some lunatic asylum;" and they apply their remedies, but

he is none the better, but rather grows worse. On a sudden this poor creature, afflicted with a sense of sin, groaning on account of guilt, is brought within the sound of the sacred Word; he hears it—it increases his misery; he hears again—his pain becomes doubled; till at last every one says his case is utterly hopeless. Suddenly, on a happy morning which God had ordained, the minister is led to some sweet passage. Perhaps it is this: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Spirit applies it, and the poor man goes home light as air, and says to his wife and children, "Come rejoice with me." "Why?" say they. "Because," says he, "my sins are forgiven." "How do you know that?" "O!" says he, "I have a sense of pardoning love within my heart, which all the doubters in the world could not gainsay; and if all the earth should rise up against me and say I should be condemned, I could say, 'I know there is now no condemnation for me.'" Have you ever felt pardoning blood applied? You will never doubt God, I know, if you have. Why, dear friends, if the poorest old woman in the world should be brought before an infidel of the wisest order, having a mind of the greatest caliber, and he should endeavor to pervert her, I think I see her smile at him, and say, "My good man, it is of no use at all, for the Lord has appeared unto me of old, saying, 'Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love,' and so you may tell me what you please: I have had a sense of blood-bought pardon shed abroad in my heart, and I know that he is God, and you can never beat it out of me." As good Watts says, when we have once such an assurance as that,

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

O! if you have a sense that sin is forgiven, you can never doubt the existence of a God; for it will be said of you, "Then he knew that the Lord he was God."

And now I gather up my strength for just one moment, to speak to those of you who desire to know what you must do to be saved. My hearer, no

question can be more important than that; none is so requisite to ask. Alas! there are too many who never ask it, but who go sailing down to the gulf of black despair, listening to the syren song of procrastination and delay. But, if you have been brought to ask the question solemnly and seriously, "What must I do to be saved?" I am happy, thrice happy to be able to tell you God's own word, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall he saved; he that believeth not," the Scripture saith, "shall be damned." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "But sir," you say, "I have many good works, and would trust in them." If you do, you are a lost man. As old Matthew Wilks most quaintly said once, speaking in his usual tone—"You might as well try to sail to America in a paper boat, as to go to heaven by your own works; you will be swamped on the passage if you attempt it." We can not spin a robe that is long enough to cover us; we can not make a righteousness that is good enough to satisfy God. If you would be saved, it must be through what Christ did, and not what you did. You can not be your own Saviour; Christ must save you, if you are saved at all. How then can you be saved by Christ? Here is the plan of salvation. It is written—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Do you feel that you are a sinner? Then believe that Jesus Christ came to save you; for so sure as ever you feel you are a sinner, it is a fact that Christ died for you; and if he died for you, you shall not perish, for I can not conceive that Christ would die in vain. If he did die for you, you shall most assuredly be pardoned and saved, and shall one day sing in heaven. The only question is, Did he die for you? He most certainly did if you are a sinner; for it is written—I will repeat it again—"It is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners." Poor sinner, believe! My dear friend, give me thine hand! I wish I could put it inside Christ's hand. O! embrace him! embrace him! lest haply the clouds of night should come upon thee, and the sun should set ere thou hast found him, O! lay hold on him, lest death and destruction should overtake thee; fly to this mountain, lest thou be consumed, and remember, once in Christ, thou art safe beyond hazard.

"Once in Christ in Christ for ever,
Nothing from his love can sever."

O! believe him! believe him, my dear, dear hearers for Jesus sake! Amen.

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Meditation On God

My meditation of him shall be sweet. - Psalm 104:34

David, certainly, was not a melancholy man. Eminent as he was for his piety and for his religion, he was equally eminent for his joyfulness and gladness of heart. Read the verses that precede my text, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." It has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly said, that the contemplation of divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtful persons have supposed, doth not become the young; it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads, who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave; it may be well enough for those who are in poverty and deep trial; but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful and happy man, this is generally said to be out of the question.

Now, there is no greater falsehood. No man is so happy, but he would be happier still if he had religion. The man with a fullness of earthly pleasure, whose barns are full of store, and whose presses burst with new wine, would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the grace of God in his heart; rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity; it would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup; it would purify his heart, and freshen his taste for delights, and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb. Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy joyful at the same time that it can make the joyous ones more joyful still. It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness; it can make the eye sparkle with tenfold more brilliance; and happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the fountain

of atoning mercy; if he knows that his name is registered in the book of everlasting life. Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the divine testament, which hath promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future, when he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He will be able to say, as our Psalmist does, "I will sing unto the Lord. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Taking these few words as the motto of our sermon to-night, we shall speak, first, concerning a profitable exercise—"meditation". Secondly, concerning a very precious subject: "my meditation of him"; and, thirdly, concerning a very blessed result:—"My meditation of him shall be sweet."

I. First, here is A VERY PROFITABLE EXERCISE—meditation.

Meditation is a word that more than half of you, I fear, do not know how to spell. You know how to repeat the letters of the word; but I mean to say, you can not spell it in the reality of life. You do not occupy yourselves with any meditation. What do many of you that are merchants know concerning this matter? You rise up in the morning, just in time to take your accustomed seat in the omnibus; you hasten to your counting-house for your letters, and there you continue all day long, for business when you are busy, or for gossip when business is dull, and at night you go home too tired and jaded for the wholesome recreation of your minds, Week by week, month by month, and year by year, it is still with you one everlasting grind, grind, grind. You have no time for meditation; and you reckon, perhaps, that if you were to set apart half an hour in the day, to ponder the weighty matters of eternity, it would be to you a clear loss of time. It is very wise of you to economize your minutes, but I suppose if half an hour in a day could earn you a hundred pounds, you would not say you could not afford it, be cause you know how to estimate pecuniary profit. Now, if you really knew equally how to count the great profit, of

meditation, you would deem it a positive gain to yourselves to spend some time therein, for meditation is most profitable to the spirit; it is an extremely healthful and excellent occupation. Far from being idle time, it is judicious employment of time.

Do not imagine that the meditative man is necessarily lazy; contrariwise, he lays the best foundation for useful works. He is not the best student who reads the most books, but he who meditates the most upon them; he shall not learn most of divinity who hears the greatest number of sermons, but he who meditates the most devoutly upon what he does hear; nor shall he be so profound a scholar who takes down ponderous volumes one after the other, as he who, reading little by little, precept upon precept, and line upon line, digests what he learns, and assimilates each sentiment to his heart by meditation—receiving the word first into his understanding, and afterwards receiving the spirit of the thing into his own soul. When he reads the letters with his eye it is merely mechanical, but that he may read them to his own heart he retires to meditate. Meditation is thus a very excellent employment; it is not the offspring of listlessness or lethargy but it is a satisfactory mode of employing time, and very remunerative to the spirit. Let us for a moment or two tell you some of its uses.

First, I think meditation furnishes the mind somewhat with rest. It is the couch of the soul. The time that a man spends in necessary rest, he never reckons to be wasted, because he is refreshing and renovating himself for further exertion. Meditation, then, is the rest of the spirit. "Oh," says one, "I must have rest. Here have I been, fagging and toiling incessantly for months; I must have a day's excursion; I must do this thing, and the other." Yes, and such recreation, in its proper place, is desirable; we ought to have seasons of innocent recreation; but, at the same time, if many of us knew how to spend a little time daily in the calm repose of contemplative retirement, we should find ourselves less exhausted by the wear and tear of our worldly duties,—to meditate, would be to us a salutary recreation, and instead of running ourselves out of breath, and laboring till a respite is compulsory, we should spread our intervals of ease and refreshing over the whole year, and secure a small portion every day, by turning aside from the bustling crowd to meditate upon whatever

subject we wish to occupy the most honorable place in our mind.

Just as a change of posture relieves the weariness of the body, a change of thoughts will prevent your spirits becoming languid. Sit down in a silent chamber at eventide, throw the window up, and look at God's bright stars, and count those eyes of heaven; or, if you like it better, pause in the noon-tide heat, and look down upon the busy crowd in the streets, and count the men like so many ants, upon the ant-hill of this world; or, if you care not to look about you, sit down and look within yourself; count the pulses of your own heart, and examine the motions of your own breast. At times, 'tis well to muse upon heaven; or if thou art a man who lovest to revel in the prophetic future, turn over the mystic page, and study the sacred visions recorded in the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Revelation. As thou dost enter into these hallowed intricacies, and dost meditate upon these impressive symbols, thou wilt rise up from thy study mightily refreshed. You will find it like a couch to your mind.

You will return to your business in a better spirit; you may expect (other things being equal) to earn more that day, than you ever earned before, by the painful system of uninterrupted drudgery; for the diversion of thought will rest, string up, and brace your nerves, and enable you to do more work, and do it better too. Meditation is the couch of the mind.

Again, meditation is the machine in which the raw material of knowledge is converted to the best uses. Let me compare it to a wine-press. By reading, and research, and study we gather the grapes; but it is by meditation we press out the juice of those grapes, and obtain the wine. How is it that many men who read very much know very little? What a host of pedantic scholars we have, who can recount book after book, from old Hesiod to the last volume in Ward's catalogue, but they know little or nothing after all. The reason is, they read tome upon tome, and stow away knowledge with lumbering confusion inside their heads, till they have laid so much weight on their brain that it can not work. Instead of putting facts into the press of meditation, and fermenting them till they can draw out inferences, they leave them to rot and perish. They extract none of the sweet juice of wisdom from the precious fruits of the vine-tree. A man who reads only a tenth part as much, but who takes the grapes of Eschol

that he gathers, and squeezes them by meditation, will learn more in a week than your pedant will in a year, because he muses on what he reads. I like, when I have read a book for about half an hour, to walk awhile, and think it over. I shut up the volume, and say, "Now, Mr. Author, you have made your speech, let me think over what you have said. A little meditation will enable me to distinguish between what I knew before and the fresh subject you communicate to me—between your facts and your opinions—between your arguments and those I should make from the same premises. Animals, after they have eaten, lie down and ruminate; they first crop the grass, and afterwards digest it. So meditation is the rumination of the soul; thereby we get that nutriment which feeds and supports the mind.

When thou hast gathered flowers in the field or garden, arrange them and bind them together with the string of memory; but take heed that thou dost put them into the water of meditation, else they will soon fade, and be fit only for the dunghill. When thou hast gathered pearls from the sea, recollect that thou wilt have gathered with them many worthless shells, and much mud; count them over, therefore, and sort them in thy memory; keep what are worth preserving, and even then thou must open the oyster to extract the pearl, and polish it to make it appear more beautiful. Thou mayest not string it in the necklace of thy minds until it has been rubbed and garnished by meditation. Thus, we need meditation to make use of what we have discovered. As it is the rest of the soul, so it is, at the same time, the means of making the best use of what the soul has acquired.

Again, meditation is to the soul what oil was to the body of the wrestlers. When those old athletes went out to wrestle, they always took care before they went to oil themselves well—to make their joints supple and fit for labor. Now, meditation makes the soul supple—makes it so that it can use things when they come into the mind. Who are the men that can go into a controversy and get the mastery? Why, the men who meditate when they are alone. Who are the men that can preach? Not those who gad about and never commune with their own hearts alone; but those who think earnestly, as well when no one is near them as when there is a crowd around them. Who are the authors who write your books, and keep up the

constant supply of literature? They are meditative men. They keep their bones supple and their limbs fit for exercise by continually bathing themselves in the oil of meditation. How important, therefore, is meditation as a mental exercise, to have our minds in constant readiness for any service!

I have thus pointed out to you that meditation is in itself useful to every man. But you did not come here to listen to a merely moral essay; you came to hear something about the Gospel of God; and what I have said already is but an introduction to what I have to say concerning the great necessity of meditation in religion. As meditation is good for the mind, even upon worldly topics and natural science, much more is it useful when we come to spiritual learning. The best and most saintly of men have been men of meditation. Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate. David says, "As for me, I will meditate on thy statutes." Paul, who meditated continually, says to Timothy, "Give thyself to meditation." To the Christian meditation is most essential. I should almost question the being of a Christian, and I should positively deny his well-being who lived without habitual meditation. Meditation and prayer are twin sisters, and both of them appear to me equally necessary to a Christian life. I think meditation must exist where there is prayer, and prayer would be sure to exist where there is meditation.

My brethren, there is nothing more wanting to make Christians grow in grace now-a-days than meditation. Most of you are painfully negligent in this matter. You remind me of a sermon that one of my quaint old friends in the country once preached from that text—"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." He told us that many people who would hunt for a sermon, were too lazy to roast it by meditation. They knew not how to put the jack of memory through it, and then to twist it round by meditation before the fire of piety, and so to cook it and make it fit for your soul's food. So it is with many of you after you have caught the sermon: you allow it to run away. How often do you, through lack of meditation, miss the entire purpose for which the sermon was designed. Unless ye meditate upon the truths we declare unto you, ye will gather little sweetness, ye will acquire little profit, and, certainly, ye will be in no wise established therein to your edification. Can you get the honey from

the comb until you squeeze it! You may be refreshed by a few words while you listen to the sermon, but it is the meditation afterwards which extracts the honey, and gets the best and most luscious savor therefrom. Meditation, my friends, is a part of the life-blood of every true Christian, and we ought to abound therein.

Let me tell you that there ought to be special times for meditation. I think every man should set apart a portion of time every day for this gracious exercise. But, then, again I am met with an apology; you assure me that you have so much to do you cannot afford it. I generally treat with lightness the excuses of those who cannot afford time for obvious duties. If you have got no time you should make it. Let us see now, What time do you get up in the morning? Could you not manage to get up a quarter of an hour earlier? Well, yes! How long do you take for your dinner? So long. Then you read some trashy publication, possibly. Well, why could you not spend that time in tranquil communion with your own soul? The Christian will ever be in a lean state if he has no time for sacred musings before his God. Those men who know most of God are such as meditate most upon him. Those who realize most experimentally the doctrines of grace, are those who meditate and soar beyond the reach of all sublunary things. I think we shall never have much advancement in our churches until the members thereof begin to accept habitually the counsel, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers;" or that other, "Commune with your own heart in your chamber, and be still." Till the din and noise of business somewhat abate, and we give ourselves to calmer thought, and in the solemn silence of the mind find at once our heaven and our God, we must still expect to have regiments of dwarfs, and only here and there a giant. Giant minds can not be nourished by casual hearing; gigantic souls must have meditation to support them. Would ye be strong? Would ye be mighty? Would ye be valiant for the Lord, and useful in his cause? Take care that ye follow the occupation of the Psalmist, David, and meditate. This is a happy occupation.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider A VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT: "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Christian! thou needest no greater inducement to excite thee than the

subject here proposed: "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Whom does that word "him" mean? I suppose it may refer to all the three persons of the glorious Trinity? My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet! And, verily, if you set down to meditate upon God the Father, and reflect on his sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love towards his elect people—if you think of God the Father as the great author and originator of the plan of salvation—if you think of him as the mighty being who has said that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he hath given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus —if you look to him as the giver of his only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, his best gift, will, with him also, freely give us all things—if you consider him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations, in the ingathering of every chosen ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation for ever, even were your attention limited to the manner of the Father's love.

Or, if you choose to do so, you may meditate upon God the Holy Spirit. Consider his marvellous operations on your own heart—how he quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins— how he brought you nigh to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold—how he called you with such a mighty efficacy that you could not resist his voice— how he drew you with the cords of love. If you think how often he has helped you in the hour of peril—how frequently he has comforted you with the promise in times of distress and trouble; and, if you think that, like holy oil, he will always supply your lamp, and until life's last hour he will always replenish you with his influences, proving himself still your teacher and your guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Saviour face to face, in the blessed presence of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost—in such revelation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation.

But to-night, I prefer rather to confine this word "him" to the person of our adorable Saviour. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Ah! if it be possible that the meditation upon one person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no Comfort find;
The holy, just and sacred three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace forgives my sins."

Thou precious Jesus! what can be a sweeter theme for me, than to think of thine exalted being—to conceive of thee as the Son of God, who with the golden compasses struck out a circle from space, and fashioned this round world? To think of thee as the God who holds this mighty orb upon thy shoulders, and art the King of Glory, before whom angels bow with modest homage; and yet to consider thee as likewise "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh"—

"In ties of blood with sinners one;"

to conceive of thee as the Son of Mary, born of a Virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race; to picture thee in all thy suffering life, in all the anguish of thy death; to trace thee in all thy passion; to view thee in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement; and then to follow thee to the pavement, and thence up the steep side of Calvary, bearing the cross, braving the shame, when thy soul was made an offering for my sins, when thou didst die the reconciling death 'midst horrors still to all but God unknown. Verily, here is a meditation for my soul, which must be "sweet" for ever. I might begin, like the Psalmist David, and say, "My heart is inditing of a good matter; it bubbleth up, while I speak of things which I have made touching the king; my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer."

Christ! "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Consider Christ in any way you please, and your meditation of him will be sweet. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen, which you may take up

and hold one way, and you see one light, and another way, and you see another light, and whichever way you turn them you will always see some precious sparkling of light, and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah! take Jesus for your theme; sit down and consider him; think of his relation to your own soul, and you will never get to the end of that one subject.

Think of his eternal relationship with you; recollect that the saints of Jesus were from condemnation free, in union with the Lamb, before the world was made. Think of your everlasting union with the person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space, and how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean, even before you fell; and after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to him since you have been called by his grace. Think how he has become your brother; how his heart has beaten in sympathy with yours; how he has kissed you with the kisses of his love, and his love has been to you sweeter than wine. Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history, where Jesus has whispered, "I am yours," and you have said, "My beloved is mine." Think of some choice moments, when an angel has stooped from heaven, and taken you up on his wings, and carried you aloft, to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with him. Or think, if it please you, of some pensive moments, when you have had what Paul sets so much store by—fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus—yet not the sweat of blood—when you have knelt down, and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship in Christ, which is to be developed in heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when ye shall—

"greet the blood-besprinkled band,
on the eternal shore,"

and for ever range the—

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Array'd in living green."

Picture to your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as "more than a conqueror," and put a pearly crown upon your head, more glittering than stars. And think of that transporting hour, when you will take that crown from off your own brow, and climbing the steps of Jesus' throne, you shall put it on his head, and crown him once more Lord of your soul, as well as "Lord of all." Ah! if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer, Surely, you have not tried to meditate; for "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Suppose you have done thinking of him as he is related to you; consider him next as he is related to the wide world. Recollect that Jesus Christ says he came into the world to save the world, and undoubtedly he will one day save the world, for he who redeemed it by price and by power will restore it and renew it from the effects of the fall. Oh! think of Jesus in this relationship as the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. He will come again to our earth one day; and when he comes he will find this world defaced still with the old curse upon it—the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, and pestilence, and war here still; but when he comes, he shall bid men "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" war shall be obliterated from among the sciences; he shall speak the word, and there shall be a company that will publish it. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." Jesus Christ shall come! Christians! be ye waiting for the second coming of your Lord Jesus Christ! and whilst ye wait, meditate upon that coming. Think, O my soul, of that august day, when thou shalt see him with all his pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment, and to avenge himself upon his enemies. Think of all his triumphs when Satan shall be bound, and death shall be crushed, and hell shall be conquered, and when he shall be saluted as the universal Monarch, "Lord over all, blessed for ever. Amen." "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Ah! Christian! you are not afraid to be alone a little while now, for want of subjects of meditation! Some persons say they cannot bear to be an hour

in solitude; they have got nothing to do, nothing to think about. No Christian will ever talk so, surely; for if I can but give him one word to think of—Christ—let him spell that over for ever; let me give him the word Jesus, and only let him try to think it over, and he shall find that an hour is nought, and that eternity is not half enough to utter our glorious Saviour's praise. Yea, beloved, I believe when we get to heaven we shall want no subject for meditation there, except Jesus Christ. I know there are some divines and learned philosophers who have been telling us that when we go to heaven we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another; that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus, and all the host of celestial bodies. We shall behold all the wonders of creation; we shall explore the depths of science, as they tell us, and there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to people who imagine thus of heaven, is, that I have no objection it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure; I hope you will have, and I know my Father will let you have, whatsoever will make you happy. But, while you are viewing stars, I will sit down and look at Jesus; and if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say, Ah! yes—

"But in His looks a wonder stands,
The noblest glory of God's hands;
God in the person of His Son
Hath all His mightiest works outdone."

But you will say, You will become tired, surely, of looking at him. No, I should reply; I have been looking at but one of his hands, and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in; and when I have lived ten thousand years more I will take his other hand, and sit down and look at each gaping wound, and then I may descend to his side and his feet:—

"Millions of years my wond'ring eyes
Shall o'er his beauties rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of His love."

You may go flitting about as far as you like; I will sit there, and look at the God in human flesh, for I believe that I shad learn more of God and more of his works in the person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of traveling on wings of light, though you should have the most elevated imaginations and the most gigantic intellects to help you in your search. Brethren, our meditation of Christ will be sweet. There will be little else we shall want of heaven besides Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ; everything in heaven will be Christ-like: yea Christ is the heaven of his people. To be in Christ and to be with Christ is the essence of heaven:—

"Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence remove
Or but conceal His Face."

Here is the object of our meditation. Our meditation of him shall be sweet."

III. Let me proceed to point out a blessed result—"Our meditation of him shall be sweet."

This depends upon the character very much. Ah! I know some persons come into chapel, who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the benediction, and dismiss the assembly; they are very glad when all is over, and they would rather hear the parting doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, It is precious dry. If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind remembering that; but a meditation which should be entirely on Christ, would be dry enough to them, and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah! that is because of the taste you have in your mouth. There is something wrong about your palate. You know, when we have been taking some kind of medicine, and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavor, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So it is with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world's poor dainties; you have some of the powder of the apples of

Sodom hanging on your lips, that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus. In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it with your hearts. But here the Psalmist says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

What a mercy, dear friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For I am sure, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. There is little here that seems sweet at first, but what has some bitter flavor afterward; and there are too many things that are actually bitter, and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world and how many will be the cases that you will see marked bitter! There are perhaps more of aloes put in our Cup than of any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy then it is, that there is one thing that is sweet! "My meditation of him shall be sweet; so sweet, beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness. Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed, and he who was her strength, the stay of her life and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave—have I not seen her hold up her hands, and say, "Ah! though he is gone, still my Maker is my husband; 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;' blessed be his name!" What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man, whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up, and become quicksands, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands, and repeated Habbakuk's words, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c., &c., yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. "Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh! how many, when they have come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived that death was swallowed up in victory, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste, through affliction and trouble, if you have been saying with Jeremiah, "Thou has

filled my mouth with gravel stones and made me drunken with worm-wood"—if so, take a little of his choice cordial; I assure you it is sweet; Lacrymae Christi, as it is called. If thou wilt take these tears of Jesus and put them in thy mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor. Or again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ, as a piece of scented stuff that was perfumed in heaven. It matters not what thou hast in thy house; this shall make it redolent of Paradise—shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden's garden, wafting the odor of flowers. Ah! there is nothing that can so console your spirits, and relieve all your distresses and troubles, as the feeling that now you can meditate on the person of Jesus Christ. "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

But, my dear hearers, shall I send you away without asking you whether you have ever had such a meditation upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? I do not like to preach a sermon, without pressing it home to the conscience of my hearers. I never like to bring you out a sword and show it you, and say, "There is a sword, and it is sharp;" I always like to make you feel that it is sharp, by cutting you with it. Would to God the sword of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts now! When I see so many gathered together even on a week-day, I am astonished. But wherefore have ye come, my brethren? What went ye out for to see? a reed shaken with the wind? What have ye come out for to see? a prophet? Nay, but I say that you have come to see something more than a prophet. You have come to see and hear somewhat of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. How many of you meditate on Christ? Christian men and women, do you not live below your privileges, many of you? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with your Jesus? Methinks, if you had a free pass to heaven's palace, you would use it very often; if you might go there and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your Jesus, the king of heaven, and he gives you that which can open the gates of heaven and let you in to hold company with him, and yet you live without meditating upon his work, meditating upon his person, meditating upon his offices, and meditating upon his glory.

Christian men and women! I say to you, is it not time we should begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know

what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the Gospel is preached in most; but it is preached as it might be by bumble-bees in pitchers—always the same monotonous sound, and no good is done. I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run up-hill; but when you begin to meditate and pray over the word, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them, and they will set to and meditate themselves, and give you the Gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts, food for people's souls.

And for the rest of you—you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ—what do you think shall become of you when your bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet "that last, that bitter cup which mortal man can taste" is but a dire presentiment. When you have to drink that gall in hell for ever—when the cup of torments which Jesus did not drain for you will have to be drained by yourself—what will you do then? The Christian can go to heaven, because Christ has drunk destruction dry for him; but the ungodly and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. What will you do then? The first drops are bad enough, when you sip here the drops of remorse on account of sin; but that future cup in hell—that terrific mixture which God deals out to the lost in the pit—what will you do when you have to drink that? when your meditation will be, that you rejected Jesus, that you despised his Gospel, that you scoffed at his word? What will you do in that dread extremity? Many of you business men! will your ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in hell? Lawyer will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Laboring man! will it be a sweet meditation to thee, to think that thy wages were spent in drunkenness, or thy Sabbath profaned, and thy duties neglected? And thou, professor! will it be a sweet meditation to sit down and think of thine hypocrisy? And ah! ye carnally-minded men, who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, "whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame," will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last?

Be assured of this: your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is

not your meditation now. May there be great searchings of heart this night! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnowers' hand; they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate—hearing sermons and forgetting them. Take heed to the voice of warning, lest God should say, "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." O wicked men! wicked men! one word to you, all of you who know not God, and ye shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation to-night. It shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, "What is your employment?" He said, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home," said he, "and make me a chain of such a length" He went home; it occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain, only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said, "Go and make it twice as long." He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, "Go and make it longer still." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, "Take it, bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire." There were his wages for making the chain. Here is a meditation for you to-night, ye servants of the devil! Your master the devil is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been fifty years welding the links of the chain; and he says, "Go and make it longer still. Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on; next Saturday night you will be drunk, and put another link on; next Monday you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say, "More links on still!" And then, at last, it will be, "Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire." "For the wages of sin is death." There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet; but if God makes it profitable, it will do good. You must have strong medicines sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply it to your hearts! Amen.

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Men Chosen - Fallen Angels Rejected

Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. - Hebrews 2:16

The Almighty God, who dwelt alone, was pleased to manifest himself by created works, which should display his wisdom and his power. When he set about the mighty work of creation, he determined in his own mind that he would fashion a variety of works, and that all his creatures should not be of one form, nature, grandeur, or dignity; hence he made some grains of dust, and others mountains of stupendous magnitude; he created some drops and some oceans; some mighty hills and some valleys. Even in his inanimate works he preserved a wonderful variety; he gave not to all stars the same glory, neither to all worlds the same ponderous mass; he gave not to all rocks the same texture, nor unto all seas the same shape of fashion, but he was pleased, in the work of his hands, to observe an infinite variety. When he came to create living creatures, there, too, are distinctions that we must note. From the worm up to the eagle, from the eagle to the man, from the man to the angel; such are the steps of creating goodness in the fashion of things that are animate. He hath not made all creatures eagles, neither hath he fashioned all beings worms, but having a right to do what he wills with his own, he has exercised the right in making one creature—the majestic lion—king of the forest, and another, the harmless lamb, which shall be devoured, without power to resist its enemy, or defend itself. He has made his creatures just as it seemed him fit; he has given to one swiftness of foot, to another, speed of wing; to one, clearness of eye, to another, force of sinew. He hath not followed any fixed rule in his creation; but he hath done exactly as it pleased him in the arrangement of the forms which he hath animated. So, also, we must observe a great difference in the rational beings which he has created. He has not made all men alike; they

differ mightily; from the man of the smallest intellect to the man of majestic mind, there are no few steps. And then there is the higher order of rational creatures, more superior to unrenewed man than man ever can be to his fellows; namely—the order of angels. And in the fashioning of angels and men, God, again, has exercised his own right to create as he pleases; to do just as he wills with his own. Thence, all angels may not be alike in dignity, and all men are not alike in intellect. He hath made them to differ.

But now we wish to draw your attention to two instances of God's doing as he pleases in the fashioning of the works of his hands—the case of angels, and in the case of men. Angels were the elder born. God created them, and it pleased him to give unto them a free will to do as they pleased; to choose the good or to prefer the evil, even as he did to man: he gave them this stipulation—that if they should prefer the good, then their station in heaven should be for ever fixed and firm; but if they sinned, they should be punished for their guilt, and cast out from the presence of his glory into flames of fire. In an evil hour, Satan, one of the chiefs of the angels, rebelled; he tempted others, and he led astray a part of the stars of heaven. God, in his divine vengeance, smote those rebel angels, drove them from their heavenly seats, banished them from their abodes of happiness and glory, and sent them down to dwell for ever in the abyss of hell; the rest he confirmed, calling them the elect angels; he made their thrones eternally secure, and gave them an entail of those crowns which, sustained by his grace, they had preserved by the rectitude of their holy conduct. After that it pleased him to make another race of beings, called men. He did not make them all at once; he made but two of them, Adam and Eve, and he committed to their keeping the safety of their entire progeny throughout all generations; he said to Adam, as he had said to the angels, "I give unto thee free-will; thou mayest obey or disobey, as thou pleasest. There is my law; thou art not to touch yon tree. The command is by no means irksome. To keep that command will not be difficult to thee, for I have given thee free-will to choose the good." However, so it happened, much to the misery of man, that Adam broke the covenant of works; he touched the accursed fruit, and in that day he fell. Ah! what a fall was there! Then you, and I, and all of us fell down, while cursed sin did triumph over us; there were no men that stood; there

were some angels that stood, but no men, for the fall of Adam was the fall of our entire race. After one portion of the angels had fallen, it pleased God to stamp their doom, and make it fast and firm; but when man had fallen, it did not so please God; he had threatened to punish him, but in his infinite mercy he selected the major portion of the human race, whom he made the objects of his special affection, for whom he provided a precious remedy, to whom he covenanted salvation, and secured it by the blood of his everlasting Son. These are the persons whom we call the elect; and those whom he has left to perish, perish on account of their own sins, most justly, to the praise of his glorious justice. Now, here you notice divine sovereignty; sovereignty, that God chose to put both men and angels on the footing of their free-will; sovereignty, in that he chose to punish all the fallen angels with utter destruction; sovereignty, in that he chose to relieve the whole human race, and to grant an eternal pardon to a number, whom no man can number, selected out of men, who shall infallibly be found before his right hand above. My text mentions this great fact, for when properly translated it reads thus:—"He took not up angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." As this text has two translations, I shall give you the two meanings as briefly as I can.

I. In the first place, the translation of our authorised version runs thus:—"He took not on him the nature of angels." Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he came from heaven to die, did not take upon himself the nature of angels. It would have been a stoop, more immense than if a seraph should have changed himself into an emmet, for the Almighty Son of God to have been clothed in the garb of even the archangel Gabriel; but his condescension dictated to him, that if he did stoop, he would descend to the very lowest degree; that if he did become a creature, he would become, not the noblest creature, but one of the most ignoble of rational beings, that is to say, man; therefore, *he did not stoop to the intermediate step of angelship, but he stooped right down and became a man.* "He took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Let us notice the wisdom and the love of this, and I think there will be something to cause us to glorify God for so doing.

1. In the first place, if Christ had taken upon himself the nature of angels, *he could never have made an atonement for man.* Setting aside the

thought that if he came to save man it would have seemed improper if he had come in the garb of angels, you must allow, that if he had done so, he could not have seen death. How could angels die? We can suppose that their spirit may become extinct, if God should will it; we can suppose the entire annihilation of that to which God alone supplies immortality; but since angels have no bodies, we cannot suppose them capable of death, for death is the separation of the body and the soul; therefore, it behoved Christ that he should take upon himself the form of a man, that he might become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Had angels been standing by, they would have said, "Oh! mighty Master, take our radiant robes. Oh! take not the poor every-day garb of humanity, take our glittering garments all bedight with pearls." And Gabriel would have said, "Come, take my wings, thou mighty Maker, and I shall count myself too honoured to have lost them for thy sake. There, take this crown and this mantle of azure, wherewith to clothe thyself, thou Son of God; put my silver sandals on thy feet; become not man, but an angel, if thou wilt stoop." "But no," he would have said, "Gabriel, if I were in thy dress I could not fight with death; I could not sleep in the tomb; I could not feel the pangs and agony of dissolution, therefore, I must, I will, become a man." "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

2. Had our Saviour become an angel, we must note, in the next place, that *he would never have been a fitting example for us*. I cannot imitate an angelic example in all points, it may be very good, so far as I can imitate, but it cannot, in all points, be my pattern. If you would give me something to imitate, give me a man like myself; then I may attempt to follow him. An angel could not have set us the same holy and pious example that our Saviour did. Had he descended from on high in the garb of one of those bright spirits, he might have been a fine example for those brilliant cherubs who surround his throne; but we, poor mortal men, condemned to drag the chain of mortality along this earthly existence, would have turned aside and said, "Ah! such a thing is too high for us, we cannot attain unto it;" and we, therefore, should have stopped short. If I am to carve marble, give me a marble statue which I am to copy; and if this mortal clay is to be cut out into the very model of perfection, as it is to be by God's Spirit, then give me man for my example; for a man I am,

and as a man, I am to be made perfect. Not only could not Christ have been a Redeemer, but he could not have been our exemplar, if he had taken upon himself the nature of angels.

2. Sweetly, also, let us remember that if Christ had been an angel, *he could not have sympathised with us*. In order to sympathise with our fellow-creatures we must be something like them. Suppose a man made of iron, or of brass; could be told of sickness or of illness: could he understand it? I would not have him for a nurse; I would not care to have such a being for my physician; he could not feel for me; he could not sympathise with me. No, even our own fellow-creatures cannot sympathise with us unless they have suffered as we have done. I have heard of a lady who never knew poverty in all her life, and consequently she could not sympathise with the poor. She heard the complaint that bread was extremely dear, when it was running up to fourteen-pence a loaf. "Oh!" she said, "I have no patience with the poor people, grumbling about the dearness of bread. If bread is so dear, let them live on penny buns; they are always cheap enough." She had not been in the position of the poor, and, therefore, she could not sympathise with them; and no man can sympathise with another, to any great extent, unless he has been in some measure in the same position, and endured the same trouble. "It behoved him, therefore, that he should be made in all points like unto his brethren, that he might be a faithful high priest;" "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." But if he had been an angel, what sympathy could he have had for me? Suppose I should tell an angel that I could scarcely resist my corruptions: the angel would look at me, and wonder what I meant. If I should tell him that I find this world a vast howling wilderness: how could he believe me, for he has never heard howlings, his ears have only been saluted by golden harps and sweet choral symphonies of praise. If I should tell him that I found it hard work to hold on my way, and keep close to my Saviour, the angel could only say, "I cannot sympathise with you, for I am not tempted as you are; I have no clogging nature to abate my ardent zeal, but day without night, with unflagging wing, I circle his throne rejoicing; nor have I a wish nor will to depart from my great Maker." There you see the Saviour's wisdom. He would become a man and not an angel.

4. Once more, Christ became a man, and not an angel, *because he desired to be one with his dear church*. Christ was betrothed to his church ere time began; and when he came into the world he virtually said, "I will go with thee, my bride, and I will delight myself in thy company. Angels' garments were not a fitting wedding dress for me to wear, if I am to be bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh. I am allied to thee by a union firm and strong. I have called thee Hephzibah, my delight is in thee; and I have said, thy land shall be called Beulah, that is, married. Well, if I am married to thee, I will live in the same condition with thee; it were not fit that husband should live in palace, and that wife would live in cottage; it were not meet that husband should be arrayed in gorgeous robes, and wife in meaner garments." "No," said he to his church, "if thou dwellest upon earth, I will; if thou dwellest in a tabernacle of clay, I will do the same;

"Yea, said the Lord, with her I'll go,
Through all the depths of care and woe,
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear."

Christ cannot bear to be different from his church. You know, he would not be in heaven without her, therefore, did he make that long, long journey, to redeem her and visit her, and when he came on this good errand, he would not that she should be made of clay, and he should not be made of clay too; he was the head, and it would have been out of order that the head should have been of gold, and the body of clay; it would have been like Nebuchadnezzar's image, that must be broken. "Since the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he must also take part in the same," for he became "perfect through suffering," since he was "the captain of our salvation." Thus, again, you see his love and his wisdom, that he "took not on him the nature of angels, but took upon him the seed of Abraham."

5. Again, if Christ had not taken upon him the nature of man, *then manhood would not have been so honorable or so comfortable as it is*. I consider that to be a Christian man is to be the greatest thing that God

has made. Little as I am, I can say of myself, if I am a child of God, I am next to my Maker. There is an infinite, an awful, an immeasurable distance; but, save Jesus Christ himself, there is no being between man and God. As for an angel, he is less than redeemed man. "Are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to be ministers unto us who are heirs of salvation?" Without controversy, the less is minister unto the greater, and the greater shall not attend the less; therefore, the angels are less than men, for they minister to us. Manhood is a noble thing, for God wore manhood once; manhood is a glorious thing, for it was the robe of the eternal; "God was made flesh and dwelt among us;" therefore, flesh is dignified and glorified. As I said, it would not be so comfortable to be a man, if Christ had not been a man. For I know that I must die; now, my comfort is, that I shall rise again; but I should not have had that comfort if Christ had not been a man, and if he had not died and risen again. Oh! death, I have often seen thy dungeon, and I have thought, how can it be that any should escape therefrom; the walls thereof are thick, and against the door is a ponderous stone; it is sealed fast, and watchers guard it. Oh! death, where is the man that can rend thy sepulchre, or open thy door? Thine iron bars, O death, cannot be filed by mortal, and thy chains are too heavy to be snapped by the finite; but I take comfort, for there was a *man* who broke the bonds of death; there was one who snapped the fetter, cut the bars of brass, unlocked the gates, and made his way triumphant through the sky; in that man I see an instance of what I, too, shall do; when the loud trump of the archangel shall startle my sleeping atoms, I, too, shall find it easy to rise, for as the Lord my Saviour rose, so all his followers must; and therefore, death, I look upon thy dungeon as one that must be opened again, for it has been opened once; I look upon thy worm as but a little thing that must yield up its prey, and give back the flesh whereon it fed; I look upon the stone of thy sepulchre as but some pebble of oceans' shingly beach, which I shall cast away with eager hand, when I shall burst the cerements of the grave, and mount to immortality. It is a comfortable thing to be a man, because Christ died and rose again; but had he been an angel, the resurrection would not have had that great and glorious proof, nor should we have been so content to be human, seeing there would be death, but no immortality and life.

II. Thus I have tried to explain the first part of the subject; and now for the second. The literal translation, according to the marginal reading, is, "*He took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham,*" by which is meant, that Christ did not die to save angels, though many of them needed salvation, but he died to save fallen man. Now, I like every now and then to give the opponents of the great doctrines of grace something hard to put between their teeth. I have often been told, that election is a most dreadful doctrine and to teach that God saves some, and lets other perish, is to make God unjust. Sometimes I have asked how that was; and the usual answer I have got is this: Suppose a father should have a certain number of children, and he were to put some of his children into a terrible dungeon, and make the rest of them happy, would you think that father was just? Well, I reply, you have supposed a case, and I will answer you. Of course I should not: the child has a claim upon his father, and the father is bound to give him his claim; but I want to know what you mean by asking that question. How does that apply to the case of God? I did not know that all men were God's children; I knew that they were God's rebellious subjects, but I did not know that they were his children. I thought they did not become his children till they were born again, and that when they were his children, he did treat them all alike, and did carry them all to heaven, and give them all a mansion; and I never did hear that he sent any of his children to hell; true, I have heard *you* say so; I have heard *you* say that some of his children fall from grace, and he therefore sends them to hell, and I leave you to solve the problem how that is just; but, sir, I do not allow that all God's creatures are his children, and I have got a small question for you. How do you explain this—that the devils and fallen angels are all lost, and yet, according to your own showing, fallen men have all a chance of being saved? How do you make that out? "Oh!" say you, "that is a different matter; I was not calculating about fallen angels." But if you were to ask the devil about it, he would not tell you it was a different matter; he would say, "Sir, if all men are God's children, all devils are quite as much so. I am sure they ought to stand on the same footing as men, and a fallen angel has as much right to call himself one of God's children as a fallen man." And I should like you to answer that devil on that subject on your own hypothesis. Let Satan, for once, ask you a question, "You say it is unfair of God to send one of his children to hell, and take another to heaven. Now,

you have said all creatures are his children. Well, I am a creature, and, therefore, I am his child. I want to know, my friend," says Satan, "how you make it just that my Father should send me to hell, and let you go to heaven?" Now, you must settle that question with the devil; I will not answer for you. I never supposed such a case; my views never bring me into such a dilemma, but you are in for the trouble, and you may get out of it the best way you can. On my principle, the deed is just enough; men and devils have both sinned and have both deserved to be damned for their sins; God, if he shall so resolve, can justly destroy them all, or he may save them all, if he can do it with justice; or, he may save one of them if he pleases, and let the others perish; and if as he has done, he chooses to save a remnant, and that remnant shall be men, and if he allows all the fallen angels to sink to hell, all that we can answer is, that God is just, and he has a right to do as he pleases with his creatures. You know, you give to the queen the right to pardon a rebel when she sees fit, and will you not give that right to God? "No," say you, "not unless he pardons all." Well, sir, then there were no right at all in that; the queen would not thank you if you gave her liberty to pardon all; she would say, "No, there are instances where it is to my honor and to the honor of my laws not to pardon, and, therefore, I will not do it; there are other instances where it is to the honor of my clemency, and not hurtful to my laws, and, therefore, these I pardon, and I uphold my right to do it." Now, what you will give to a king or an emperor you will deny to God; but I stand here to claim this right for him, and deny it, if you please; you will have to deny it in the teeth of the Scriptures, for they do authoritatively declare, that God is a Sovereign; that he "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens."

Now, come, if our friend will let us, we will, for a moment, just consider this case: how it is that devils are lost, and some men are saved.

1. In the first place, *I do not think it is because of any difference in the sin.* When two criminals are brought before a judge, if one of them is to be saved, and the other punished, very likely the judge will say, "Who is the greatest offender? Let the greatest offender die, and let the less offender be saved." Now, I do not know that Satan was a greater offender than man; I am not sure that the fallen angels sinned more than man did.

"Why, sir," you say, "man's sin was a very little one; he only stole some of his Master's fruit." Ay, but if it was such a thing to do, what a little thing it would have been not to do it! If it were so little a thing, how easily he might have avoided it! and, therefore, because he did it, it became all the greater sin. "Oh!" you say, "but Satan was proud, and the fallen angels were proud." And are not *you* pretty tolerably in the same direction my friend? at any rate, Adam was. "But," you say, "Satan was rebellious." Well if *you* were not a rebel, you would not talk so; if you had not rebelled against God, you would not set yourself up to deny his sovereignty. "But," you say, "the devil was a liar from the beginning." I wonder how long it is since *you* have spoken the truth, sir; you know how to lie as well as he, and though you may not have developed your sin as much as the fallen angels have done, if God were to let you alone, and take the curb off, I wonder that would be the difference between you and the devil. I believe, that if men were allowed to do just as they liked, and there were no government over them, they would almost go beyond Satan. Look at Robespierre, in France; look at the doings of the Reign of Terror; turn to heathen countries; I dare not tell you what abominable vices, what lascivious sins are committed there in public; I point you to Sodom and Gomorrah, and I ask you what man may become; and I say that I do not know but that a man might become as vile as a devil, if God's restraining mercy were taken from him; at any rate I do not say but that Adam's sin was as great as Satan's. "Ah!" you say, "but Adam was tempted to do it." Yes, that was some excuse; but so were the greater part of the devils. It is true, Satan was not tempted; he did it of his own free will; but he tempted the other spirits, and therefore, the excuse which will do for man will do for the great mass of fallen spirits; and why did not God, therefore, select a portion of the fallen spirits to be saved? I answer, that you can never find any reason except this, "Shall I not do what I will with mine own;" and we must fall down, and breathlessly admire the infinite sovereignty that passed by angels, and saved man.

2. But suppose there is not much difference in their sin, the next question is, *which of those two beings is the most worth saving?* Which is the most valuable creature? Which would serve his Maker most, if his Maker should spare him? And I defy any of you to hold, that a sinful man is a more valuable creature than an angel. Why, if God had looked at profit,

speaking after the manner of men, it would be more profitable to him to save the angel. Could not the restored angel serve him better than restored man? If I serve God, day after day, yet at night I must rest; but the angels serve day without night in his temple. If my zeal be ever so intense, yet my body must flag; but angels know not weariness; and if saved, I shall make but a poor courtier to stand around his throne, but yon bright fallen seraph would, if he had been delivered, have made a very peer to grace the halls of the Almighty. If I shall ever be carried to heaven, I have no bright angelic honors, and my nature when ennobled, will not surpass what an angel might have been if God has so decreed; but if Satan had been saved, oh! how loudly would he have sung, and with what glory would he have marched through heaven, to the praise and glory of the grace which rescued him from hell! Therefore, if God had in that thought of his own profit, he would sooner have saved angels than have saved men.

3. Another thought. Sometimes the government will say, "Well, here are two persons to be executed; we desire to save one; *which of the two would be the most dangerous character to allow to continue an enemy?*" Now, which could hurt God the most, speaking as man would speak, a fallen angel, or a man? I answer, that fallen man can do but little injury to divine government, compared to a fallen angel; a fallen angel is so subtle, so powerful, so swift, so able to fly on the lightning's wings, that he can do ten times more injury to his Maker, if indeed, his Maker can be injured, than ever man could do; so that if there had been any consideration of this kind in the divine mind, God would have selected the devils to save them, since they could, if saved, do him the most glory, and if not saved, do him the most injury.

4. And yet one more consideration here, to show you still further how sovereign is the divine will in this matter. Perhaps it would be said, if one is to be saved, let that one be saved who would take the least trouble to be saved. Now, which could be saved with the greatest ease, should you suppose a fallen angel, or a fallen man? For my part, I can see no difference; but if there be any, it strikes me that a restoration does not put things one-half so much out of order as a revolution; and to have restored the angels to the place from which they had fallen, speaking as a man

must speak, would not have been so hard as to have taken fallen man out of the place from which he had fallen, and placed him where fallen angels had once stood.

If Satan had entered heaven, it would have been like a restoration—an old king come back to his ancient throne; but when man goes there, it is like a king going to a new dynasty—a new kingdom; it is man entering into the angel's place; and for that you know, there must be sanctifying grace and purchasing love. That might have been needed for fallen angels, but certainly not more for them than for fallen man. Here, then, we are brought back to the one only answer, that God saves men, and not angels, just because he chooses to do it; and he says to angels who have perished, "nay, but O! Satan, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

5. But, you may say, *God saved man because he pitied him*. But then why did not he pity the devils? I know two men living on three or four shillings a week. I pity one of them very much, indeed; but the other, who is no better off, I pity him the most, for he once knew better times. Man, it is true, fell out of Eden; but Satan fell out of heaven, and is the more to be pitied on account of the greatness of his fall; and, therefore, if pity had ruled the day, God would have decided for the fallen angels, and not for fallen man.

But I think I hear some one whispering again, "Ay, but I do not see that first part: you said, that you did not know but the sin of man was as great as the sin of Satan." Well, I beg to repeat it; and I say another thing, that, mighty wise as you may be, you do not know any difference either; for do you think, if the sins were different, the punishment would be the same? Certainly not, you say; the same punishment for the same sin. Well, now, devils and men are to be in the same hell; the lake of fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels is the place into which men are cast; and therefore I defy you to prove that their sin is not the same. I believe, if it be not the same in degree, it is the same in quality, and the same in nature. And, therefore, a fallen angel and a fallen man stand on a par; so that if God makes a difference, he makes it only because he will make it, and gives no account of his dealings. This is a knife which cuts up root

and branch everything like merit; it takes away from the free-willer any chance of charging God with injustice; for how can he prove God unjust in saving one man and not another, when he dares not hint that he is unjust in saving some men, and letting devils perish?

And now I have closed this subject; and I must just make a practical reflection or so, and then I shall have done. Some may rail at this doctrinal preaching, and they will go out and call me an Antinomian. I will not be at all particular about that, so long as I can make them angry; for if a man hates the truth, I shall never be backward in stirring up his wrath; and if any man offends my God then let him be offended. Far better for him to show his opposition; for then, perhaps, he may know that it is in him, and repent of it before God. But I will show you that this is a practical subject. It is practical in this way: that if any man does not submit to God's right to do with him as he pleases, he has very grave reason to doubt his own piety. "Ay," you say, "too cutting by half." Now, I do not mean to say anything harsh or bigoted; but I do mean to say that again. I do not assert that if you doctrinally deny it, but if you in your hearts hate the doctrine, that God has a right to save or to destroy you, you give me very grave cause to suspect whether you ever knew your own position in the sight of God; for I am quite sure that no humble sinner will doubt God's right to destroy him, and I believe that no man who has any love to his fellow-creatures, believing that God has a right to destroy him will ever quarrel with God, if he chose to save another who is only as bad as himself. I tell you, it is your unhumiliated pride that kicks against these doctrines; it is your infernal self-conceit, born of hell, that makes you hate this truth. Men have always kicked at it, and they always will. When Christ preached it once, they would have dragged him out to the brow of the hill, and cast him down headlong; and I expect always to meet with opposition, if I speak out broadly and plainly; but let me tell you solemnly, if you do not believe God's right over you, I am afraid your heart has never been right before God.

But another practical conclusion. If you do feel this to be true, that God has a right to send you soul to hell, and that if he saves another, and not you, he will be just, but if he save you it will be an act of free distinguishing love, you show a spirit which is very near to the kingdom

of heaven. I do not think a man will admit this truth unless he has a change of heart: he may admit it in his mind, but he will not feel it to be true, unless he has got a new heart and a right spirit. I will not go so far as to say that a man who believes divine sovereignty must be a Christian; that were to stretch the truth; but I do say, that if a man is humble enough, meek enough, contrite enough, to lay himself down at the Saviour's feet with this,

"Nothing in my hands I bring;"

"I have no righteousness, no claims; if thou shouldst damn me, thou wouldst be just; if thou savest me I will thank thee for ever;" such a man must have had a work of grace in his heart to bring him to such a conclusion. If thou canst say that, then, poor sinner, come to Jesus, come to Jesus; for he will never cast you out. Let me tell you a story about the prodigal, and then I have done. The prodigal set out one morning, and he had a long, long journey to go; he had a high hill to climb, called the hill of his own sins and follies. He had scarcely got to the top of it, and was getting near the tower, called the tower of true repentance, when his father, who was sitting on the top of the house, saw him; and when he saw him, he ran out immediately, and ere his son had got to the door, he had fallen on his neck and kissed him. He took his son into his house, and a feast was prepared, and they sat down to it; but after the son had sat down, the father turned his eye to him, and he was not eating, but the tears were rolling down his cheeks. "My son," said the father, "why don't you eat? Why dost thou weep, my son? The feast is all prepared for thee." Bursting into tears, the son said, "Father, dost thou forgive me all?" "Yes," says the father, "I do. Eat my son. Do not weep." The prodigal went on. The father turned his eye to the other guests, and by-and-bye, looking on his son, he saw that he was weeping again, and not eating. Said the father, "Son, why don't you eat? The feast is all for you. Why do you weep, my son?" "Father," said he, with the tears rolling down his cheeks again, "will you let me stay here?" "Oh, yes, my son," said the father, "eat; do not weep; you shall stay here; you are my beloved son." Well, the prodigal went on, and the father looked at the other guests; but by-and-bye he turned his eyes again, and there was his son weeping once more. "My dear son," he asks, "why do you weep?" "Oh, father," said he, "will you

keep me here? for if you do not, I know I shall run away. Father, will you make me stop here?" "yes, my son," said he, "that I will."

"My grace shall like a fether bind
That wandering heart to me."

The son wiped his eyes, went on with his meal, and never wept again. There, poor prodigal, there is something for thee; if thou wilt come to Christ, thou shalt always stay there; and over and above that, he will keep thee there. Therefore rejoice; for though he has a right to destroy thee, recollect, he will not; for his heart is full of love and pity towards thee. Only come to him, and thou shalt be saved.

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Man's Ruin And God's Remedy

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. - Numbers 21:8

I DO not propose this morning to explain again the mystery of the brazen serpent. As many of you well remember, not long ago I preached upon that subject, and endeavored to expound it in all its lengths and breadths. I have a somewhat similar object at the present time, the details may indeed be different, but after all the moral will be the same.

Man has very many wants, and he should be grateful whenever the least of them is supplied. But he has one want which overtops every other: it is the want of bread. Give him raiment, house him well, decorate and adorn him, yet if you give him not bread, his body faints, he dies of hunger.

Hence it is that while the earth when it is tilled is made to bring forth many things that minister unto the comfort and luxury of men, yet man is wise enough to understand that since bread is his chief want, he must be most careful concerning corn. He therefore sows broad acres with it, and he cultivates more of this, which is the grandest necessary, than he doth of anything else in his husbandry. I feel that this is the only excuse I can offer you for coming back again constantly and continually to the simple doctrine of the salvation of the sinner through Christ Jesus. There are many things which the soul wants: it needs instruction, it needs comfort, it needs knowledge of doctrine and enlightenment in its experience; but there is one grand need of the soul, which far surmounts every other, it is the want of salvation, the want of Christ; and I do feel that I am right in repeating again, and again, and again, the simple announcement of the gospel of Christ for poor perishing sinners. At any rate, I know I seldom feel more happy than when I am preaching a full Christ to empty sinners. My tongue becomes something like Anacreon's harp. It is said of it, it resounded love alone. And so my tongue fangs to resound Christ alone, and give forth no other strain, but Christ and his cross; Christ uplifted, the salvation of a dying world; Christ crucified, the life of poor dead sinners. I pray that this morning many here present, who have no clear views of the plan of salvation, may now see for the first time how men are saved through the lifting up of Christ, just, as the poor Israelites in the wilderness were saved from the fiery serpents by lifting up the brazen serpent on the pole.

Solemnly addressing you this morning, I shall need your attention to two things. First - and here, remember, I am about to speak to sinners dead in trespasses and sins - I want your attention to *your ruin*, and next I shall want your faithful consideration of *your remedy*.

I. First of all, oh unregenerate man! thou who hast heard the Word, but hast never felt its power, let me entreat thee, lend me thine ears while I talk to thee of a solemn subject that much concerns thee. **MAN, THOU ART RUINED!** The children of Israel in the wilderness were bitten with fiery serpents, whose venom soon tainted their blood, and after intolerable pain, at last brought on death. Thou art much in the same condition. Thou standest there, healthy in body and comfortable in mind,

and I come not here to play the part of a mere alarmist; but I do beseech thee, listen to me while I tell thee, neither more nor less than the simple but dreadful truth concerning thy present estate, if thou art not a believer in Christ.

Oh sinner! there are four things that stare thee in the face, and should alarm thee. The first thing is *thy sin*. I hear thee say, "Yes I know I am a sinner as well as the rest of mankind;" but I am not content with that confession, nor is God content with it either. There are multitudes of men who make the bare confession of sinnership, the general confession that all men are fallen, but there are few men who know how to take that confession home and acknowledge it as being applicable to them. Ah! my hearers, ye that are without God and without Christ remember, not only is the world lost, but you are lost yourself not only has sin defiled the race, but you yourself are stained by sin. Come, now take the universal charge home to yourself. How many have your sins been! Count them, if you can. Stand here and wonder at them. Like the stars of midnight, or as the sands by the sea shore, innumerable are thine iniquities. Twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty, perhaps more than fifty years have rolled over thy head, and in any one of these years thy sins might out-count the drops of the sea. How innumerable, then, have they become in ALL thy life! And what if thou shouldst say they are but little ones, yet since they are so many, how great has the mountain become. Though they were but as grains of sand, yet are they so many that they might make a mountain that would soar above the stars. Pause, I beseech thee, and let thy conscience have play for a moment. Count over thine iniquities, turn over the pages of thy history, and tell the blots, if thou canst, and count the mistakes. But no, thou art committing fresh sins whilst thou art recounting these, and the denial of thy innumerable sins were but the multiplication of them. Thou art increasing them, mayhap, even whilst thou art telling them. And then think how aggravated they have been. I will not venture to mention the grosser sins into which some of you have fallen. It may be that I have here those who have cursed God to his face who have asked him to blast their limbs and to destroy their souls. I may have those here who have ventured even to deny God's existence, though they have been walking all their lives in the midst of his works, and have even received the breath in their nostrils from him. I may have some who

have despised his Word laughed at everything sacred made a jest of the Bible, made a mockery of God's ministers and of his servants. Call I beseech you, these things to your remembrance, for though you have forgotten them, God has not. You have written them in the sand but he has engraven them as in eternal brass, and there they stand against you. Every crime that you have done is as fresh in the memory of the Most High as though it were committed yesterday, and though you think that the repentance of your grey old age might almost suffice to blot out the enormities of your youth, yet be not deceived. Sin is not so easily put away; it needs a greater ransom than a few expressions of regret or a few empty tears. Oh call, ye great sinners, call to your recollection, the enormities you have committed against God. Let your chambers speak, let your beds bear witness against you, and let the days of your feasting, and your hours of midnight rioting - let these things rise up to your remembrance. Let your oaths roll back from the sky against which they have smitten, and let them return into your bosom, to awake your conscience and bestir you to repentance. But what am I saying? I have been talking of *some* men who have committed great iniquity. Ah! sinner, be thou whosoever thou mayest, I charge thee with *great* sin. Brought up in the midst of holy influences, nurtured in God's house, it may be that some of my unregenerate hearers this morning, may not be able to remember a single instance of blasphemy against God. It may be that you have never outwardly done despite to any sacred thing. Ah, my hearer, bethink thee, thy sin may be even greater than that of the profligate, or the debauches, for *thou* hast sinned against light and against knowledge; *thou* hast sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's tears; *thou* rebelled against God's law, knowing the law. When *thou* wast sinning, conscience pricked thee, and yet thou didst sin. Thou knewest that hell was the portion of the ungodly, and yet thou art ungodly still. Thou knowest the gospel of Christ; thou art no ignoramus. Thy mother took thee in her arms to the house of God, and here thou art even now. Every sin thou hast committed receives a greater aggravation on account of the light thou hast received, and the privileges thou hast enjoyed. Oh, my hearer, think not that thou canst escape in this thing; thy sin hath bitten thee with a terrible bite. 'Tis no flesh wound as thou drest, but the venom has entered into thy veins. 'Tis no mere scurf upon the surface, but the leprosy lies deep within. Thou hast sinned. Thou hast sinned

continually. Thou hast sinned with many aggravations. Oh, may God convict thee of this charge, and help thee to plead guilty to it. Can you not some of you, if you are honest to yourselves, call to remembrance peculiar sins that you have committed. You recollect your sick bed, and your vow you made to God - where is it now? You have returned like the dog to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. You remember that prayer that you offered in the time of your distress: you remember too that God graciously delivered you, but where is the thanksgiving that you promised to him? You said you would give him your heart; but where is it? In the black hand of the devil still! You have been a liar to God, you have deceived him, or you have pretended at least that you would give him your soul, and you have not done so. And think too of certain special sins you have committed after receiving special warning. Do you not remember going out from the house of God with a tender conscience, and then running into sin to harden it again? Do you not remember, some of you, how after being alarmed and startled, you have gone your way, and gone to your evil companions, and laughed away the impressions that you have received? This is no mean sin - to strive against the striving Spirit, and to resist the influence that was drawing you to the right path. I beseech you, call to recollection your sins. Come, don't be cowards. Don't shut up the book; open it. Look and see what you have been and if you have been that which you are ashamed of, I beseech you look it in the face, and make acknowledgment and confess it. There is nothing to be gotten by hiding your sins. They'll spring up, man; if you dig deep as hell to hide them, they'll spring up. Why not now be honest, and look at them today, for they'll look at you by-and-bye, when Christ shall come in the clouds of judgment? If you look not at them, they'll stare you in the face with a look that will wither your soul and blast it into infinite torment and unutterable woe. Your sin, your sin, should make you tremble and feel alarmed.

But I go further. Sinner, thou hast not only thy sin to trouble thee, but there is a second thing, there is *the sentence of condemnation gone out against thee*. I have heard some ministers talk of men being in a state of probation. No such thing; no man has a state of probation at all. Ye are condemned already. You are not to-day, my unregenerate hearers, prisoners at the bar about to be tried for your lives. No, your trial is over,

your sentence is past already, and you are now this day condemned. What though no officer has arrested you, though death has not laid his cold hand upon you, yet Scripture saith, "He that believeth not is condemned already because he believeth not on the Son of God." Man, the black cap is on the judge's head. He even now declares thee lost, nay more than this, if thou wouldst rightly know thine own estate, thou art standing - mark that, my careless hearer - thou art standing under the gallows, with the rope on thy neck, and thou hast but to be cast off from the ladder by the hand of death, and thou art swinging in eternity lost and ruined. If ye only knew your position, ye would discover that ye are criminals with your necks on the block this morning, and the bright axe of justice is gleaming in this morning's sunlight, and God alone knows how long it is ere it shall fall, or rather how soon thou shalt feel its keen edge, and its edge shall be stained with thy blood. Thou art condemned *already*. Take that home, man. Thy sentence is signed in heaven and sealed and stamped, and the only reason why it is not carried out is because God in mercy respites thee. But thou art condemned, and this world is thy condemned cell from which thou shalt soon be taken to a terrible execution.

Now you do not believe this. You think that God is putting you on your trial, and that if you behave as well as you can, you will get off. You think that in some future day you may yet blot out your sin. But when the criminal is condemned, there is no room left for good behavior to alter the sentence. When a capital sentence is passed upon him that sentence is not to be moved by anything that he can do. And your sentence is passed, passed be the judge of all the earth, and nothing you can do can alter that sentence. The law leaves no room for repentance. Condemned you are and condemned you must be, unless that one way of escape, that I am forthwith about to explain, shall be opened to you by God's rich grace - you are condemned *already*.

Now let me ask you one question ere I leave this point. Sinner, you are condemned to-day. I ask you this, whether you do not deserve it? If you are what you should be, and what I hope the Lord will make you, you will say, "Deserve it, ay, that I do!" If I never committed another sin, my past sins would fully justify the Lord in permitting me to go down afire into

the pit. The first sin you ever committed condemned you beyond all hope of self-salvation, but all the sins you have committed since then have aggravated your guilt, and surely now the sentence is not only just, but more than just. You will have one day, if you repent not to put your finger on your lips and stand in solemn silence, when God shall ask you whether you have anything to plead why the sentence should not be carried into execution. You will be compelled to feel that God condemns you to nothing more than you deserve, that his sentence is just - a proper one on such a sinner as thou hast been.

Now, these two things are enough to make any man tremble, if he did but feel them - his sin and his condemnation. But I have a third to mention. Sinner, there is this to aggravate thy ease and increase thine alarm - *thy helplessness*, thy utter inability to do anything to save thyself, *even* if God should offer thee the chance. Thou art to-day, sinner, not only condemned, but thou art dead in trespasses and sins. Talk of performing good works - why, man, thou canst not. It is as impossible for thee to do a good work whilst thou art what thou art, as it would be for a horse to fly up to the stars. But thou sayest, "I will repent." Nay, thou canst not. Repentance is not possible to thee as thou art, unless God gives it to thee. Thou mightest force a few tears, but what are those? Judas might do that and yet go out and hang himself and go to his own place. You cannot repent of yourself. Nay, if I had to preach this morning salvation by faith apart from the person of Christ, you would be in as bad a condition as if there were no gospel whatever. Recollect, sinner, thou art so lost, so ruined, so undone, that thou canst do nothing to save thyself. The would is so bad that it cannot be cured by any mortal hand. Thine inability is so great, that unless God pull thee up out of the pit into which thou hast fallen, thou must lie there and rot to all eternity. Thou art so undone that thou canst neither stir hand, nor foot, nor lip, nor hearts, unless grace help thee. Oh, what a fearful thing it is to be charged, tried, condemned, and then moreover, to be bereft of all power. You are to-day as much in the hand of God's justice as a little moth beneath your own finger. He can save you if he will, he can destroy you if he pleases, but you yourself are unable to escape from him. There is no door of mercy left for you by the law, and even by the gospel there is no door of mercy which you have power to enter, apart from the help which Christ affords you. If you think

you can do anything, you have yet to unlearn that foolish conceit. If you fancy that you have some strength left, you have not yet come where the Spirit will bring you, for he will empty you of all creature pretension, and lay you low and dash you in pieces, and bring you in a mortar and pound you till you feel that you are weak and without strength, and can do nothing.

Now have I not indeed described a horrible position for a sinner to be in - but there is something more remaining, a fourth thing. Sinner, thou art not only guilty of past sin, and condemned for it, thou art not only unable, but if thou wert able, thou art so bad that thou wouldst *never be willing* to do anything that could save thyself. And even if thou hadst no sins in the past, yet art thou lost, man, for thou wouldst go on to commit sin for the future. For this know - thy nature is totally depraved. Thou forest that which is evil, and not that which is good. "Nay," saith one, "I love that which is good." Then thou lovest it for a bad motive. "I love honesty," says one. Yes, because it is the best policy. But dost thou love God? Dost thou love thy neighbor as thyself? No, and thou canst not do this, for thy nature is too vile. Why, man, thou wouldst be as bad as the devil, if God were to withdraw all restraint and let thee alone. Were he but to take the bit out of thy mouth, and the bridle from thy jaws, there is no sin that thou wouldst not commit. Dost thou deny this? Dost thou say, "I am willing; I am willing to be holy and to be saved." Then God has thee so; for if not thou wouldst never be so by nature. If thou shouldst go out of this hall and say, "I hate such preaching as that;" I should but reply, "I knew you did." Though one should say, "I will never believe that I am so lost as that," I should say, "I did not think you ever would - you are too bad to believe the truth;" and if you should say, "I will never be saved by Christ; I will never bow so low as to sue for mercy and accept grace through him;" I should not be surprised, for I know thy nature. Thou art so desperately bad that thou hatest thy own mercy. Thou dost despise the grace that is offered to thee - thou dost hate the Saviour that died for thee, for if not, why dost not thou turn now, man. If thou art not so bad as I say thou art, why not now down on thy knees and cry for pardon? Why not now believe in Christ? Why not now surrender thyself to him? But if thou shouldst do this, then I would say, "This is God's work, he has made thee do it for if he had not done it thou wouldst not have been humble

enough to bow thyself to Christ." Let Arminianism go to the winds; let it be scattered for ever from off the face of the earth; man is totally unable to feel his misery or seek relief, if he were able, he is totally unwilling. The sinner could not help the Holy Ghost, even if the Holy Ghost wanted the help of man to perfect his own operations. What! can it be possible that any man will say the creature is to help the Creator - that an insect of an hour is to be yoked with the Ancient of Days - the Eternal - that the clay is to help the potter in its own formation? Why, even if we grant the power, where would be the sympathy or the willing hand? Man hates to be saved. He loves darkness, and if he hath the light, it is because the light thrusts itself upon him. He loves death with a fatal infatuation, and if he be made alive, it is because the Spirit of God quickens him, converts his wicked heart, makes him willing in the day of his power, and turns him unto God.

Have I not now this morning rend a most awful indictment against you? Mark, I mean it for every living man, woman, and child in this Hall, who has not faith in Christ. You may be fine gentlemen or grand ladies; you may be respectable tradesmen and very upright in your business, but I charge you before Almighty God with being sinners, condemned sinners, sinners that cannot save yourselves, and sinners, moreover, that would not save yourselves if you could, unless grace made you willing, you are sinners unwilling to be saved. What a fearful indictment is this read in the face of high heaven! May some sinner as he hears it be compelled to say, "It is true, it is true, it is true of me; O Lord, have mercy upon me!"

II. Having thus set before you the hard part of the subject - THE SINNERS RUIN - I now come to preach of HIS REMEDY.

A certain school of physicians tell us that "*like cures like.*" Whether it be true or not in medicine, I know it is true enough in theology - like cures like. When the Israelites were bitten with the fiery serpents, it was a serpent that made them whole. And so you lost and ruined creatures are bidden now to look to Christ suffering and dying, and you will see in him the counterpart of what you see in yourselves. While you are looking to him, may God fulfill his promise and give you life. A remedy to be worth anything must reach the entire disease. Now Christ on the cross comes to

man as man is; not as he may be made, but as he is. And it doth this in the four several respects which I have already described.

I charge you with sin. Now in Christ Jesus behold the sinner's substitute - the sin-offering. Do you see yonder man hanging on the cross; he dies an awful death. In him prophecy receives a terrible accomplishment: of him Almighty vengeance makes a tremendous example. Jehovah hath cast off and abhorred; he hath been wroth with his anointed. The terrors of the Lord are heavy on his soul. And why does that man Christ Jesus die? - not as himself a sinner, but as numbered with transgressors. O soul if thou wouldst know the terrors of the law, behold him who was made the curse of the law. If thou wouldst see the venom of the fiery serpent's bite, look to yonder brazen serpent; and if thou wouldst see sin in all its deadliness look to a dying Saviour. What makes Christ die? Sin! though not his own. What makes his body sweat drops of blood? Sin! What nails his hands? What rends his side? Sin! Sin does it all. And if you are saved it must be through yonder sin-offering, you dying, bleeding Lamb. "But," saith one, "my sins are too many to be forgiven." Stop awhile; turn thine eye to Christ. Sometimes when I think of my sin I think it is too great to be washed away, but when I think of Christ's blood, oh I think there can be no sin great enough for that to fail in cleansing it every whit. I seem to think, when I see the costly price, Christ paid a very heavy ransom. When I look at myself I think it would need much to redeem me, but when I see Christ dying I think he could redeem me if I were a million times as bad as I am. Now remember Christ not only paid barely enough for us, he paid more than enough. The Apostle Paul says, "His grace abounded - "superabounded," says the Greek. It ran over; there was enough to fill the empty vessel, and there was enough to flood the world besides. Christ's redemption was so plenteous, that had God willed it, if all the stars of heaven had been peopled with sinners, Christ need not have suffered another pang to redeem them all - there was a boundless value in his precious blood. And, sinner, if there were so much as this, surely there is enough for thee.

And then again, if thou art not satisfied with Christ's sin-offering, just think a moment; God is satisfied, God the Father is content, and must not thou be? The Judge says, "I am satisfied; let the sinner go free, for I have

punished the Surety in his stead "and if the Judge is satisfied, surely the criminal may be. Oh! come, poor sinner, come and see, if there is enough to appease the wrath of God there must be enough to answer all the requirements of man. "Nay, nay," saith one, "but my sin is such a terrible one that I cannot see in the substitution of Christ that which is *like* to meet it." What is thy sin? "Blasphemy." Why, Christ died for blasphemy: this was the very charge which man imputed to him, and therefore you may be quite sure that God laid it on him if men did. "Nay, nay," saith one, "but I have been worse than that; I have been a liar." It is just what men said of him. They declared that he lied when he said, "If this temple be destroyed I will build it in three days." See in Christ a liar's Saviour as well as a blasphemer's Saviour. "But," says one, "I have been in league with Beelzebub." Just what they said of Christ. They said that he cast out devils through Beelzebub. So man laid that sin on him, and man did unwittingly what God would have him do. I tell thee, even that sin was laid on Christ. Come, sinner, there is not a sin in the world with one exception which Jesus did not bear in his own body on the tree. "Ah, but," says one, "when I sinned, I sinned very greedily.! did it with all my might I took a delight in it." Ah! soul, and so did Christ take a delight in being thy substitute. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished! "Let Christ's willingness respond to the suggestion that thy greediness in sin can make it too heinous to be forgiven. "Ah!" crieth another, "but, sir, I acted ever with such a bad heart: my heart was worse than my actions. If I could have been worse I would. Among all my companions in vice there was not one who was so greedy of it and black in it as I." Yes, but, my dear hearer, if thou hast sinned in thy heart, remember, Christ suffered in his heart. His heart-sufferings were the heart and soul of his sufferings. Look and see that heart all pierced, and the blood and water flowing therefrom, and believe that he is able to take away even thine heart of sin, however black it may be.

"Yes," I hear another self-condemned one exclaim, "but I sinned without any temptation. I did it deliberately in cold blood. I had become such a wicked, beastly sinner, that I used to sit down and gloat over my sin before I committed it." Ah, but sinner, remember before Christ died he thought of it; ay, from all eternity he meditated on becoming thy

substitute. It was a matter of premeditation with him, and, therefore let his forethought put aside thy forethought. Let the greatness of his previous thought upon his sacrifice, put away the grievousness of thy sin, on account of its having been committed in cold blood. Does there yet come up some sobbing voice - "I have been worse than all the rest, for I did my sin by reason of a covenant which I made with Satan. I said, 'If I could have a short life and a merry one, I would be content;' I made a covenant with death, and I made a league with hell." And what if I am commissioned to tell you that even this *bite* is not incurable? Remember, Jesus the Son of God made a covenant on thine account. It was a greater covenant than yours, not made with death and hell, but made with his Father on the behalf of sinners. I want, if I can, to bring out the fact, that whatever there is in thy sins there is its counterpart in Christ. Just as when the serpent bit the people, it was a serpent that healed them, so if you are bitten by sin, it is, as it were, thy sin's substitute; it is thy sin laid on Christ that heals you. Oh, turn your eyes then to Calvary, and see the guilt of sin laid upon Christ's shoulders, and say, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," and looking to him thou shalt live.

Secondly, here is a remedy for *the condemnation*. I said, you were not only sinners, but condemned sinners. Yes, and Christ is not only thy substitute for sin, but he is thy condemned substitute too. See him. He stands at Pilate's bar, is condemned before Herod and Caiaphas, and is found guilty. Nay, he stands before the awful bar of God, and though there is no sin of his own put upon him, yet inasmuch as his people's sins were laid on him, justice views him as a sinner, and it cries, "Let the sword be bathed in his blood." Christ was condemned for sinners that they might not be condemned. Look up, look away from the sentence that has gone out against you, to the sentence that went out against him. Are you cursed? - so was he. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Are you condemned? - so was he, and there was one point in which he excelled you; he was executed, and that you never shall be, if you look to him now and believe that he is able to save you, and put your trust in him.

In regard to the third particular. Our utter helplessness is such, that as I told you, we are unable to do any thing. Yes, and I want you to look at Christ; was not he unable too? You, in your father Adam, were once

strong, but you lost your strength. Christ too was strong, but he laid aside all his omnipotence. See him. The hand that poises the world hangs on a nail. See him. The shoulders that supported the skies are drooping over the cross. Look at him, The eyes whose glances light up the sun are sealed in darkness. Look at him. The feet that trod the billows and that shaped the spheres are nailed with rude iron to the accursed tree. Look away from your own weakness to his weakness, and remember that in his weakness he is strong, and in his weakness you are strong too. Go see his hands; they are weak, but in their weakness they are stretched out to save you. Come view his heart; it is rent, but in its cleft you may hide yourself. Look at his eyes; they are closing in death, but from them comes the ray of light that shall kindle your dark spirit. Unable though thou art, go to him who himself was crucified through weakness, and remember that now "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." I told you, you could not repent, but if you go to Christ he can melt your heart into contrition, though it be as hard as iron. I said you could not believe, but if you sit down and look at Christ, a sight of Christ will make you believe, for he is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.

And then the fourth thing. "Oh," cries one, "you said we were too estranged to be even willing to come to Christ." I know you were; and therefore it is he came down to you. You would not come to him, but he comes to you this morning, and though you are very evil, he comes with sacred magic in his arm, to change your heart. Sinner, thou unwilling, but guilty sinner, Christ stands before thee this morning, he that was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, a man and a brother born for adversity. And he puts his hand to day in thy hand, and he says, "Sinner, wilt thou be saved?" Then trust in me. Ah! if I preach the gospel, you will reject it, but if *he* preaches it you cannot. Methinks I see the crucified one finding his way in that thick crowd under the gallery, and going between the ranks seated here, and above, and everywhere, and as he goes along, he stops at each broken-hearted sinner, and says, "Sinner, will you trust *me*? See here I am, the Son of God, yet I am man. Look at my wounds, see still the nail-marks, and the prints of the thorn-crown. Sinner, will you trust *me*?" And while he says it, he graciously works in you the grace of faith. But are there any who looking him in the face, can reply, "Thou crucified one we

cannot trust thee, our sins are too great to be forgiven?" Oh, nothing can grieve him so much as to tell him that. You think that you are humble; you are proud; despising Christ while you think you are despising yourself. And is there one in all this great assembly who says, "This is all twaddle, I care not to hear such preaching as this?" Nay I do not ask thee to care for what I speak; but Jesus the crucified one is standing by thy side, and he asks thee, "Sinner, have I ever done anything to offend thee; have I ever done thee a displeasure? What hurt hast thou ever suffered at my hands? Then why dost thou persecute thy wife for loving me - then why hate thy child for loving one that did thee no hurt? Besides," saith he, and he takes the veil from his face, "did you ever see a face like this? It was marred by suffering for men - for men that hate me too, but whom I love. I need not have suffered. I was in my Father's house, happy and glorious; love made me come down and die. Love nailed me to the tree, and now will you spit in my face after that?" "No," said a young man to me this last week, "I found it hard to love Christ, but," said he, "once upon a time I thought 'Well, if Christ never died for me, and never loved me, yet I must love him for his goodness in dying for other people.'" And methinks if you did but know Christ, you must love him. Thou wouldst say to him, "Thou dear, thou suffering man, didst thou endure all this for those that did hate thee? didst thou die for those that murdered thee? didst thou shed thy blood for those that drew it from thy veins with cursed iron? didst thou dive into the depths of the grave that thou mightest lift out rebellious ones who scorned thee and would have none of thee? Then dissolved by thy goodness I fall before thy feet and I weep. My soul repents of sin - I weep - Lord accept me, Lord have mercy upon me."

Did you think I have run away from my point? So I had, but I have brought you back to it. You know I was to shew that Christ could overcome our depravity. And he has done it in some of you while I have been speaking. You hated him, but you do not hate him now. It may be, you said you would never trust him, but you do trust him now. And if God has done this in your heart, this is the true end of preaching; the best way of keeping to the subject, is for the subject to be brought home to the heart. Ah! dear hearers, I wish I had a better voice this morning. I wish I had more earnest tones and a more loving heart, for I do feel when I am

preaching about Christ, that I am a poor dauber. When I grant to paint him so beautiful, I am afraid you will say of him, he is not lovely! No, no; it is my bad picture of him; but he is lovely. Oh! he is a loving Lord. He has bowels of compassion; he has a heart brimful of tenderest affection; and he bids me tell you - and I do tell you that - he bids me say, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." And he bids me add his kind invitation, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Do not believe what the devil tells you. He says that Christ is not ready to forgive; oh! he is more willing to forgive than you are to be forgiven. Do not believe your heart, when it says, that Christ will shut you out, and will not pardon you: Come and try him, come and try him; and the first one that is shut out, I will agree to be shut out with him. The first soul that Christ rejects after it has put its trust in him - I risk my soul's salvation with that man. It cannot be. He never was hard-hearted yet, and he never will be. Only believe, and may he himself help thee to believe. Only look to him, and may he himself open thine eyes and enable thee to look, and this shall be a happy morning. For though I may have spoken feebly, as I am too conscious I have, God will have worked powerfully; and unto him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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Marah; Or, The Bitter Waters Sweetened

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. - Exodus 15:23-

What a sudden change from the sound of the timbrel to the voice of murmuring! You saw the maidens dancing three days ago, and you little dreamed that they would make part of yonder clamorous throng who surround the servant of God, and cry, "What shall we drink?" Such are the changes of our outward conditions and of our inward feelings, so fickle and so mutable is man. What is there that can be rested upon in this mortal life? We say to-day, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved;" to-morrow, terra firma there is none, and we are tossed upon a stormy sea. Our life is like an April day, the sunshine alternates with the shower; or like each day of all the year, the morning and the evening are needful to complete it. Quick on the heels of light treads the darkness, followed with equal haste by light again. The sun's rule, at this golden hour, is but temporary; he must abdicate in favor of the usurping stars, but they, in their turn, must give way before his lordly presence yet again. This world, which is our inn, owns to the sign of the "chequers"—the blacks and whites are everywhere. We can be sure of nothing between here and heaven of the things which are seen; but of this we may be certain, that underneath all the outward change there is the immutable love of God towards his people, and that, after all, the change lies only in the seeming things, not in the things which truly are; for the things which are not seen are eternal and changes come not there; it is but in the things which are seen that the change occurs. Let us set the less store by earth, because its fashion abides not. Let us prize heaven more, because it cannot fade.

I. The text directs your attention, first of all, to THE EVILS OF THE WILDERNESS. We need not spend much time in thinking of these evils, because they throw themselves in our way often enough; and the tendency of our mind is unduly to exaggerate them. Notice that the perils and trials of the wilderness occur very early in the pilgrim life. It is a notion, I have no doubt, of very young Christians who still have the shell upon their heads and are scarce hatched, that their trials are over now that they have become winged with faith; they had far better have reckoned that their trials have begun with tenfold force, now that they are numbered with the servants of the Most High. Whatever else comes not

to thee, O servant of God, this will surely be fulfilled, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" Some privileges are not common to ail the adopted, but the privilege of chastisement is universal to all true sons. It is the token of bastardy if the rod be escaped, but scourging, is the sure pledge of paternal love. I say, however, that these trials come very soon. Israel was no sooner across the Red Sea than they went three days into the wilderness of Shur, but found no water; and on the third day, when they did arrive at a fountain, they found worse than no water, for it was so brackish, so altogether unfit for drinking, that though they thought they would have drunk anything, they could not possibly drink this. What, in three days, must they that sang unto the Lord because he triumphed gloriously, nauseate the water for which their thirst makes them pant? In three days shall they be reduced to such straits that they must drink or die, and yet feel that they should die if they were to drink of such nauseous streams? Ah yes, with some of us our delight at conversion was very great, our exhilaration at finding the Savior was something never to be forgotten, and yet only a day or so after we were stumbled with great temptation, amazed at the discovery of the evil of our hearts, or tried by the coldness of our fellow Christians, or the cruelty of the outside world, so that we found we had come to Marah. And this was all the severer trial, because some of us had found a degree of pleasure in the ways of sin, and now it stumbled us to find sorrow in the ways of God. When Israel was in Egypt, they drank of the river Nile. No ordinary water that. To this day the dwellers on the banks of the Nile assert that the water has a peculiar taste not to be discovered in any other stream, and they prefer the waters of the Nile to all the waters in the world besides. What a change from the sweetness of the Nile to the bitterness of Marah! Did not the suggestion rise in their hearts, "It was better with us in the bondage of Egypt, with water in abundance, than it is now in the liberty of the wilderness with the bitterness of Marah?" The devil tempted some of us at the very first by saying: "See what you have got by being a Christian. While you were as others are, your mind had mirth; now you have come out and followed the Crucified, you have lost the liveliness of your spirits, the brightness of your wit—that which made life worth having is taken away from you." Young Christian, is that your case to-day? Be not stumbled, neither believe the enemy. Man, it were better to die at Marah free, than live a

slave by the sweet Nile. Even men that know not the Spirit of God have felt it were better to die free than live slaves, and truly to be a slave to Satan is so degrading a thing, that if this mouth were for ever filled with Marah's bitterness, yet were it better to be so than to be enchanted with the pleasures of sin. Yet these early trials are very severe, and need much grace lest they cause us great mischief.

Secondly, these evils assume varied shapes. You noticed that for the first three days in the wilderness they found no wafer; that is one trial. But the next day, or at the end of the third day, they found water. Now they thought their trial was over: alas! it had only changed its shape. They found water, but it was too bitter to drink. Do not be in a hurry to change your trials, dear friends. We have heard of some who have repined that they had no children, and, like Rachel, their cry was, "Give me children, or else I die." Ere long they have had children who proved to be far worse than none. Better no son than an Absalom. We have known those who were in good health, but discontented because they had no wealth; they have gained wealth at last, but with an injured constitution, they have had no power to enjoy it. If we could choose our trials, we might well remember the wisdom of the old philosopher, who told the people oppressed by a tyrant to be content with his tyranny, "for," said he, "it is with oppressors as with mosquitoes, let those suck which are now upon you, for if you drive those off, the fresh ones which will succeed them will be hungrier than those that are there now: better be content with the tyranny you have, than seek a new one." It is much the same with the trials we now feel you will get used to them by degrees: they will spend their force. Desire for a change of trials may only be a wish for a worse affliction, for whether was the worse, to have no water, or to have the water and to find it too bitter that you could not drink it?

Yet when God changes the trial be well satisfied that it should be changed. You may anticipate, Christian, that you will have your trial changed: indeed, you must reckon that it is so. I mean, that if today it is smooth sailing with you, though yesterday waves rolled mountains high, it is only a change of trial you are now tried by prosperity, which may prove to be a more severe test for you than adversity. Is the wind balmy, blows it from the south? Is it but another trial for thee, be sure of that, for

they who have withstood the northern blast and grown the ruddier and stronger for its influence, have often grown faint and weary under softer airs. Watch thou in all things, thy trials are with thee constantly; the crucible is changed, the fire still burns.

Note again, that as the trials of the wilderness came soon, and assumed various shapes, so often do the trials of the Christ touch very vital matters. They found no water, or finding it, it was bitter. It is not said they found no wine—a small trial indeed; it is not said they found no milk, yet might the infant children have been sorely troubled by such a want; but they found no drinkable water. Here was a denial of an essential of life. They must have water, it was no luxury, it was a necessity; with the hot, burning sand beneath them reflecting the fierce heat of a cruel sun, not to have water in the wilderness is to feel an urgent necessity producing a terrible pain. God may touch us, and probably has done so or will, in points most vital. To be tried in the loss of some of your superfluities, my brethren, is but little; but to lose even the little that you had to live upon, to be brought to straitness of bread, this is real tribulation. To have the hand put forth to touch your bone and your flesh, this is affliction. Believe me, our virtues and graces look very fine, and we think much of them until they undergo that ordeal, but that test often takes from them their gloss and beauty; we find how great our weakness is when the very marrow of our bones seems to be a den in which pains, like robbers, hide themselves. God may touch you in the most beloved object of your heart. It is not one child that is taken out of many, but the only one; it is not a friend, or distant relative, but the partner of your bosom is laid low. Do not wonder if the trial affects you greatly, and comes home to your soul and heart. It is one of God's determinations that trials shall not be mock trials with his servants, and the grace given shall not be imaginary, but true. God never plays at chastening his children. No trial for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. By the blueness of the wound the heart is made better; if it do not bruise, it doth not benefit. Very much in proportion to the bitterness felt will be the benefit that will come of it. They found no water. O my God, to what straits dost thou reduce thine own people; thine own people who carry with them the title-deeds of a land that flows with milk and honey! Jordan and Kishon are theirs, and yet they find only Marah to drink while they are here; thine

own people for whom thou hast appointed that they shall dwell in a land of brooks and rivers of water, where they shall sit every man under his vine and fig-tree; these, thy darlings, whom thou hast brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm, are brought to the extreme of poverty, and the little that they have has often a bitter taste infused into it.

Notice once again, there is a reason why the earthly mercies which supply our necessities must be more or less bitter. When Israel received water out of the rock it was not bitter, but this water came out of the sand. To this day in the desert water is found in different places, but where it oozes up from a sandy bed it is almost without exception so brackish and bitter, by reason of the sand, that it is not fit for human drinking; and even the camels, unless they are sore pressed, turn away from it with great aversion. The sand has tainted it, the flavour of earth has got into the blessing. So it is with most of our blessings; by reason of our sin and infirmity too much of the flavour of earth enters into the gift of heaven. Our common mercies, when we receive them direct from heaven as God gives them, are mercies indeed—cool, flowing streams that gush from the rock of his favor; but we are so apt to trace them to the creature, so ready to look upon them as derived from earth instead of coming from heaven; and just in that proportion may we expect to find bitterness in them. What can you hope for in a wilderness, but productions congruous to it? Canaan! who looks for bitterness there? Is it not the land that flows with milk and honey? Sweet land, when shall we reach thee? Thy sweetness is but congruous to thyself: But here, in this wilderness, where we have no continuing city, who looks for the streams of Lebanon? who hopes to find Canaan's fruits in the wilderness of Sin? As well seek to gather from the briny sea the sweet fruits of the palm or the luscious clusters of the vine, as hope to find, amidst these changing scenes, comforts that shall be all comfortable and joys that shall be all joyous. No, they will be comforts, but they will be often embittered; they will be joyous somewhat, but the earthy flavour in them will make us remember that this is not our rest.

I know not that I ought to detain you longer with these evils of the wilderness. I do not feel it is wrong to speak of them, for we do not mention them with any view of discouraging those who have set out on

pilgrimage; we are not like those who hold up their hands and say, "The lions, the giants, the dragons; young pilgrim, you will never reach the land of promise;" but yet we would imitate the Savior, who said to the follower who thought he could follow him whithersoever he might go, "Sit down, and count the cost." There are trials for you, ye followers of Christ, if there are none for others—peculiar trials for you, peculiar joys ten thousand times outweighing them, but yet peculiar griefs, new griefs of a new life of which it will be a blessed thing to have been a participant; but there they are, and we will not deceive you. For you there will be Marahs that others may not know, and for you there will be long thirsts where others drink to the full; nevertheless, we will take Christ and his reproach, Christ and his Marah, rather than the world with its sweetness, for with every drawback that is supposable to Christ Jesus, he is better than the world with all the additions that can be invented by the sons of mirth.

II. Thus much on the first point, the evils of the wilderness. Now, secondly, THE TENDENCY OF HUMAN NATURE. The people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Do not say "human nature," says one; say, "the tendency of Jewish nature." Ah, but if anything, I would prefer the people in the wilderness to any other: rest assured that they were no worse than we are. They are an example to us of what our heart is; and whatever we see in them we have but to watch a little, and we shall see it all in ourselves. It was not Jewish nature that God proved in the wilderness so much as human nature at its very best estate. Assuredly, the tendency of human nature is to murmur. They murmured, complained, found fault. A very easy thing, for the very word "murmur," how simple it is, made up of two infantile sounds—mur mur. No sense in it, no wit in it, no thought in it: it is the cry rather of a brute than of a man—murmur—just a double groan. Easy is it for us to kick against the dispensations of God, to give utterance to our griefs, and what is worse, to the inference we drew from them that God has forgotten to be gracious. To murmur is our tendency; but, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, do we mean to let the tendencies of the old nature rule us? Will we murmur? O that we might have grace rather to say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" Shall a living man complain? Have we not received so much good from the hands of the Lord that we may well

receive evil without rebellion? Will we not disappoint Satan, and overrule the tendency of the flesh, by saying in the might of God's Spirit, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I know we are apt to say, "Well, that is human nature," and when we have said it is human nature, we suppose we have given a very excellent excuse for doing it. But is human nature to rule the divine nature? You, believer, profess to be a partaker of the divine nature. Let the superior force govern, let that which cometh from above be uppermost, and put the lower nature down; let us eschew murmurings and complainings, and magnify and adore the God who lays our comforts low.

Observe—and this is worthy of note—that the murmuring was not ostensibly against God. They murmured against Moses. And have you ever noticed how the most of us, when we are in a murmuring vein, are not honest enough to murmur distinctly against God. No: the child is dead, and we form a conjecture that there was some wrong treatment on the part of nurse, or surgeon, or ourselves; we lay our hold on that for which there may not be a shadow of proof, and the murmuring is upon that point. Or we have lost money, and have been brought down from opulence to almost poverty; then some one person was dishonest, a certain party betrayed us in a transaction by failing to fulfill his part; all the murmuring is heaped on that person. We deny, perhaps indignantly, that we murmur against God; and to prove it we double the zeal with which we murmur against Moses. To complain of the second cause is about as sensible as the conduct of the dog, which bites the stick with which it is beaten. It owes no anger to the stick, but to the person who uses it. Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? Whoever is the instrument, the Lord overrules. In our heart of hearts our rebellion is against the Lord himself. We have not quite honesty enough to rail against God openly and avowedly, and so we hypocritically cover up our repining against him by murmuring against some person, occasion, or event. "If I had not happened to go out on such an occasion I might not have had that cold and been laid aside." Thus we blame an accidental circumstance, as if it were not part of the divine arrangement. Is this complaining of the second cause better than railing against God? I trow not, for, in very deed, it is railing against God, and it is, in addition, an

injustice to the second cause, so made a butt of. When Pharaoh bade the Israelites make bricks, and gave them no straw, there was injustice; but when the Israelites gathered around Moses and virtually told him that he ought to supply them with water, it was much the same thing. Whence should this man have water to give them to drink? How could he sweeten Marah? They knew right well that it was not possible for him to open a well for them in the wilderness; they complained, I say, in their hearts, really against God, but they added to this the hypocrisy and the injustice of veiling their murmuring against the Most High by an unjust and clamorous complaint against his servant Moses. Stop thy tongue, my brother; cease thy cavilling against this and that, against him or her; for be sure that thou art doing injustice to thy fellowman as well as a wrong to thy God.

Once more, while we speak of this tendency in human nature, I want you to observe how they betrayed an utter unbelief of God. They said unto Moses, "What shall we drink?" They meant by it, "By what means can God supply our want of water?" What a question! They were at the Red Sea, and God cleft the intervening gulf in twain, through the depths thereof they marched dryshod; there is Marah's water—shall it be more difficult for God to purify than to divide? To sweeten a fountain—is that more difficult than to cleanse a sea? Is anything too hard for the Lord? A great miracle had been wrought; had they but considered it, and exercised even the lowest degree of faith, they must have seen that he who could work such a miracle as they had seen could work yet another; and they might joyously have stood at Marah's brink, and have sung, "He who cast Pharaoh and his chosen captains into the Red Sea, and delivered his people, can give his chosen drink, therefore sing we, Spring up, O well, and let thy waters be sweet and clean." O that they had faith in God but as a grain of mustard seed, and they would have seen great things, and glorified his name. Do you blame them? Do so; blame them much, but include yourselves in the censure. How often has it been so with us? We have said, "I will never distrust my God after this memorable deliverance, this singular display of his power has slain my unbelief;" yet a new trial has occurred, and our faith, where was it? Had the Son of Man himself been on the earth with those quick eyes to discern the faith which he himself creates, could he find faith in us in the hour of tribulation? Be

humbled as ye see yourselves in this mirror. Behold your instability, which is as water. How like to reeds shaken with the wind are we; or like to meteors, which flash across the brow of night, to leave the darkness denser than before. How soon is the glory of our confidence spent, and the excellence of our faith withered. Hold thou our feet in life, great God, or we shall soon be silent in darkness.

III. Now, thirdly—and may divine help, the help of the Holy Ghost be given me—I will speak upon THE REMEDY OF GRACE. I have shown you the evils of the wilderness and the tendency of nature: it is delightful to behold the remedy of grace. First, if thou wouldst have Marah's bitterness healed, take the case in prayer to God. God begins by making us begin. The people complained to Moses; Moses took the complaint to his Master. In all trials, the surest way to a remedy is prayer. In heavenly pharmacy, prayer is a catholicon; it healeth all things. Prayer, which overcomes heaven, will certainly never be overmatched on earth. Neither men nor devils can stand against prayer: it smites them hip and thigh like another Samson. The bow of prayer returns not empty; it is swifter than an eagle, it is stronger than a lion. Take thy case to God, O heir of trouble; unroll Rabshakeh's letter before the Host High, and the Lord will silence his revilings. Half the work is done when it is brought before God in supplication.

Note, next, that as soon as we have a prayer God has a remedy. The remedy is near at hand; but we do not perceive it till it is shown us. "The Lord showed him a tree." The tree had been growing for years on purpose to be used. God has a remedy for all our troubles before they happen to us. A delightful employment it is to notice how God forestalls himself; how long before we reach the encampment, if there be the bitter well, there is also the healing tree. All is ready between here and heaven. He that has gone to prepare a place for us by his presence, has prepared the way to that place for us by his providence. But, brethren, though for every trouble in this mortal life there is a remedy, you and I do not always discern it. "The Lord showed him a tree." I am persuaded that for every lock in Doubting Castle there is a key, but the promises are often in great confusion to our minds, so that we are perplexed. If a blacksmith should bring you his great bundle of picklocks, you would have to turn them

over, and over, and over; and try half of them, perhaps two-thirds, before you would find the right one; ay, and perhaps the right one would be left to the last. It is always a blessing to remember that for every affliction there is a promise in the word of God; a promise which meets the case, and was made on purpose for it. But you may not be always able to find it—no, you may go fumbling over the Scriptures long before you get the true word; but when the Lord shows it to you, when it comes with power to the soul, when the heart can grasp it, and cry, "Ay, that is the word, my Master; indeed and of a truth that is the precious truth which can sweeten my sad discomforts," oh, what a bliss it is! All glory be unto the Holy Ghost, who to this day is ever ready to show unto his praying servants the sweetening tree when they come to the bitter streams.

Now that remedy for the healing of Marah's water was a very strange one. Why should a tree sweeten the waters? I do not suppose there was any natural efficacy in the tree, although that would not be altogether impossible, since there are trees, so travelers tell us, which have been used in the sweetening of waters. There is in South Africa a certain river, which water cannot be drunk until branches of a certain tree are placed in it, and then the bitterness which is in the stream is deposited at the bottom, and the water becomes drinkable. The thing is not unnatural nor altogether necessarily supernatural, though I think in this case it was supernatural, for there are no trees found now in the wilderness of Shur that would have the effect of sweetening brackish waters. This was no doubt a miraculous incident, and it was also meant to teach us something. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was eaten by our first parents and embittered all; there is a tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. Blessed is he that eats of this tree of life; it shall take away from him the bitterness which the first forbidden fruit brought into the world. A tree is a living thing: may we not learn that there are living principles in true religion which will sweeten our adversities? Mere doctrines may not, but living principles will; these cast into our troubles will assuage our grief.

Best of all, may not this tree cut down be an emblem of the Savior? A glorious tree indeed was he, with spreading branches, and top reaching to heaven—but he must suffer the axe for our sakes; and now, to-day,

contemplating his atoning sacrifice, and by faith resting in him, the troubles of life and the troubles of death are sweetened by his dear cross, which, though it be a bitter tree in itself, is the antidote for all the bitterness that comes upon us here and hereafter.

That remedy was most effective. When they cut down the tree, and put it into the water, it turned the water sweet—they could drink of it; and let me assure you, that in the case of our trouble, the cross is a most effective sweetener. Shall I put the tree into the water for a minute, and then ask you to drink Have you been suffering pain, or any other form of tribulation? I will lay the cross asoak in it for a minute, and your first reflection will be—"In all this that I am called to suffer there is not even a single particle of punishment for my sin; God has punished Christ, consequently he cannot punish me: to punish two for one offense would be unjust, therefore there is nothing penal in all that I am suffering." I do not know of any reflection more consoling than this, that my sorrow is not laid on me by a judge, nor inflicted on me as the result of divine anger. There is not a drop of wrath in a riverful of a believer's grief. Does not that take the bitterness out of affliction and make it sweet? And then the reflection goes further. Since Christ has died for me, I am God's dear child; and now if I suffer, all my suffering comes from my Father's hand—nay, more, from my Father's heart. He loves me, and therefore makes me suffer; not because he does not love, but because he does love does he thus afflict me. In every stripe I see another token of paternal love. This it is to sweeten Marah's waters indeed.

Then will come the next reflection—that a Father's love is joined with infinite wisdom, and that, therefore, every ingredient in the bitter cup is measured out drop by drop, and grain by grain, and there is not one pang too many ever suffered by an heir of heaven. The cross is not only weighed to the pound but to the ounce ay, to the lowest conceivable grain. You shall not have one half a drop of grief more than is absolutely needful for your good and God's glory. And does not this also sweeten the cross, that it is laid on us by infinite wisdom, and by a Father's hand?

Ravishing, indeed, is the reflection in the midst of all our grief and suffering, that Jesus Christ suffers with us. In all thine affliction, O

member of the body, the Head is still a sharer. Deep are the sympathies of the Redeemer, acute, certain, quick, infallible; he never forgets his saints.

All the while the Lord lays his chastening hand upon his servants they may be cheered by this reflection, that in this he is making them conformable unto Christ. What should they know of Gethsemane if they had no sweat of pain? What should they know of the passion if they never had to cry, "I thirst," or "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" They were poor scholars in the school of Christ's sufferings if they endured no sufferings themselves; and it is a blessed thing, a sweet thing to drink of his cup, and to be baptised with his baptism.

Moreover, when the child of God is in his right state, it is always enough for him that his condition is the result of his Father's will. Is it God's will? Is it Christ's will? Then it is my will. How could I dare to wish anything to be otherwise than divine love appoints?

I do not know but what it will become sometimes to the Christ a subject of joy that Marah is bitter. For suppose Marah had been sweet, then, Moses had not prayed to God, and then the tree had not been cut down, and they had never known the power of God to sweeten bitter waters. It must be an awful thing to live an unafflicted life on earth. You say it must be a very delightful thing. I have no doubt it may be from some aspects; but a person who has had no sickness, how can he have a sympathetic heart? What service can he render in cheering the people of God? If you never had any trials, I should suppose, unless something very extraordinary happened, that you would become harsh, and untender; I am afraid some would grow brutal, coarse, hard of heart. Who wishes, where others have to suffer, to claim an immunity from a blessing which brings rich consolations with it, and works eternal benefits? Beloved, this is ever one thing that sweetens Marah that it afterwards bringeth forth the comfortable fruits of righteousness. Our trials are not sent to us alone and by themselves; there is a quantum suff. grace sent with them, by which they are made available as means to sanctify us, and make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I will not keep you much longer upon this point, but I must notice, that

while I have shown you that the remedy is very efficacious, it is something more than efficacious: it is transcendent. The water was bitter, but it became absolutely sweet. The same water that was bitter became sweet, and the grace of God, by leading us into contemplations that spring out of the cross of Christ, can make our trials themselves to become pleasant to us. It is a triumph of grace in the heart when we not only acquiesce in trouble, but even rejoice in it. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience." It is a grand thing when we can truly say that as to the rod of the covenant we would not escape it if we might. It becomes in the judgment of wisdom so good a thing to be tried, that though we would not seek it yet we accept it with something more than readiness, and the bitter thing becomes sweet to us.

Let me say, and have done with this part of the subject, that the remedy which is suggested to us by a spiritualizing of text, is efficacious for all trials, and will be found especially so for the bitter waters of death at the last. With all that can be said about death it is not a pleasant subject for contemplation, and needs to be viewed in connection with covenant consolations. Certain brethren buoy themselves up with the hope of escaping death by the second Advent. I am not certain that they are wiser than David who did not hope to omit the valley of the shadow of death, but trusted that he should fear no evil therein, because the rod and staff would be his stay. The death of Christ robs death of its terrors. The prospect of the resurrection and the certainty of immortality make us say, "Surely the bitterness of death is past!"

Be it remembered, that if the cross avails to sweeten all the bitterness of our mortal life, and even the last bitterness of death, it is assuredly available this morning to sweeten the bitterness of our present sorrow. Did you drink the quassia-cup this morning before you came here? Do you feel desponding at this moment, my brother, my sister? Go to your Savior at once, view him suffering on your behalf, behold the completion of your reconciliation to God, mark the security of your soul through the finished work of your glorious Surety, take down your harps from the willows, put away your ashes, ask the Lord to anoint you with the oil of joy instead of mourning, and even at the waters of Marah lift up your song again, and let the timbrel still be heard. "Sing unto the Lord, for he

hath triumphed gloriously: Marah's bitterness hath he turned to sweetness, he hath cut down the mighty tree which he gave for us, and which yielded itself to the axe for us, and into the bitter stream the tree is cast, and now henceforth, O Marah, thou art sweet indeed." Did you come here this morning as Naomi when she returned to her city and said, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." Ah, when she dandled on her knee and held in her fond bosom the child of Ruth and Boaz, the joy of her old age, she was glad to think the neighbors had not changed her name, and she was willing enough to be called Naomi still. Call not yourself Marah, but remember the new name which the Lord hath named upon you. The bitter pool itself call it not Marah; be not so ready to affix names of sad memorials, your griefs are apt enough to gall your memory; do not aid them to sting you. Call the well by another name; forget Marah, and remember Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that healeth both thee and the waters. Record the mercy rather than the sorrow, and give thanks unto the Most High.

Now, in closing, somebody will say, "This is a very curious missionary sermon." Yes, but you see I did not appoint the missionary sermon for to-day: my brethren did that, and certainly I did not arrange my own sickness, so as to make it fall on this day. How can I dance to the sound of the timbrel when I am feeble and sad? If I had the choosing of my own state of health and mind, I would have the choosing of my own texts, and make them always suitable to the occasions as they arise; but I am obliged to preach what I can preach, and as I know pretty well the flavor of Marah, and a little about the sweetness which the healing tree can give it, I can only tell you what I know by experience.

But it is a good missionary sermon for all that. Let us show you how. Here is A SUGGESTION OF COMPASSION.

Brethren, all the world over, the heathen have trials, bitternesses, woes. I said that Christ have peculiar woes, but the dark places of the earth have direr sorrows. Some nations are devastated with war; others are tormented with diabolical customs and rites: their actions even towards themselves through their superstition are brutal. I may well liken the world that lieth in darkness to a thirsty caravan gathered around Marah's

well where the water is too bitter to drink. Oh, the woes, the woes of mankind! High are the Andes, lofty the Himalayas, but the woes of the sons of Adam are higher, huger still. The Ganges and the Indus, and other mighty streams, pour their floods into the ocean; but what mighty deep could contain the torrents of human grief? A very deluge is the sorrow as well as the sin of man. And, my brethren, the heathen know nothing of the healing tree, the tree cut down of old, which still hath power to sweeten mortal misery. You know it, you have your trials, and you surmount them by the appeals you make to your Lord, and by the power of his consolations; but alas! these sons of darkness have your griefs, and more, but they have not your Comforter. For them the deluge, but not the ark; for them the tempest, but not the refuge. And you are so sure that you have that which would cheer them: no doubt passes across your mind as to the gospel. These are wavering times in which some professors, and even some teachers, almost believe, that the gospel is but one theory of many, and will have to stand its test, and, in all probability, will fail as many human systems of thought have done. You think not so; you believe that God's gospel is a verity, a revelation of Jehovah Heaven and earth may pass away, but not his word, his Christ, his decree, his covenant. You know that you have a tree that can heal the bitter fountains. No doubt comes across your mind as to that: what then? By common humanity, much more by the tender movements of the grace of God upon your souls, I conjure you present this remedy to those who need it, and who need it so much. Will anything suffice as a substitute for it? Is there anywhere on earth another healing tree beside that which fell beneath the axe at Calvary? Are there other leaves for the healing of the nations? On the seven-hilled city of Rome, grows there a tree that can heal man's diseases? No; it is a deadly upas. Cut it down, and burn the very roots thereof. Amongst the fancies of idolatry are there any inventions of man that can cool his fevered brow and sooth his griefs? Does Mohammedanism offer hopes for eternity that can light up the grave to an awakened sinner? Are there thoughts of bliss in idolatry calculated to cheer the sepulcher? All religions answer, "Comforts are not in us." It is only at the cross, it is only by Jesus crucified that the world can be healed. Hitherto little has been accomplished compared with our desires; and in contrast to our ambitions, next to nothing; but faith, darting beyond the things that are seen, flying into the presence-chamber of God, can behold

him writing with the eternal pen, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God;" and she is sure that the tree will sweeten the waters yet. Come, brethren, let your faith prove itself by your works. Help to-day—to-day, by your gifts; help to-morrow—to-morrow, by your prayers. Help, some of you, by consecrating yourselves to mission labor. There is a prayer I mean to continue to offer until it is answered, that God would pour out on this church a missionary spirit. I want to see our young men devoting themselves to the work, some that will not be afraid to venture and preach Jesus Christ in the regions beyond. I have not much faith in missionary societies; it gets less, I must protest, each year; yet we must never put aside one instrumentality until we have a better ready. If the Lord would send the living fire through the churches of England, if he would send from on high a divine impulse, we should see starting up here and there men who would say: "Here are we: send us." The Spirit of God will say, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work," and when this is done I look to see far happier days.

We have sweetened the waters a little; no more the suttee burns; the African is free; the slave-ship crosses no more the deep. In some regions exterminating wars have ceased; the white dove of peace flies where the raven of war was seen. Glory be to God. A few leaves cast into the waters have done this. Let us bear a whole Christ and a whole gospel amongst the nations, and lay the tree in this Marah, until at last the whole world shall drink of the sweet waters of divine love, and God shall be all in all. God bless you, beloved, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Marvellous Increase Of The Church

Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? -
Isaiah 60:8

The ancient church, in the foresight of her mighty increase in these latter

days lifts up her hands in astonishment, and having been so used to see the Lord's grace confined to a small nation, she exclaims in amazement, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" We, beloved, are in a somewhat similar position. It has pleased our Father to add to our numbers so greatly beyond all precedent in modern times, that I doubt not that many of our aged members, who remember days of yore, when God was pleased to bless them very greatly, and then think of days of sadness and weariness, when they were diminished and brought low, are this morning lifting up their hands, and saying, as they think of the present prosperity of our church, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" I am sure whenever I appoint an evening for seeing the converts I am amazed; I can only stand up afterwards, clap my hands, and go home and weep for very joy, to think that the word of our God is so running and multiplying and abundantly increasing; and as post after post I receive letters from different parts of this country, from one person here, and another there, not in England only, but in Scotland, and even across the sea - in Ireland, and you know, in the Crimea also - I have been overwhelmed with amazement, and have been obliged to cry out, "Who hath begotten me these?" "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

The church, when she uttered these words, appears to have been the subject of three kinds of feeling. First, *wonder*: secondly, *pleasure*: thirdly, anxiety. These three feelings *you* have felt; you are not strangers to them; and you will understand, while I speak to you as the children of God, how it is that we can feel at the same time, wonder, pleasure, and yet anxiety.

I. First, the church of old, and our church now, appears to have been the subject of WONDER when she saw so many come to know the Lord. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Take the first sentence of the text first: "Who are these that fly as a cloud?"

The church wondered, first of all, *at the number of her converts*. They did "fly as a cloud." Not here and there a convert - not now and then one - not converts like solitary bitterns of the desert; but they "did fly as a cloud."

Not a convert now and then, like a meteor, a thing we see but seldom, which flashes across the sky, rejoices the darkness, and then is gone; not now and then a convert, as a *rara avis*, - a spiritual prodigy. "But who are these?" saith she, "who fly as a cloud?" She wonders at their number. But, my brethren, why should we be astonished? Did not the apostle Peter become the instrument of converting three thousand under one sermon? And have we not heard of Whitfield, that while ten thousand listened to him, it has been known that two thousand at a time have felt the power of God manifested in their hearts? And why should we wonder if hundreds were brought to God now? "Is his arm shortened, that he cannot save? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?" Have we not cried unto the God of Jacob; and is anything impossible to him? Remember how he "cut Rahab and wounded the dragon." Think of his prodigies by the Red Sea, and the miracles he worked in the field of Zoan. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Oh! thou distrustful church, dost thou marvel because thy Lord giveth thee many children? Is it not written - "More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife," saith the Lord. I tell thee, the Lord will show thee greater things than these. The increase we have had shall yet be exceeded, if God wills it. Nothing is impossible with him. He who converts one, could as easily convert a hundred; and he who redeems a hundred, could save a thousand by the self-same power. Is not the blood of Jesus sufficient? Is not the Holy Ghost powerful enough? and is not the mighty Three-one God "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think?" Yet, so it is; so little are our expectations, and so unprepared are we for God's mercies, that when he pours out a blessing upon us, so that we have not room enough to receive it, we begin shutting up the windows altogether, and think, "Surely it cannot come from God, because there is so much of it." Why, that is the very reason why we should believe it to be. If there were few conversions, then we might tremble, and fear lest they might be man's; but when there are so many none but a God can accomplish it. When one or two are brought to join a church, we may shake for fear and examine them with caution; but when they fly like a cloud, we can only say, "Great art thou, O God, marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." Doubtless, brethren, until larger views of God's power and increased faith shall diminish the wonder, we shall always stand in amazement, and say, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

But, secondly, the Chaldee has the idea in it, not of numbers, but of *swiftness*. "Who are these that fly as a cloud," for swiftness? Ye have seen clouds dashing along, like chariots drawn by mighty horses, or flying like a fugitive army, when the swift winds have pursued them, and ye have said, "See how swiftly the clouds career along the sky;" and it is notable, that in great revivals of religion, persons are generally more swift in their religious growth and experience than they are in dull and degenerate times. "Why," says one, "how soon persons join the church here! how very soon they attain to assurance of faith! how very speedily they come to understand gospel doctrines. It was not so in my days; for I know I was months and months, and tried a long while, before I dared think of obeying my Master - before I could say, 'I know whom I have believed.'" Just so; but these are brighter days than your days, and you are wondering now because the converts fly so swiftly. But that is just the idea of the text: "Who are these that fly *as swiftly* as a cloud?" I know, brethren, it used to be the custom with our churches, when a convert came to keep him a summer and a winter - to summer him and to winter him. Now, that is very prudent and very wise; but it is not at all scriptural: there is nothing in the word of God to support it. The example of Jesus and his apostles is altogether against it; and I take it that scripture is to go before prudence, and that his example is always to be above man's wisdom. Why should the people of God tarry in these days? Let them haste, and delay not to keep his commandments; and what if young people do grow in grace faster now than they did in your time? Perhaps God has now poured out a larger measure of his Spirit. He has placed us in brighter days; and plants in the warm sunshine must expect to grow faster than those that dwell in the frost. We know that in the short summers of Sweden, a harvest will ripen in two or three months, or less than that. Why should we complain of the corn of Sweden, because it ripens so swiftly, when it is just as good as ours that takes several months to ripen? The Lord does as he wills and as he pleases; and if some fly swiftly, whilst others travel slowly, let those who go slowly bless God that they go at all, but let them not murmur that others go a little faster. Nevertheless, it will always be to God's church a source of wonder: "Who are these that fly so swiftly like a cloud?"

The Targum has another idea, that of *publicity*. "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" The cloud, you know, flies so that everybody can see it. So do these converts fly openly before the world. It is a matter of admiration with this church and with God's church whenever it is increased, that the converts become so bold and fly so publicly. In the first days of the church, Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night; he was somewhat ashamed, lest he should be put out of the synagogue. Joseph of Arimathea, the rich man, was afraid to profess his Lord, and therefore loved Jesus "secretly, for fear of the Jews." But you do not read that any of them were afraid, when God poured out the Holy Ghost on the day that Peter preached; but "they broke their bread from house to house, and did eat it in singleness of heart, praising God." They went up to the beautiful gate of the temple, and in the very teeth of all the people, Peter and John healed the lame man. They worked their miracles openly before all men. They were not ashamed. So, when there is a glorious ingathering of souls, you will always notice how bold the people become. Why, there never were such a brazen-faced set of people as those who assemble here. They are not ashamed of their religion. Why, I have seen persons come to the pool of baptism, fearing, shaking, and trembling: but I have not found it so with the majority of those who have been baptized in this place. They seem proud to own their Master. They can sing, -

"Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star!
Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon!"

You "are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," for it has been here the power of God unto salvation to many who have believed. I have rejoiced to see the boldness of the young converts; I have heard of them fighting with the antagonists of the truth. I have seen them boldly standing up for their Master, in the face of scorns and jeers, and slanders; and the church says, with regard to them, "Who are these that fly publicly as a cloud?"

But methinks there is another idea here, which Dr. Gill gives us in his very valuable commentary. "Who are these that fly as a cloud," for *unanimity*? You will mark, not as clouds, but "as a cloud;" not as two or

three bodies, but as one united and compact mass! Here is the secret of strength. Split us into fractions, and we are conquered; unite us into a steady phalanx, and we become invincible; knit us together as one man, and Satan himself can never rend us asunder. Divide us into threads, let our warp and woof be disunited, and we become like rotten tow, that burneth before a single spark of the fire of the enemy. But, thanks be to God, we are "as the heart of one man." I could not but wonder at our Church Meeting on Wednesday, how all seemed to fly as a cloud. No sooner was a thing proposed, than the whole church seemed without a dissentient opinion to be carried along irresistibly by one thought that possessed its bosom. It is very seldom you see a church really united; but God *has* united us; we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." But yet the church wonders at it; she can scarcely understand it. "Who are these," she says, "who fly as one compact and solid cloud?" God grant that we may always continue so! Whatever is said of one of us, let it be said of all of us. Do not let us be stragglers. Those who fall into the rear of an army are always in danger; and those who hang about its flanks are equally subject to insult and injury. Let us march breast to breast, shoulder to shoulder, each of us drawing the sword at one word; every one doing as the captain tells us; and as surely as truth prevaieth, unity shall conquer, and our king shall honor us and bless us still, treading our foes beneath our feet, and making us more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.

Again: there is the idea of *power*. Who is he that shall bridle a cloud, or stop it in its march? What man is he who by a word can stay the careering clouds, and make them still? Who is he that can bid them, when they are driving northward, turn their course to the south? Who is he that can rein the coursers of the wind, and forbid them to drag the chariots of darkness along to the west? The clouds yield to none; no majesty can control them; they laugh to scorn the sceptre of the prince, and they move on, despite the rattling of the sabres of armies. None can stop the clouds; they are invincible, uncontrollable; and in their majesty they move themselves right royally, like the kings of heaven. And who is he that can stop the converts of Zion? Who is he that can keep back the children of Jerusalem; when the Lord shall "bring again the captivity of his people," who is he that shall stop them? When his people of old were in Babylon, could "the

two-leaved gates" bar them in? Could Cyrus, with all his armies, have kept them prisoners? Nay, the two-leaved gates open, the bars of brass give way; and Cyrus himself sends them back to their country, with gold and silver to build their temple. And when in latter days the Jews shall return to their own land again, to worship God, who shall stop them? Shall the might of Russia? Shall the power of Egypt? Shall the tyranny of Turkey? Shall aught keep them back? No; the city shall be builded again upon her own heap, and the tribes of the Lord shall yet go up again, to worship God where their forefathers bowed before them. O, people of God! it is so with you. "Who are these that fly as a cloud!" Try, try, O enemy, to stop one of the Lord's doves, when he is coming to the windows! You cannot do it. Did not the devil try to stop you, O brother, when you were coming to God? Ah! he did; but it was all in vain. And when you went to join the church, how many difficulties there were in the way! But when you are called to God you will not be afraid, you will fly like a cloud. Ah! the world says we shall stop by-and-by; that all our success is as nothing; that it will soon die away; that it is a mere excitement, and will soon end. Ah! let them talk so, if they please. We are flying like a cloud. We have God within us; we have good within us; we have the might of the Deity within our church; and who is he that shall stop us? We bid the mighty men of this earth come; we bid carnal reason array itself against us; we bid the wisdom of the critic try to stop us. But they cannot do it. The weakness of God is mightier than man; and he who took us from the sheep-folds to lead his people Israel will not desert his David; he who has put us before his people will not cast us away, nor will he leave his church, nor forsake his chosen ones. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

Thus have I tried to picture to you the amazement of Christ's Church. "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" And, now, Church of God, one word with thee, ere I leave thee. Your success is amazing one way; but it is not amazing if you look at it in another direction. It is amazing that any man should be saved, if you look at man; it is not amazing if you consider God. It is amazing that the wilderness should blossom as the rose, if you look at the wilderness; but it is not amazing, if you consider Jehovah. It is wonderful that a desert should have the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: but, wonder all dies away, when you recollect that God who doeth as he

wills in the armies of heaven doeth as he pleases in this lower world. O, Church of God! give the honor and the glory to thy God, and to thy God only. Write his name upon thy banners; let thy sacrifice smoke before him, and before the shields of the mighty. "I am, and there is none else besides me." Bow before him; lest, if you give praise to the creature, and if you think we have done anything, and say, "Behold this great Babylon that I have builded," God would say, "Because thou hast exalted thyself like the cedars of Lebanon, therefore will I bring thee down to the earth, and thy glory shall be taken from thee." May the Lord in his mercy keep us from pride, and also keep us living on him, believing in his might, and trusting in his power!

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse, which is the PLEASURE OF THE CHURCH. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

First, the church is exceedingly pleased at the *character* of those who come to her, "doves." We should always thank God, when those who join the church are of the right sort; for alas! there is such a thing as having a large addition to the church of men that are of no use whatever. Many an army has swelled its ranks with recruits, who have in no way whatever contributed to its might; and it has been known in many great revivals, that large hosts have been gathered in, who have forsaken the truth in six months. I know a church which excommunicated eighty members in twelve months, for disorderly conduct and forsaking the truth; and they had taken on a hundred or so the year before, from some great spasm, which had been occasioned by one of those spurious revivalists, who came about making a great noise, and doing no good whatever, but scorching and burning up the ground, where other men might have sown the good seed of the kingdom. I wonder that any man should be so self-conceited as to call himself a revivalist, or profess to be a revival-maker: let this be known, as my opinion, he is a nuisance and nothing better. But where a church is cautious, where the minister exercises scrutiny, and all possible means are taken to see into character, it gives us great pleasure that they are of the right sort. Ah! beloved, you should be at our church meetings sometimes, and hear the sweet words of experience which are uttered there. I am sure you would say, that they, "fly as the doves to their

windows." Now and then there comes before me an old croaking raven, that wants to come in; but we are soon able to tell the raven from the dove. It may be, that now and then a raven gets into our church; but I do hope that the majority are doves. We have seen them so humble, so meek, trusting alone in Jesus, like timid doves, half afraid to speak and tell you, and yet so loving, that they seemed as if they had sat on the finger of Jesus, and picked their food from between his lips; we have marked their conduct afterwards, and seen it to be holy and consistent. We will glory before the world, that notwithstanding the numbers that have been added to us, we have had to cut off as few as any church in the world - but *one* in a year, out of our vast body! and that one was received from another church, and therefore had never been examined thoroughly. O my brethren, always try to give the church pleasure by your dove-like conversation. "Be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves." Such was your Master's teaching. Let your character be -

"Humble, teachable, and mild,
Changed into a little child;
Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Weaned from all the world besides."

"Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." Be not like the unclean bird, that will devour all kinds of filth; but be like the dove, that liveth on the "good corn of the kingdom." And be ye sure that you are like them, loving and kind one to another; and, like them, always mourn when you lose your mate; weep when your Jesus is gone from you, and you lose his delightful presence. Be ye like the dove in all these things.

Again: the church feels pleasure, not only in their character, but in their *condition*. Like doves "that fly." Lowth translates this portion of the verse "like doves on the wing." The church feels pleasure in thinking that her converts are "like doves on the wing." Do you never, beloved, get into such a condition, that you are not like a dove on the wing, but like a dove in a secret place, in the cleft of the rock, hiding yourself in darkness, because you are afraid to be seen? For my own part, I am often not like a dove on the wing, but like a dove hiding its head under its wing, afraid to

fly. But "he reneweth our strength like the eagle's." There is a moulting time for the Lord's doves; but their feathers grow again, and then they have the wings of the dove, covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold; and they can fly upwards towards Jesus. And will not our church rejoice, when her converts appear to be all on the wing, not doubting, fearful converts, not converts that stand timidly, afraid to come; but converts on the wing, flying upwards towards Jesus, prayerful, laborious, active; not sitting still, doing nothing, but labouring and flying upwards towards Jesus. These are the converts we want. And the church is pleased when she can say, "Who are these that are like doves on the wing?"

Furthermore; the translation of the Septuagint gives us another idea. "Who are these that fly like doves *with their young*?" The church rejoices at the company that the converts bring with them. How charming is the sight when a father unites himself with the people of God, and then his children after him! We had an instance a little while ago here, of two sons followed by their mother, and we have had many instances of a mother following her daughters, and of daughters following their mothers, and sons following their fathers. Oh! how blessed it is, to see the doves come with their young! If there is anything more beautiful than a dove, it is the little dove that flieth by its side. Beloved, do you not rejoice, some of you, that you have your children in the church? that you can run your eye along the pew, where your offspring are sitting with you, and can say, "Ah! glory be to God, it is not only I that have received his mercy, but here are my sons, too; and there sits my daughter drinking from the same well as I draw from; living on the same spiritual manna, looking to the same cross for salvation, and hoping for the same heaven! But I notice some families here - I could point them out if I would: I notice them with sadness; where there is a father and a mother, both of them heirs of heaven, but of whose sons we have no evidence and no hope that they are the children of God. And there are some of you, my friends, whose young ones have come before you. We have daughters here that have prayerless mothers; we have sons that have ungodly fathers. Oh! does it not seem hard that the children should be in the kingdom before the parents? For if it be hard that a parent should see his children perishing, surely there is tenfold horror in the thought of children saved, and parents going to hell;

your offspring entering into the joy of their Lord, and ye yourselves cast "into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Daughter of Zion! plead for your children. Men of Jerusalem! plead for your children.

The church, again, feels pleasure *at the direction in which these doves move*. "Who are these that fly as the doves *to their windows*?" Where should the dove fly to else but to its dovecot? The word means the dovecot, where the doves live, the little pigeon holes, into which the doves enter and dwell. The joy of the church is, that the poor sinner does not fly to man, nor to the law, but flies to Christ, the dovecot! I can recollect when, like a poor dove, sent out by Noah from his hand, I flew over the wide expanse of waters, and hoped to find some place where I might rest my wearied wing. Up towards the north I flew; and my eye looked keenly through the mist and darkness, if perhaps it might find some floating substance, on which my soul might rest its foot, but it found nothing. Again it turned its wing, and flapped it, but not so rapidly as before, across that deep water that knew no shore; but still there was no rest. The raven had found his resting-place upon a floating body, and was feeding itself upon the carrion of some drowned man's carcass; but my poor soul found none. I went on: thought I saw a ship floating out at sea; it was the ship of the law; and I thought I would put my feet on its canvass, or rest myself on its cordage for a time, and find some refuge. But ah! it was an airy phantom, on which I could not rest; for my foot had no right to rest on the law, I had not kept it, and the soul that keepeth it not must die. At last I saw the barque Christ Jesus - that happy ark; and I thought I would fly thither; but my poor wing was weary, and I could fly no further, and down I sank into the water, but as providence would have it, when my wings were flagging, and I dropped into the stream to be drowned, just below me was the roof of the ark, and I saw a hand put out from it, that took me, and said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore I have not delivered the soul of my turtle dove into the company of the wicked; come in, come in!" and then I found I had an olive branch in my mouth of peace with God and peace with man, plucked off with Jesus' power. Poor soul! hast thou found a resting-place in the ark? hast thou fled to thy window? or art thou, O Ephraim, like the silly dove that hath no heart, that goeth down to Egypt, and resteth itself in Assyria? Oh, say

thou, why is it that thou are looking for rest, where none can be found? There be many that say, "Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me!" That is the dove's resting-place; that is his house. Have you found your home in Christ? If you have not, when the storm comes, O dove, with ruffled plumage thou shalt be driven before the swift tempest; thou shalt be blown along like a small feather before the stream, onward, onward, through the dark unknown until thou findest thyself with burned and singed wings, falling into flames that have no bottom. The Lord give you deliverance, and help you to fly to Jesus.

III. Now we come to our third point - the CHURCH's ANXIETY. "Ah!" says the church, "it is all very well their flying like a cloud; it is all right their going as doves to their windows; but who are they?" The church is anxious, and she anxiously desires to be sure that it is all gold that is put into her treasury; for she suspects that some of those lumps of bullion cannot be gold. She thinks, "surely that is not all genuine metal, or there would not be so much of it;" and she says, "Who are they?" That is the question! Now I address myself to an anxious church to answer it.

First, they are *those that fly*. Our text says, "Who are these that fly?" They are those who fly because they cannot stop where they were, and they are flying somewhere else for refuge. We trust that those who have joined our church are those who are persuaded that the land wherein they dwelt is to be consumed with fire, who feel a necessity to come out of the place where they once lived, and have a strong desire to seek "a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We hope, beloved, that those who have joined with us here are those who are escaping from hell and flying to heaven; such as once had no sins that they cared for, but now come out because they needs must come, for their house has got too hot for them, and they cannot abide any longer in their sins. Here we have the idea of conviction. They are those that fly. They are not content now to make their nest of their own good works, with here and there a little bit of down picked off Morality-common, and here a piece of yarn that they have picked up in Legality palace, and here a piece of good work that they have found in the barn-yard of Ceremonialism. No; they are poor souls that have no rest anywhere, but are flying, and flying with rapid wing, until they can get to their windows. Are you such, my beloved,

that have joined the church? or are you not? If you are not, you have deceived me, and you have deceived the church, for we thought you were; we want to have none united with us but those who are flying to us. We want no self-righteous ones; no self-sufficient ones, no good moral people; we want those who feel that they are ragged sinners, clothed by Jesus; poor dead sinners, made alive by Jesus. I ask God, when I ask him to give me any, to give me those who are flying with haste for a Saviour; and if any of you that have come to us making a profession of flying are not such, I beseech you by everything that is solemn, by that hell of hypocrites, which is the hell of hells, and by the heaven you would lose, to bethink yourselves how sinfully you are acting, in continuing members of a Christian church when you are hypocrites and have never fled.

But again: they are those who fly *not on the ground, but like a cloud, up high*. We know many a church, to which the people come, because there is so much charity connected with it. I know some country churches in the Establishment which are attended by some people, because there are regularly given away so many sixpences after the service. That is flying like a will-o'-the-wisp, dancing about in dark marshy places. If I could buy all London for my congregation by the turn of a threepenny piece, I would not give it. If people do not come from some better motives, we do not wish to have any. But we have none of that sort, we trust. They fly higher than these groundlings. Zion rejoiced that they did not fly on the ground, but flew like a cloud. They were persons that did not care about the world, but wanted heaven.

They were *souls filled with rain*, like the clouds; or if they were not big and black with rain, as the clouds sometimes are when they are about to burst, yet they had a little grace in them, a little moisture, a little dew.

And they were *persons driven by the wind*, just as the clouds are - who do not move of themselves, but go because they must go - who have no power of themselves to move, but have something driving them behind. Brethren, we hope that the converts of this church have been driven to us by the power of the Holy Ghost, and could not help coming, and they have been men filled with rain, which they will drop out upon us in copious showers, if God pleases. They have been like the clouds, which

tarry not for man, neither wait for the sons of men. They are come with us now: and we hope to see the clouds go up higher and higher, into the air, until those clouds shall one by one, be swallowed up in Jesus, shall be lost in the one assembly of the First-born Church of the Holy Ghost. These are the persons who "fly as a cloud."

We give thee yet another answer, O thou timid church. Those who come to join themselves with thee are *persons who have been regenerated*; for they are *doves*. They were not doves by nature; they were ravens; but they are doves now. They are changed from ravens into doves, from lions into lambs. Beloved, it is very easy for you to pretend to be the children of God; but it is not easy for you to be so. The old fable of the jackdaw dressed up in peacock's feathers often takes place now. Many a time have we seen coming to our church, a fine strutting fellow, with long feathers of prayer behind him. He could pray gloriously; and he has come strutting in, with all his majesty and pride, and said, "Surely I must come; I have everything about me; am I not rich and polite? have I not learning and talent?" In a very little while we have found him to be nothing but an old prattling jackdaw, having none of the true feathers belonging to him; by some accident one of his borrowed feathers have dropped out, and we have found him to be a hypocrite. I beseech you, do not be hypocrites. The glory of the gospel is not that it paints ravens white, and whitewashes blackbirds, but that it turns them into doves. it is the glory of our religion not that it makes a man seem what he is not, but that it makes him something else. It takes the raven and turns him into a dove; his ravenish heart becomes a dove's heart. It is not the feathers that are changed, but the man himself. Glorious Gospel, which takes a lion, and doth not cut the lion's mane off, and then cover him with a sheep's skin, but makes him into a lamb! O church of God! these that have come like doves to their windows are trophies of regenerating grace, which has transformed them, and made them as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The last answer I shall give respecting those who have come to join themselves with us is, that they are those, we hope, who have *fled to their windows*, and found a refuge in Christ my Lord. There is nothing we want to know of a person coming before the church, except this. Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Hast thou had pardon from his

hands? Hast thou had union with his person? Dost thou hold communion with him day by day? Is he thy hope, thy stay, thy refuge, thy trust? If so, then thou mayest come in. If thou art one living in the dovecot we will not drive thee away; if thou hast fled like a dove to thy window, we are glad to have thee. But there is the anxious question - Have you fled to Christ? Beloved, there are some who think they have fled to Christ that have not; and there are some who think they have not fled to Christ that have. There are some of you who think yourselves safe for heaven, that are nothing but whitewashed sepulchres, like the Pharisees of old. It is a horrible thought, that there are some, we fear, who lay their head upon their death pillow, as they think, in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but will in hell lift up their eyes, being in torment. A dove, you know, can find good shelter for itself in other places beside a dovecot; there may be some little hole in the barn, and in there the dove gets and builds its nest, and is very happy and comfortable. Ah! dove, but there is no place that will protect you that is not a dovecot; and there is only one dovecot. You have built a nice snug nest perhaps in some of your trees; you are building your hope in some one of your merits; you are putting your trust in some of your own works. It is all in vain. There is only one dovecot. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ and him crucified." There is only one hope for a poor sinner from the justice of Jehovah; and that is in the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," who "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." Do you know how *that* dovecot was made for you? Do you know how it is lined for you, and how large the door is? It was made by Jesus, the carpenter's son; it is lined with the blood of his own heart; and the door is so wide that the biggest sinner can get in, but he who has any righteousness will find that the door is not large enough to let him carry his righteousness with him. Poor soul! hast thou a dovecot? and art thou living in it? If so, we rejoice with thee, and glad enough should we be to have thee united with our church; for we love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, lest thou shouldst not understand our holy religion, one moment shall suffice, and thou shalt go. Dost thou not know that the law which God made on Sinai has been broken by us all, and that God, the "jealous God," will "by no means spare the guilty?" And dost thou not know, O sinner, that thou must offer something to God, to make up a recompense for what thou hast done?

Dost thou not know, that God is so angry with the man who sins, that he will damn that man, unless there is some one who will be damned for him, and suffer the punishment in his stead? And dost thou not know, that our religion is a religion of substitution - that Jesus Christ the Son of God became man; that he might take the punishment we ought to have had; that he bore the wrath we ought to have borne; that he took the guilt we committed, just as the scape-goat of old did, and carried it right away into the wilderness of forgetfulness; so that now a sinner who is putting his trust in that substitution can escape punishment. God's justice cannot demand payment twice -

"First at my bleeding Surety's hands,
And then again at mine."

Precious Jesus! what a substitute thou wast for guilt? Sweet Lord Jesus! I kiss thy wounds this day; thou Man! thou God! thou who didst wrestle with Jacob! thou who didst walk with Abraham, the man of God, of Mamre! thou who stoodst in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Thou Son of God, thou Son of Man, who didst appear to Joshua with thy sword drawn! I worship thee, my substitute, my hope! Oh! that others might do so too, and that the whole of this vast multitude might, with one heart, accept him as their Saviour!

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The Master's Profession - The Disciple's Pursuit

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have

not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. - Psalm 40:9-10

Who is the speaker that gives utterance to these marvellous words? In the first instance they must be understood to proceed from our Lord Jesus Christ. By the Spirit of prophecy in the Old Testament they were spoken of him, and by the Spirit of interpretation in the New Testament they have been applied to him. Mark, then, how vehemently he here declares that he has fully discharged the work which he was sent to accomplish. When, in the days of his flesh, he was crying to his Father for preservation in a season of dire distress, he might well ask that he should then be helped, since all the previous strength he possessed had been laid out in his Father's service. But because this profession emphatically belongs to our Savior we need not suppose that it exclusively belongs to him. On the other hand, Christ being our forerunner and our example, we are encouraged to emulate the high calling and the dutiful obedience he so perfectly exhibited.

I. UNDOUBTEDLY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS WE READ HIS HISTORY IN THE FOUR EVANGELISTS, MOST GLORIOUSLY FULFILLED HIS LIFE-MISSION.

He was constantly testifying to the gospel of God, the gospel of his righteousness and of his grace. From the first moment when he, being full of the Holy Ghost, began to preach the gospel, until the day when he was taken up into heaven, while he blessed his disciples, he was instant in season and out of season. There were no waste moments of time, no neglected opportunities, no talents held in reserve. "I must work," was his motto. The zeal of God's house consumed him. It was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. A marvellous study is this life of Christ on earth; and as one looks at it thought begets thought, for -

"Kindred objects kindred thoughts inspire,
As summer clouds flash forth electric fire."

Mark ye not how he concentrated every attribute of his nature, every faculty of his mind, and every power of his body in the one work he had

undertaken—to do his Father's will? He seems all his life through to have challenged the enquiry, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He was continually preaching the gospel. "Never man spake as this man," may apply to the quantity as well as the quality of his utterances. All places seemed to be alike suitable to his ministry. Your gowns and your pulpits, your chancels and naves, your aisles and transepts were of no account with him. He wanted no toga or rostrum, nor did he need a preconcerted arrangement of the assembly to lend grace to his discourses when he made known the word of God to the people and astonished them with his doctrine. He could speak anywhere—even along the crowded thoroughfare, where the multitudes thronged him. He went down the lowest streets, and from the poorest beggars he didn't turn aside. He was not thwarted by the sneers, and sarcasms, and subtle questioning of the Pharisees and Sadducees. One thought possessed him, and he persistently wrought it out. His life-sermon as so thorough that nothing of earthly splendor could allure or distract him, or break the thread. He was always and everywhere either pleading with God for men, or else pleading with men for God. The reiterated expressions of these two verses are emphatically the truth: the asseverations are vehement, yet the effect is a noble vindication of integrity. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness, and thy truth from the great congregation." He was the great Witness for God, the great Testifier, who went proclaiming everywhere the kingdom of God, and the good tidings of salvation to man.

Do not these words likewise suggest to you the thought that Christ testified frequently to the greatest crowds? "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. . . . I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." On the hill-top, where his disciples came unto him and he began with his benediction of "Blessed," the multitude that gathered together, when he sat down and taught them, was doubtless imposing. The people sometimes thronged to hear him in such numbers that the historian describes them as innumerable, and tells us that they trod one upon another. From the

statement given us, that there were at one time five thousand and at another time four thousand men, besides women and children, collected together in the desert place and the wilderness, when he fed them, we might reasonably infer that in populous places the crowds assembled on a yet vaster scale. Of course, the whole population off Judea, scattered all over the land, was scarcely equal to the population of this city, and therefore greater crowds may be collected in London than could have been gathered in Jerusalem; yet the concourse there must at times have been exceedingly great and the spectacle unusually grand, especially when at the great feast our Lord stood up before the people, and rang out, in words clear and distinct—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Why, for years afterwards, the very tones of his voice must have haunted the memories of those who stood and listened to him, if they rejected the message. It is not easy to stand up before a crowded assembly; let those who think so come and try. Oftentimes it tests a man's valor. It brings him many trials to his spirit to be prepared for the work. But our Lord Jesus Christ was fully equipped for his blessed ministry. He was a great preacher, with a great message, full of a great love, with a great Father by whom he was commissioned, sustained, cheered. All the qualities of his character and conduct were congruous. With a great assembly he was at home; for his sympathy was mighty in its aggregate and minute in its detail. At the same time, Christ did not want a great congregation to enable him to preach. The first verse of our text, if I catch the heart of its meaning, seems to me to intimate that he could speak personally to one or to two: "Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest." From the court of human conscience to the court of divine omniscience the appeal is carried. Fame hath not heard of this private fidelity. Howbeit he that dwelleth in the heavens takes cognisance of it. "O Lord, thou knowest, and canst bear witness to it. When there was but one woman at the well's brink, I refrained not my lips." When there were but two—his disciples, as he was going to Emmaus—he opened his mouth. Whether they were those whom he had made or would make his disciples, he had a word for all at all times and at all seasons. In this we ought to imitate the Master. Be ready to tell of Christ not only when your heart is prepared for it at a set time, but at all times, whether you have prepared for it or not. Your spirit should be always on the alert; you should always be on the watch for souls. Fain would I be like the eagle

that is on its way to the eyrie, and looks for it long before it comes in sight, and no sooner discerns it than, like a lightning-flash, it darts off and alights upon it. O for a heart that is set on winning souls, that is set on glorifying God, that is set on coming nearer to the model and being more conformed in this matter unto Christ our Head! Our Lord could truly assert that he had not kept back the gospel; he had preached it publicly to the crowds, and he had declared it privately, as opportunity allowed. That he never did seal his lips or stifle his testimony, he could call God to witness.

Does not the tenth verse, in its first clause, intimate that Christ's preaching was never heartless preaching? "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart." As if he had said, "It is in my heart, but I have never concealed it there. What I have received of thee, O my Father, I have made known unto the people: forsooth, thy will, which I have observed in heaven, and engaged to fulfill on earth; thy righteousness, as it appears in the justice of thy throne and the benevolence of thy laws; thy faithfulness, as it is verified in the stability of thy covenant and the perpetuity of thine ordinances; thy salvation, as it was prepared in thy counsels of old, and is displayed when thou makes bare thy right hand and thy holy arm; thy lovingkindness which flows in one perpetual stream of mercy; and thy truth, which sets the final seal to thy testimonies;—all these have I treasured in my heart, not to hide them from the children of men, but to manifest them for the glory of thy name and the welfare of thy people." Is it so? Then this solemn protest before God is of vital interest to us. Henceforth every word, every statute, every precept of the gospel, comes to us distilled through the heart of Christ. I like the idea of pouring our sermons out of our own hearts. They must go from our hearts, or they will not go to our hearers' hearts. But, oh, how full of gracious secrets our hearts ought to be, priceless secrets, which though hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes! Jesus, we thank thee for this, that thou hast not concealed thy Father's lovingkindness and truth from us.

See, too, our Master kept always to vital matters. We notice here how he uses words which show that his teaching had a distinct reference to God. "I have not hid thy righteousness; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy

salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." Our Lord in his teaching never seems to have diverged from the great central truth. We are too apt to be taken up with the mere externals, and if we do not become mere sectarians, it is just possible that points of our creed of the least importance occupy the most prominent place in our thought and conversation. Our Lord, with eagle eye, descries what is most important for men to know, and upon that he dwells. Sinners must know of God's righteousness; they will never know their sinfulness else, or knowing it they will think it to be a little thing. The righteousness of God comes like a stream of light into the soul, and reveals its corruption. God's salvation, again, must be shown in its true colors. It does not owe its origin, its accomplishment, or its application to our works or our merits, but it proceeds from God's grace, and redounds to his glory. I hold that this should be the cherished motive of the gospel preacher, to glorify God! While it should be the chief end and aim of Christians ordinarily, it is to be the chief end and aim of the preacher extraordinarily. Beyond everyone else, he is concerned with that which, beyond everything else, brings glory to him who is first, last, midst, and without end. Jesus Christ preached God's righteousness, and showed God's righteousness even in salvation, and then he preached that salvation fully.

Nor, dear friends, did he withhold his testimony of the other attributes of God. Think for an instant of God's faithfulness. Oh, what a delightful theme! As immutability is a glory that belongs to all his attributes, so faithfulness pertains to all his purposes and promises. Well may his people everywhere rely upon his fidelity. Well may we tell that we serve no mutable God. "He is not a man that he should lie; neither the Soul of Man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Moreover he will rest in his love, "for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake." He is "the Father of lights, with whom is, no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His promises and his threatenings abide steadfast. Side by side with the faithfulness of God there is witness of his lovingkindness. Oh, what a glorious revelation! the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of pity and of pardon, the God of love. Not of love as with us, in a mere effeminate sense, as though it were only an impulse of

human admiration that would wink at iniquities. He is Love, love in the essence, love essentially divine; love consistent with holiness, that hums like flames of fire. In justice deep and terrible is God; in majesty he doth ride on the wings of the wind. This God of tempest, is the God of God, and this is the God whom Jesus preached; and while he did not conceal the sterner attributes of the Almighty, yet he did not forget to depict the heart of mercy and the hand that is ready to help. The God whom he preached is full of gentleness and tenderness. May we learn to believe in the God and Father whom his only begotten Son Jesus Christ delighted to make known, and if called to testify of Him may we testify fully and heartily as Jesus did.

To sum up all, we may say that our Lord's three years' ministry was matchless in its perfection, such as he could look back upon without a single regret, but with unsullied complacency. It was matchless as to its doctrines, and as to its completeness it was unsurpassed. More might be said of his manner, which was full of tenderness to the men among whom he walked, and of his majestic oratory, which we may admire and seek to imitate, but which we can reach only at a distance, for it is peerless beyond all competition, it stands alone; "Never yet man spake like this man," shall be true of him to the world's end. All his life long there is no flaw, there is no excess. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," he could truly say, as he laid down his earthly ministry, and ascended to exercise his ministrations before the throne. In the retrospect of his labors there was no occasion for self-reproach, no cause for a fault to be found, even by the accuser of the brethren. All was to be joy and rejoicing when he had completed his life-work.

Thus much concerning our Lord. I have only opened the door for you to enter. I wonder whether it will ever be given to us to be able to say, as Christians, in our humbler measure, what he said, as the very Christ in such exalted strains?

II. Let us now use the text IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES.

It ought to be the ambition of every believer here, in a sense more or less extensive, to be able to say, "I have preached righteousness; I have not

refrained my lips; I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy and thy truth."

It is quite certain that many careless Christians will never be able to lay this unction to their heart. In all our churches there is a very large proportion of idle people. I hope they are saved; the Lord knows whether they are or not, but whatever else they are saved from, certainly they are not saved from laziness. We have in the visible church a large proportion of flesh that is not living, or if it is alive it gives very little indication of life. Now, I do like as pastor to be in fellowship with a living church, all alive, and everybody active. Though it may be our happy lot to have a goodly preponderance in this church of living men and women, I know there is a considerable portion of added flesh about it. Albeit, there are some portions of the body which may be said to be ornamental, it is equally true that they also have some distinct service; there is not one of them put there to do nothing. Some Christians seem to think themselves "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever" to the church, and that they have nothing to do in it for the common weal. They must imagine that they are ornaments, for certainly they are of no use, so far as any good offices are concerned. It used to be almost thought that the whole duty of man consisted in taking your sitting, paying your quarter's rent, filling up your place, and listening with more or less attention to the sermons that were preached. As to the idea of everybody doing something for Christ, and the exhortation to them as good soldiers of the cross not to shirk their duty, these people said that it was sheer madness. To do or dare, to labor or suffer in the cause of the Captain of our salvation, was no article of their creed. Sleepy souls, they presently become victims of their own infatuation. As men who habituate themselves to take opium, they grow soporific. Then their Christianity becomes like a dream. It may be they are filled with flattering illusions, but in full many a case they are scared with strange spectres that issue in the short sighs, weak cries, and dismal groans of doubt and fear. Alas for them! they will not be able to say, "I have preached righteousness; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth." Nay, nay; when their conscience is

awakened, they shall have poignant regrets that they have neglected so many glorious opportunities of bringing crowns to Christ.

Nor will cowardly people be able to make this protest. Many Christians are of a retiring disposition, and their retiring disposition is exemplified somewhat in the same way as that of the soldier who felt himself unworthy to stand in the front ranks. He felt that it would be too presumptuous a thing for him to be in front, where the cannon balls were mowing down men on the right hand and on the left, and therefore he would rather be in the van-guard. I always look upon those very retiring and modest people as arrant cowards, and I shall venture to call them so. I ask not every man and woman to rush into the front ranks of service, but I do ask every converted man and woman to take some place in the ranks, and to be prepared to make some sacrifice in that position they choose or think themselves fit to occupy. But ah! there are some who shrink back from any post that demands toil or vigilance. When they were young their ardor was never kindled, the spirit of enterprise was never stirred within them. Had they shown any mettle then, they might have been lion-hearted now; had they done Nothing then, their career of usefulness might have been in full vigor now. But alas for the man upon whom there is the rust of wasted years; he waits, he doubts, he parleys still, and shelters himself under a fictitious humility. Would God I had more courage myself, but I will tell you one thing, I dare not fold my arms, nor dare I hold my tongue; it seems to me so awful a thing not to be doing good, and it seems to me so dastardly a thing to shrink back when opportunities lie in one's path. I do wish that some of you would learn to imitate the character of the godly man -

"Who holds no parley with unmanly fears;
Where duty bids, he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all."

The cowards will not be able to say, "I have preached righteousness: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth."

Nor, again, will spasmodic people be able to adopt this language. There are some people who, if there is a revival, are so marvellously zealous and earnest that we are ready to clap our hands, but all on a sudden they stop. That Sunday-school class they were just getting into right order, but before there was an opportunity to reap the fruit they felt it was not precisely what they were called to. That Young Men's Bible Class—yes, that was a happy thought, the pastor was delighted; but, unfortunately, some little difficulty occurred that you had not foreseen, and that also has fallen through. So it has been in other cases. Know therefore that those who cannot, like the Master, look back upon a continuous and persevering testimony, will not be able to speak with a clear conscience as he did.

But although so many classes of those who profess and call themselves Christians will not be able to take a happy retrospect of their lives, yet there are not wanting those who could do so. I have known men of one talent who without any self-righteousness could say, "I have preached righteousness; I have not regained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth." Dear good men in many a country village whose Dames will never be known to fame have gathered just a few people together and have preached on, on, on for years, and when they come to die in the Lord and rest from their labors, their works will follow them, and their life-service will be as acceptable as the services of, many men with ten times the talents and ten times the scope for their exercise. Perhaps the Master will say to them, "Well done!" with a stronger emphasis than to some who were better known. That poor girl whose only work she could do for Christ was to teach those two little children who were entrusted to her, and that nursery maid with but one gift, and one only, may be able to say, "I have preached righteousness; lo! I have not refrained my lips: I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth." You one-talent servants, you have this within your reach.

And those, too, with an extremely narrow sphere may be able to say this.

It is not, perhaps, the man who can stand and talk to thousands, but it may be you in the family—the housewife, the kitchen maid, the serving-man, or the woman who has been bed-ridden for years, whose only audience will be a few poor neighbors, or perhaps, now and then, a generous friend—it is you within these narrow spheres who may yet be able to say, "I have preached righteousness; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest; I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth." I have sat by a bedside where I have envied the poor woman despite the agonies and pains of body she suffered, because she yet could praise and magnify the lovingkindness revealed to her there.

But, brethren, we may be, able to quote these words, some of us to whom greater talents have been committed. Though we may feel that we have not preached as earnestly as we could have wished; that we have not done our utmost towards those whom we have taught; that in our house-to-house visitation we have not been so earnest with poor souls as we might have been in this respect, for alas! alas! we are all unprofitable servants; yet we can say, "I have preached righteousness; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth."

Fervently do I hope that those of you with the largest opportunities may yet be privileged to make this good profession with all sincerity. I am not afraid for those friends who have but narrow spheres—sometimes I wish that mine were such—I am not afraid for those in humbler fields, but oh, if with such spheres, and such churches as God here and there allots to some of his servants, they can thus give account of their stewardship, it will be grace indeed, and to grace alone will the honor be due. Yet let us hope that we too may be able to say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

III. It is with an overwhelming sense of the importance as well as the moral grandeur of this profession that I repeat it to you again and again; for when we are able to feel this, and to say it humbly and confidently, with good faith and without guile, IT CASTS MUCH COMFORTABLE LIGHT ON MANY SOLEMN subjects.

How awful to remember that every hour there are hundreds of men and women who are dying without Christ. Turn to the bills of mortality of this one city. Be our sentiments ever so charitable, let us judge with the utmost liberality, the dreadful fact fills our mind, and every knell speaks it to our heart, "They go out of this world unforgiven; they go before their Maker's bar without a hope!" I think our hearts would break with the dread recollection of this if we could not say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

And how many deaths there always are among our hearers! What comfort can any Christian who knows you have, if you die unsaved, unless he is able to appeal to God, and say, "My Father, I did all I could to teach that soul the way of salvation; I did all I could to persuade him to accept the Christ of God"?

Dear friends, whenever you see any of your neighbors, your relatives, your acquaintance die, can you forbear to ask yourselves, shall their blood be required at my hands? Are your skirts stained? Are there no blood drops there? Come, look them down, and say if you can ponder with a clear conscience the fact of a sinner dying in a Christless state without your being able to say, "I have done all I could to bring that soul to Christ"?

And as for that dreadful outlook—the hereafter of the lost—would that we could believe the softer theories which some so eagerly embrace! We would, but dare not. We believe that those who die in their sins when they pass from this life into the next, shall find that second death to be no extinction of existence, but an eternity of sin and of misery, Ah! how can

any of us bear to think of this if we feel that we are morally responsible for any one soul that is damned? Yet are we so, I speak but the bare truth, until we have delivered ourselves from that responsibility by faithful earnestness. Is there a Cain here who says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I shall not appeal to your most sympathetic soul, but leave you to your Judge. But to the Christian I say, "No man liveth to himself." When you think of a spirit in despair, cast out for ever from the presence of his God and from the glory of his power, may you, friends, be able to say, "Great God, though I understand not thy ways, for thy judgments are a great deep; yet I warned the sinner, I admonished him to lay hold on Christ, and if he perished it was not for want of preaching to or for praying over; my warnings and tears were never spared. I did what was in me to prevent his ruin." Put in that light, we may look at least with some degree of serenity upon the doctrine of divine sovereignty. I must confess that the sovereignty of God is a great mountain whose top we cannot scale. I often marvel at the coldness with which some men talk of the sovereignty of God, as though it were of small concern whether men were lost or saved. They seem to take these things as easily as if they were only talking of blocks of wood, or fields filled with tares. I do not think that we can equitably plead the divine sovereignty as a counterpart to our futile efforts, till we can say, "I have done all that was possible to bring that soul to God, I have prayed over him and wept over him, and now if he perish I must believe that this man wilfully rejected Christ, that his iniquities are upon his own head, and that in him, as a vessel of wrath, God will get glory as well as in vessels of mercy.

The doom of the heathen is a subject in like manner of which it were too painful for any of us to speak unless we can say, "I have, as far as lieth in me, sought to do something for them." This is a thing about which we ought not to think with any ease, unless we feel that we would fain save them, and give them the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and to carry out this, our cherished purpose, we will do the best we can.

The uprisings of error often cause us dismay. Every now and then we see some old form of error spring up that was stamped out, as we supposed, in the days of our ancestors. Not unfrequently a foul old heresy is brought out as a brand new discovery, and all the world admires it, and wonders

whence it came. Now, whenever these old heresies crop up, and are brought out as new, and lead men astray, it is a great comfort when you and I are able to say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." Let men propagate whatever errors they choose, if we have no share in misleading the people, and are continually engaged in instructing them, we may wrap ourselves in our integrity, and lay the matter before our God to vindicate our righteous cause.

The apathy of the church, which has lasted so long, is truly disheartening. With many a deep-drawn sigh do we bewail it. O that we could get the church to awake! You might sound the trump of the archangel before you could rouse full many to the appalling destitution by reason of which the people perish for lack of knowledge. Even the cries of lost souls, and the shrieks of the sinners in this Metropolis, rushing headlong to the pit that is bottomless, do not startle some of us. Yes, but if we can say, "I have preached righteousness; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation," then we may take courage to work nobly and to persevere under terrible difficulties. Though for awhile we should see no conversions; and though for a season the ploughshare should break against the rock, or against even the very adamant itself, yet still if we can say, "I have preached righteousness, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth"—we are exonerated from blame; nay, more, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in the testimony we have delivered. Yes, brethren, I apprehend that amongst the sweetest dying-bed recollections, and amongst the minor comforts, in taking our farewell of the world as it is, not the least will be that of having been constant and faithful all our lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Give me a few minutes longer while I turn this sermon into the special direction which it was intended to take. I do not know that there are

many more "young men" present to-night than there are usually at our week-day lecture. I generally find when I preach a sermon for any of our societies it so happens that everybody connected with the society seems to stay away. They would be willing enough to come if it were for the Primitive Methodist, or any other denomination. They are in love with everybody else except their own relations. I do not say this by way of censure, but surely if there be a people under heaven without a grain of clannishness it is that denomination to which we belong. If it had been a sermon for Jews or Turks the building would have been crowded; but as it is for ourselves it does not signify. However, if they are not present for whom it was intended, they may probably read the sermon; so I will add a few words expressly for them.

Young man, it may be that you are one of those who ought to become a missionary; it may be that you ought to dedicate your life to some work for God either at home or abroad. Well, if it be so, do not mistake your path in life. We do not urge you to rush into the ministry, much less into the foreign ministry, unless you are called to it, for that is the very last place for a man to be in who is not called to the work. Act as a Christian young man for once in your life by asking whether it may not be your vocation to bear the cross of Christ into lands where as yet it is unknown. Surely, whatever answer you may feel called upon to give you will be ready for it. You will at least be willing to give yourself up to the very hardest form of service to which you maybe called. I should like you, then, to be sure about this on the outset lest you should in the turn of the road miss the path and so not be able to say at the last: "I have preached righteousness; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." I should not like you, if meant by the gifts of God for a great missionary, to die a millionaire. I should not like it, were you fitted to be a missionary, that you should drivel down into a king; for what are all your kings, what are all your nobles, what are all your stars, what are all your garters, what are all your diadems and your tiaras, when you put them all together, compared with the dignity of winning souls for Christ, with the special honor of building for Christ, not on another man's foundation, but preaching Christ's gospel in regions yet

far beyond? I reckon him to be a man honored of men who can do a foreign work for Christ, but he who shall go farthest in self-annihilation and in the furtherance of the glory of Christ, he shall be a king among men, though he wear no crown that carnal eyes can see. Ask yourselves the question then, Christian young men, whether that is your vocation.

Should it happen that you feel convinced this is not your calling, remember you may still in your daily business be able to say these words. Some of my friends here never will be able to say them. They have been church members for twenty years, and during all those twenty years they have not preached righteousness, they have refrained their lips, they have hidden his righteousness, they have not declared his faithfulness and his salvation, they have concealed his lovingkindness and his truth. You, young men and women, have an opportunity of doing what is gone from them. Though they might publish Christ abroad from now till they die, there are twenty years they must ever regret and look back upon as waste land for which they will have to give an account at the last. You have, it may be, those twenty years before you, and it is a noble thing to begin working young, and so long as ever you live to go on building on that work. I have heard it said that you should not put young converts to work for which they are not qualified. Ah! say I, put the youngsters in; they will never learn to swim if they are not put in at once. Why should you, young men and women, be received as church members at all unless you are prepared to do something for Christ? Work becomes you as well as worship. I mean, of course, if not disqualified by sickness, and even then there is a sphere for testimony. You can make a sick bed a pulpit to preach Christ, while by patience and resignation you show forth his praise. No one should join a church without seeking out something to do for the glory of Jesus Christ. Do start your lives, young men, with high purpose, that you may close them with holy cheer.

In order to do this, you will need much more zeal than you are likely to possess by making resolutions, and much more grace than you will ordinarily get without much self-denial and devout consecration. You have need to be baptised into the Holy Ghost and in fire. I do like those converts who are thoroughly purged from the corruptions of the world, and thoroughly converted to God, every faculty of the mind and every

member of the body being surrendered to Christ, all of them as instruments of righteousness. We seem to get some people who are not half converted. I hope their hearts are converted, but the effect is not to drain their pockets or to set their hands to work.

You need, dear friends, to go much to Jesus Christ, to live much in communion with him, for this life-service has many expenses, and you have no ready money. You must go to the great exchequer of the King of kings and draw from its inexhaustible treasury. Do so. Do resolve to live lavishly in the service of Christ, and the divine storehouse will supply all that you need, be your ambition as large as it may.

There are habits, it is true, to be acquired which must be the result of growth, for they cannot be matured without the manifold experience of sunshine and shower, summer and winter, heat and cold; to all of these you will be exposed. But when once you have yielded yourselves to those divine influences which foster life, you will prove that by all these things men live. To this I can bear you witness. Drudgery ceases to be irksome when the ruling passion of laboring for the Lord has begun to ferment in your breasts, and the sweet assurance that your labor is not in vain in the Lord has quickened a sacred enthusiasm in your spirit. It may be that in your apprenticeship you have to encounter many hardships, but it shall be that in the full discharge of your vocation you will reap a harvest of joy.

God help you never to refrain from preaching the truth, never to withhold any part of it; may you be clear in all these matters as before the living God.

Oh! yours will be cheerful dying if you familiarise yourselves with such noble living as this. You will have a welcome entrance into heaven if such has been your life on earth. The pastor, when he can preach no more the gospel, will say, "I preached when there was time, and now I will sing when sermons all are o'er." You Sunday-school teachers cannot teach any longer, but your Sabbath recreations below will prove the sweet prelude to your Sabbatic felicities above. Tract distributors, now that all your work is over, you will say, "I did but distribute the leaves of the tree of life for the healing of the people, but now I feed myself on all its luscious

fruits."

I do not say that rewards are given as mere rewards of merit, but this I do assuredly know, there are rewards given in respect of service through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I pray you seek the prize. So run that you may obtain it. May you be able to say, "While I was down below where service could be done for my Master -

"In works which perfect saints above,
And holy angels cannot do,"

with all my might I labored to excel, and now I enter into the bliss of him who helped and strengthened me, who revealed his grace in me, and counted me worthy to put me into some part of the ministry of his church."

God bless you, dear friends, and make you earnest to tell to others those things he has made known unto you, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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The Mediator - The Interpreter

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. - Exodus 20:18-20

The giving of the law was glorious with pomp of power. The blaze of splendor was intended to impress the people with its sense of the authority of the law, by letting them see the greatness of the Lawgiver. It was meet that with great solemnity the law of the Most High should be proclaimed, that Israel might have a holy reverence for its commands. This terrible grandeur may also have been intended to suggest to the people the condemning force of the law. Not with sweet sound of harp, nor with the song of angels, was the law given; but with an awful voice from amid a terrible burning. Not in itself is the law condemnatory; for if there could have been life by any law, it would have been by this law: but by reason of man's sinfulness, the law worketh wrath; and to indicate this, it was made public with accompaniments of fear and death: the battalions of Omnipotence marshaled upon the scene; the dread artillery of God, with awful salvos, adding emphasis to every syllable. The tremendous scene at Sinai was also in some respects a prophecy, if not a rehearsal, of the Day of Judgment. If the giving of the law, while it was yet unbroken, was attended with such a display of awe-inspiring power, what will that day be when the Lord shall, with flaming fire, take vengeance on those who have willfully broken His law?

To us, that day at Horeb is a type of the action of the law in our nature: thus doth the law deal with our consciences and hearts. If you have ever felt the law spoken home to you by the Spirit of God, you have heard great thunderings within. You have been forced to cry with Habakkuk, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness

entered into my bones." And God intended it to be so, that you might look to the flames which Moses saw, and abandon forever all hope of acceptance by the works of the law.

The glorious majesty which surrounded the institution of the law is not, however, our subject at this time. I shall handle the text in another manner. The Lord God, in this instance, came as near to man as was possible; yea, He came nearer than man could bear. Until a Mediator was found, the approach of God brought to man nothing but terror. Although under no great apprehension of guilt at the time—for they had only then heard the law for the first time—yet the people removed, and stood afar off, and cried out, "If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die." God was near them in special condescension; for Moses said, "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" Yet this memorable manifestation caused them alarm. Does it ever happen now that the Lord comes to His people in a way which dismays them? I think so. It is not really so, that God will fight against His people; but, to our apprehension, so it seems at certain times. Of these tempestuous manifestations of the Lord to our hearts I am going to speak at this time; and may the heavenly Comforter use it to the spiritual profit of his tried family!

Our first head is this: the Lord has ways of communing with His people which fill them with fear; but, secondly, this endears the Mediator to them; and thirdly, this Mediator teaches them to interpret wisely the Lord's darker dealings with them. When we have thought upon these things, we shall close by saying to you that this sacred art of interpretation should be practiced by us now.

1. First, let me remind you that **THE LORD HAS WAYS OF COMMUNING WITH HIS PEOPLE WHICH FILL THEM WITH FEAR.** You must not think that the Lord always appears to His people in robes of light: sometimes He enrobes Himself in clouds and darkness. His paths drop fatness, and yet He often hath His way in the whirlwind. True, He manifests Himself to us as He doth not unto the world; but in the brightest of those manifestations He may make us fear as we enter into the cloud. It is not every revelation of God which inspires the saints with

joy; for in many cases it is far otherwise, even as with Daniel, who said, "I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." This experience may not have occurred to some of you; it is, however, known to many of the people of God, who have had long dealings with Him. If any of you do not understand this matter, lay the sermon by till you do.

Sometimes the near approach of the Lord fills His people with apprehension and alarm; and this sure to be the case when His coming includes a close application of the law to their hearts. We used to talk of "law-work" in days which are not past, and are by moderns looked upon with contempt; and, my brethren, our talk was not without good reason, for there is such a work, and it ministers greatly to our good. Certain servants of God, who had experienced this law-work to a very deep degree, fell into the error of regarding a marked measure of it as absolutely necessary to every child of God. We will avoid that evil, for it was a grievous cause of uncharitableness; but we will not conceal the fact that many souls, in coming to God, and in God's coming to them, have been made to feel a hewing and burning work from the law of God. The law has rent them in pieces, because they themselves have rent in pieces. The law has wrought in them a sense of bondage, burden, and despair. Even after we have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel, after we have a full assurance that our iniquities are put away, the Lord sometimes works in us a further work of the law, in which He makes us to see its exactness, its spirituality, strictness, and infinite compass. It is no little thing to see how the law judges the thoughts, desires, and imaginations of the heart. As the plummet of the holy law is held up, we see how out of the perpendicular we are, and we are therefore distressed. Brethren, when I have carefully considered, and inwardly perceived, the holiness of God's law, I have felt as though the sharp edge of a saber had been drawn across my heart, and I have shivered and trembled. Though the law did not actually cut or wound, yet its very presence, in all the keenness of its two edges, has made me shudder. So pure, so just, so uncompromising is the law of God, that when it is really understood, it makes us quail, and brings us to our knees. The law searches to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow, and it is a discerner of the

thoughts and intents of the heart. Its excessive light strikes us, like Saul of Tarsus, to the earth, and makes us cry for mercy, When you begin to judge yourself, and estimate your actions by its infallible rule, you cease from boasting, and are filled with self-aborrence. I believe it to be one of the best means to growth in humility, to be well instructed in the law, in the force and power of it. No man knows the brightness of the gospel till he understands the blackness of those clouds which surround the law of the Lord. Much of the shallowness of current religion is the result of a failure to apprehend the demands of divine justice, and a want of clear perception of the heinousness of disobedience. Let but God set up the throne of His law in your heart, and make you feel the power of that law in any one item of your daily conduct, much more in the whole circle of your life, and you will feel as the Israelites did when they could not abide the presence of the Most High.

The Lord also may most truly and profitably come to a man, and in His coming may unveil to him the depravity of his nature. If any man could see his own heart as it is by nature, he would be driven mad: the sight of our disease is not to be borne unless we also see the remedy. When the Lord permits the fountains of the great deep of our depravity to be broken up, then are the tops of the hills of our self-sufficiency drowned in fear. When we see what we are capable of being, apart from divine grace, our spirit sinks. When believers are allowed to see how much there is still about them that is akin to hell, when sin becomes exceeding sinful, and we feel that the taint of it has defiled our whole nature, then it is that we are horrified and appalled. What an abyss of evil is within our bosoms! Probably some of you know very little about it. I pray that you may never discover it by its painful results; but I desire that you may believe it, so as to take a firmer grip upon the doctrines of grace, and exercise greater watchfulness over your hearts. Sin which dwelleth in us is no enemy that we can safely despise. Even in one single member of our fallen nature, namely, the tongue, there dwells a world iniquity: "It defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." What poor creatures we are! The best of men are men at the best; and, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, and the power of divine grace, hell itself does not contain greater monsters of iniquity than you and I might become. Within the magazine of our hearts there is powder enough to

destroy us in an instant, if omnipotent grace did not prevent. When this is distinctly perceived, we are troubled before the presence of the thrice holy God. Standing before the Lord, we cry with the prophet, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." This is a true manifestation of God; but it is by no means a cause of comfort to us.

The Lord may also come to us, and lead us, by His light, to a discovery of actual sin in our life. We may sit here, and think ourselves very good; but if so, we are in the dark. If a beam of divine light is now entering our mind, our apprehension of our own character will be changed, The sins of a single day, if fully known in all their bearings, would drive us to despair, apart from the infinite grace of God. Apart from the divine plan of justifying the ungodly in Christ Jesus, any one hour would shut us up in hell. Beloved, think a minute of your omissions during the past week, how much you might have done, and ought to have done, which you have not done. It is on the side of omission that some of us are most vulnerable. Honestly looking down upon our lives, we may be able to say that we do not know of any overt offense against God, and for this we bless the divine grace; but when we come to think of what we have left undone, we feel like a traveler who, when crossing a glacier, suddenly sees an unfathomable crevasse opening just before him, and widening fast as he looks down into its blue depths of frozen death. Oh the sadness of that confession, "We have left undone the things which we ought to have done!" There is as much of lamentation in it as in the cry which precedes it—"We have done those things which we ought not to have done." When we think of all our omissions, how can we stand before the Lord?

Think again of your failure in what you have done. Brethren, you have prayed this week. I only refer to this week; for seven days are more than enough for my purpose. You have prayed: you have kept your regular times for devotion. But how have you prayed? With fervency? With careful consideration? With concentrated mind? Brethren, have you prayed with faith? With importunity? Surely, each of these questions must cut into you like a whip of wire. If you are as I am, you cannot answer to this examination without wincing. Why, even in the one matter of prayer, the sins of our holy things may shrivel us up before the burning eye of the Lord, who searcheth the heart. Your Bible also: you have read

your Bible, of course you have; but with what attention? with what intention? with what devout belief? with what resolve to feel its force, and obey its commands? Have we not sinned against this Book enough to cast us into the lowest hell in the space of four-and-twenty hours?

When the Lord begins to take a man to pieces by coming near to him, another matter will often trouble him, and that is his falseness, even were, in a measure, he is sincere. You prayed in public, and expressed most proper emotions and desires; but were they really your own emotions and desires, or did you steal the expressions of another man? You preached about the things of God; did your testimony come from your heart? Do you act in accordance therewith? You, my Christian friend, expressed yourself strongly, but, in your heart of hearts, can you justify the expression? Do we not often go further with our lips than we go with our hearts? Is not this, to some degree, hypocrisy? Must it not be very displeasing to God that we should use words towards Him which we have not weighed, and which are not fully true, as we use them? O brethren, if the Lord sets out secret sins in the light of His countenance, we too, like Israel, shall start and shrink from the presence of the Lord.

If we add to these apprehensions of our own unworthiness a sense of the divine glory, then we cower down and hide ourselves in the dust. When a peal of thunder rends the heavens, and is followed up by a crash, as if the house would fall about your ears, while flames of fire blind you with their excessive brilliance, you feel that the Lord is terrible out of His holy places. God's nearness has inspired you with an awe which has been shaded with dread. The one attribute of power suffices to make the strongest believer feel that Jehovah is to be feared above all gods. But, my brethren, if properly apprehended, God's omniscience inspires an equal awe, while His goodness, His love, and His holiness are even more overwhelming when fully realized. One might possibly stand with unblanched cheek in the presence of divine power; but when the Lord reveals His holiness, a man might far sooner gaze into the sun than look into the face of God. Even His love is as the fire of a furnace to our unloveliness. At the sight of our God we say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The nearness of God to

sinful man is a killing thing, and those who have known it will confess that it is so.

What, my brethren, if, in addition to this, there should come to you a succession of alarming providences? These Israelites not only knew that God was near, but they heard the thunder, they saw the lightning, they looked into the thick darkness, they marked the mountain altogether on a smoke, and by all this they were horror stricken. Has it come to pass that the lord has laid many blows upon His servant? Has He taken away the desire of thine eye with a stroke? What if there be one, two, three little graves in yonder cemetery? What if love and friend have forsaken thee? What if thy business fail thee, and if thy health fail thee also? What if thy spirits sink? Oh, then, indeed I marvel not that thou art scared with forebodings of still worse calamities, and art ready to give up the ghost! Now art thou afraid because of the nearness of the great God, who is trying thee.

If to this be added an apprehension of speedy death, as in the case of the Israelites, who cried, "This great Fire will consume us"; then, indeed, it is difficult to remain calm and hopeful. It will be no trifle to stand before the face of the Eternal. Since heaven and earth shall flee from thy face, and rocks shall melt, and stars shall fall, and the moon shall be turned black as sackcloth of hair, who shall stand before Thee, thou great and glorious One!

Thus have I spoken to you upon the fact that our God does sometimes commune with His people in a way that fills them with overwhelming dread; let us advance to our next theme.

II. Secondly, ALL THIS ENDEARS TO US THE MEDIATOR. The Israelites turned at once to Moses. They had already murmured against him: they afterwards said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him"; once they took up stones to stone him; but now they are of another mind. Terrified by the presence of God, they cry to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord Our God shall speak unto thee." The Mediator is everything to them now.

They had found out by experience the necessity for an interposer; and they had not made a mistake either, for God Himself said they had well spoken what they had said. There is in God's esteem an urgent need for a Mediator. When we sang just now—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind,"

we did not give utterance to morbid or ungrounded fear. It is so in truth; and the next verse is accurate also:

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

It is a matter of fact that we need a Mediator; and these people were driven to see it. Brethren, be sensible of your sin, and you will no more attempt to approach an absolute Deity than you would walk into a volcano's mouth. You will feel that you need a sacrifice, a propitiation, a Saviour, a Mediator. Perceive the infinite difference between your nothingness and the divine infinity, and you will feel that there is no drawing nigh to the Eternal but by Jesus Christ. How can we, of ourselves, draw nigh unto God? It is wisdom to say unto the Well-beloved, "We pray thee, stand between the Lord and us." When your trembling is upon you, when your heart faints with awe, then you perceive how much you need an Advocate. Bless God that He has appointed one to be High Priest for you, who can safely go into the thick darkness, and stand in the presence of the Thrice Holy Majesty, and represent you without fail.

Moses was well fitted to be the type of the true Mediator of the gospel covenant. He was himself in great favor with God, so that the Lord hearkened to his voice. Behold his dauntless courage in the presence of God, and, at the same time, his intense tenderness towards the people.

Mark his faithfulness Godward as a servant over all his Master's house, and then note his self-sacrifice for Israel, so that he once said, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." He offered himself to be a sacrifice for them. But, O beloved, consider Jesus Christ our Mediator. Where is the like of Him? He is man, like ourselves; in all respects a sufferer, poor, needy, knowing even the pangs of death; and therefore He can lay His hand upon us with a warm, brotherly love. But then He is "God over all, blessed forever," equal with the Most High, the Well-beloved of the Father; and thus He can give His hand to the eternal God, and so link our humanity with God. I feel most safe in trusting all my concerns with that dear Advocate, that Interpreter, one of a thousand. O Jesus, who can rival thee?

"God, and yet man, thou art,
True God, true man, art thou;
Of man, and of man's earth a part,
One with us thou art now."

Into the thick darkness our Mediator went. Forth from it He came. He interprets to us the language of the Eternal, and He takes our petitions up to heaven, and translates them into the tongue of the Holy One, so that God hears us and accepts us in the Well-beloved.

I know that some of you imagine that you would believe the gospel if God were to speak to you out of the skies. Do not wish for it. The terror of His voice would overwhelm you, but it would not convert you. The Israelites were happy with a Mediator, and so will you be. If you hear not Jesus, neither would you hear though God should thunder. A Mediator is provided. Could you, with all your wit, suggest a better Mediator than Christ? I entreat you, accept the gospel in Christ, and come to God through Him. As there is no other way, so assuredly there could be no better way. If you had all wisdom and all power in your hands with which to make a way of acceptance with God, could you devise one more pleasant, more simple, more perfect, more adequate, more exactly what you need? Come, then, dear heart, come at once to God in Christ; and remember, Jesus says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

III. Now I come to my third point, upon which I would lay stress: THE MEDIATOR TEACHES US TO INTERPRET WISELY THE LORD'S DEALINGS. Moses became an interpreter of the Lord's terrible appearance to the trembling people, and he put a cheering construction upon it. You, to whom God has been speaking in a way of terror, and I know there are such here, for I have had to comfort them; you have a Mediator to explain to you the ways of the Lord. Be ready to learn the lesson which He teaches you: it is this—"Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." These rough dealings of God with your conscience, with your body, with your family, and with your estate, are not for your destruction, but for your instruction: not for your killing, but for your healing. As He came in tempest and thunder to teach the children of Israel, so has He come to you. If God is teaching you, He cannot mean to destroy you: the law does not provide a schoolmaster for a convict who is to be hanged tomorrow. The discipline in God's house, however severe it may be, is a sure proof of love. We educate sons, and not enemies. The Lord is teaching you what you are, and what He is. If He had meant to destroy you, He would not have showed you such things as these, If a criminal must needs die, we do not put him through a rehearsal of the pains of death. No, no, there would be no use in such a course-it would be sheer cruelty, and depend upon it, the Lord will not show you His own greatness merely to make you miserable, nor reveal to you your own ruin merely to drive you to despair. He does not afflict willingly. Infinite love dictates the apparent severity with which He afflicts your conscience. You are being judged here, that you may not be judged hereafter with the ungodly; you are now made to abhor yourself, that the Lord may not abhor you in the day of the judgment of the wicked.

The Mediator here explains to trembling Israel that God had come to test them. We all need testing, do we not? Would you like to cross a railway bridge if it was reported to you that it had never been tested by a train? When the first Exhibition was built, I remember how they marched troops along the galleries to test them. Do you not desire to have your hope for eternity tested? The Lord draws near to us in ways which inspire our fears because He would test us. What is the result of the test? Do you

not feel your own weakness? Does not this drive you to the strong for strength? You feel your own sinfulness; and you fly to the Lord Jesus for righteousness. Testing has a practically good effect in slaying self-confidence, and driving you to put your confidence where God would have it rest.

When God came to these people in cloud and storm, it was to impress them, to put depth into their thought and feeling. We are filled with fear at times on purpose that our religion may not be a flimsy, superficial thing. Our tendency is to slur spiritual work. We easily get to be trifling and careless. Levity in religion is an easily-besetting sin with many; but when we are made to see the plague of our heart, and the awful majesty of God, that fear of the Lord which endureth forever soon drives out the triflers from the temple. Fear plows deep, and then faith sows, and love reaps; but godly fear must lead the way. Godly fear makes prayer to be fervent prayer; it makes the hearing of the word to be quite another thing from listening to the chatter of the world's vanity. Holy awe of God makes preaching to me to be the burden of the Lord. It may be light work to your men of genius and learning; but to me it is life and death work. Often have I thought that I would rather take a whipping with a cat-o'-nine-tails than preach again. How can I answer for it at the last great day unless I am faithful? "Who is sufficient for these things?" When I have felt the dread responsibility of souls which may be lost or saved by the word they hear, the fact that God is so near has made my flesh creep, and made me wish that I had never ventured on so bold a life-work. How shall I give in an honorable account of my commission at last? Beloved, God, by such apprehensions as these, is deepening in us the work of His grace, making us more alive to our position, and better fitting us for it. It is all in love that He allows our awe of Him to darken into dread, our sense of weakness to deepen into faintness of heart.

Above all, it is explained to us that the dealings of the Lord are meant to keep us from sin. What does David say? "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Does not Hezekiah tell us that by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit? We are so worldly, that we need our nest to be stirred to keep us on the wing. Six days we are taken up with business, mixing with those who despise

heavenly things; and we should come to think lightly of them too, were it not that God comes to us in His dread majesty and makes us think, consider, and fear. This holy trembling drives off the shams which else would grow over us like mold on decaying matter. Our inward tempests clear the air, and keep us from stagnation and the pestilence which breeds in it. God's love will not suffer us to settle down in mere pretenses, and so glide into gross sins: He empties us from vessel to vessel, and thus discovers our evil sediment, and cleanses us from it. Many people, when they hear a sermon, say, "How did you enjoy it?" If you always enjoy sermons, the minister is not a good steward. He is not acting wisely who deals out nothing but sweets. God's people need that the word should at times be medicine to them, and we do not enjoy medicine. The word is as fire, and the iron does not like the fire; yet it is needful to its melting. It is as a hammer, and the rock does not love the hammer; yet it is needful to its breaking. Experiences which are painful may be therefore all the more profitable. That which makes us hate sin is a thing to be valued. I pray you, after this manner read the dispensations of God with you. When He chides He loves; when He chastens He shows fatherly affection; and when He scourges He receives into peculiar familiarity. Do not therefore run away from a chastening God. If fear drives thee away, let faith draw thee near. He means thy highest good. Never doubt it. Steadfastly believe that His heart loves even if His face frowns.

IV. I close by asking you to PRACTICE THIS ART OF SACRED INTERPRETATION. Whensoever thy Lord speaketh with thee in thunder and writeth bitter things against thee, by faith read between the lines, and after the example of Moses, the mediator, put a comfortable construction upon rough words.

Faith sees many reasons for refusing to read as fear would suggest: here is one of them. When the Lord spoke to these people with the voice of trumpet and thunder, He did not speak in anger after all, but in love; for His first words set the key-note. Here they are: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of Bondage." What gracious words! What happy memories they arouse! What loving-kindnesses they record! It is true that your Lord has taken your wife or your child away, or has made you sick, or has tried your soul

by the hidings of His face; but it is not an enemy who has done this. It is your God who has done it, even the same God that delivered you from the power of sin, and made you free in Christ Jesus. The Lord of love has chastened you, and chastened you in love. Learn Job's philosophy, and say from your heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Think of His former loving-kindness. Consider what He has done for you through the Lord Jesus and His death on your behalf. He brought you out of the bondage of your natural depravity, and He set you free from the Pharaoh of your evil passions. He has washed you from your sins, and brought you through the Red Sea of your fears by His own right hand. Can you not believe that He means well to you? What if He does speak roughly; may He not do so without being distrusted? He is the same God: He changeth not, and therefore you are not consumed: can you not rely on His faithful love? Will you take good from His hand, and will you not also take evil? He who humbles us is our covenant God, bound to us by His promise and His oath. He gave His Son to redeem us, He cannot now do us a displeasure: let Him do as seemeth Him good. We give Him carte blanche to do what He wills, for His love is beyond dispute. He died that I might live, and now it is impossible for Him to mean anything other than good towards me. I sometimes think that if I never had a gleam of love from His face again, I would live on that one text: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Salvation from sin and death and hell should make us interpret every trying revelation, and every afflicting providence, and every painful experience, by the key of His ancient love; and so interpreted, every sorrowful line is sweetened.

Notice next, dear friends, in your process of interpretation, that God cannot mean to destroy us, since this would be contrary to His word. He hath said, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Can "everlasting life" be destroyed or die? How, then, could it be "everlasting life?" Can God declare it everlasting, and yet end it? Yes, He has given us everlasting life in His dear Son; and, what is more, He has laid up that life in Christ; for "your life is hid with Christ in God." Can He destroy the life which He has hid in His own immortal Son? Does not Jesus say, "Because I live ye shall live also?" What are you afraid of, then? God cannot destroy

you. He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." What if He speaks severely to thee, it is that He may deliver thee from sinning. Wilt thou not bless Him? He will not curse thee, for He hath blessed thee in His Son, and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Bow thyself, and take from thy Father's hand whatever He appoints.

Remember, that you are not, after all, in the same condition as Israel at the foot of Horeb. Though I have drawn a sort of parallel this morning, yet there remains a wonderful difference. "Ye are not come unto the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." Ye are not come to a terrible voice which mortal ears could not endure. "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." You are come to the land of pardon, peace, and promise: you are in the home of life, love and liberty. You have come to the Lord of adoption, acceptance and glory. Wherefore, do not, I pray you, construe the acts and dealings of God with your soul after the mean and slavish manner which unbelief suggests to you, but believe your God in the teeth of all you hear, or see, or feel. The Lord hath come to prove thee, to put His fear before thy face, and to keep thee from sin; wherefore look for sweet fruit from the bitter tree of thy present grief, and flee not from thy God.

Again, dear friend, here is our great comfort: we have a Mediator. When God dealeth with thee by the law, or by His rod, or by His searching Spirit, thou art apt to say, "How can I endure His hand?" Hide behind the Mediator. Let Jesus be thy shield, even as He is the Lord's Anointed. Beseech the Lord God not to look on thee as thou art in thyself, but to see thee in Christ Jesus. Say

Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus's wounds on me.

Take care that thou lookest through Jesus' wounds on God; and if thou dost, thou wilt see in Him infinite love and boundless kindness. The glory

of God in the face of Jesus Christ is unutterable love. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him", and when they fear Him most, His pity goes out to them in streams of tenderness. If thy God use the knife on thee, it is to cut out a deadly cancer. If thy God break thee, and grind thee, it is to get away thy bran, and make thee as the fine flour of the meat-offering. He may seem to slay thee, but by this He makes thee live. Though He slay thee, still trust thou in Him. Never believe anything which would militate against the truth of His love, or the wisdom or the tenderness of it. Cling to Him when He frowns. The closer thou canst cling the less thou wilt feel the blows of His hand when He chastens. A faith which believes when it smarts will soon have done with the rod. If thou wilt have nothing but good to say of God, He will take thee out of the fire, for it is evident that thou dost not need more of it. A full and firm belief in God when He seems to be against us, is a grand mark of sanctification. To be able to spell out "love" when it is written in cruciform characters, shows a high state of spiritual education.

And now, beloved, if you can take the Lord in this way, henceforth and forever believing in His love, and never staggering through unbelief, thou wilt glorify thy God and get good to thyself in every way. If thou believest, then thou wilt be strong; for faith is the backbone of the spiritual man. If thou believest, thou wilt love, and love is the very heart of the spiritual man. Believing and loving, thou wilt endure with patience, and thy patience shall be a crown to thee. Believing, loving, and enduring, thou shalt become equipped for every holy service, and in that service thou shalt acquire more and more of likeness to thy Lord, till when thou hast endured to the full, thou shalt be in all points a brother of Him who is the Firstborn. Like Him, thou shalt be able to go into the thick darkness, and have that communion with God which only they can know who have felt the consuming fire passing through them again and again, and burning up that corruption of the flesh which makes God to be a terror to men. Like our Mediator, may we be made to plead with God for men, and with men for God. May we go up into the mount and see God and eat and drink; and then come down with faces shining with the heavenly light. God give us thus to have a Mediator, to interpret our God through a Mediator, and then to grow like our Mediator by the work of his own Spirit.

I have said a great deal that must be very terrible to ungodly men, since it even tries the holiest. O my hearers, if you are unconverted, I do not suppose that the terrors of the Lord, even though they make you fear, will work any lasting good in you; for I remember that those very people who trembled at Sinai were found, in a very few weeks, madly dancing before a golden calf, and saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of Egypt." Fear alone will work no saving or sanctifying effect on the heart. It plows, but it does not sow. In the child of God, mixed with faith, fear becomes a holy tonic, a salutary medicine; but, as for you who have cause for fear, there is something else for you. Flee to the Mediator, trust in Christ Jesus, who stands between man and God, look unto Him at once, and looking you shall live. To our adorable Mediator be glory forever and ever. Amen, and Amen.

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The Meek And Lowly One

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. - Matthew 11:28-30

THE single sentence which I have selected for my text consists of these words: - "I am meek and lowly in heart." These words might be taken to have three distinct bearings upon the context. They may be regarded as being *the lesson to be taught*: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." One great lesson of the gospel is to teach us to be meek - to put away our high and angry spirits, and to make us lowly in heart. Peradventure, this is the meaning of the passage - that if we will but come to Christ's school, he will teach us the hardest of all lessons, - how to be

meek and lowly in heart. Again; other expositors might consider this sentence to signify, that is *the only Spirit in which a man can learn of Jesus*, - the Spirit which is necessary if we would become Christ's scholars. We can learn nothing, even of Christ himself, while we hold our heads up with pride, or exalt ourselves with self-confidence. We must be meek and lowly in heart, otherwise we are totally unfit to be taught by Christ. Empty vessels may be filled; but vessels that are full already can receive no more. The man who knows his own emptiness can receive abundance of knowledge, and wisdom, and grace, from Christ; but he who glories in himself is not in a fit condition to receive anything from God. I have no doubt that both of these interpretations are true, and might be borne out by the connection. It is the *lesson of Christ's school* - it is the *spirit* of Christ's disciples. But I choose, rather, this morning, to regard these words as being *a commendation of the Teacher himself*. "Come unto *me* and learn; for I am meek and lowly in heart." As much as to say, "I can teach, and you will not find it hard to learn of me." In fact, the subject of this morning's discourse is briefly this: the gentle, lovely character of Christ should be a high and powerful inducement to sinners to come to Christ. I intend so to use it: first of all, noticing *the two qualities* which Christ here claims for himself. He is "*meek*;" and then he is "*lowly in heart*;" and after we have observed these two things, I shall come to *push the conclusion home*. Come unto him, all ye that are labouring and are heavy laden; come unto him, and take his yoke upon you; for he is meek and lowly in heart.

I. First, then, I am to consider THE FIRST QUALITY WHICH JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS. He declares that he is "MEEK."

Christ is no egotist; he takes no praise to himself. If ever he utters a word in self-commendation, it is not with that object; it is with another design, namely that he may entice souls to come to him. Here, in order to exhibit this meekness, I shall have to speak of him in several ways.

1. First, Christ is meek, as opposed to the *ferocity* of spirit manifested by zealots and bigots. Take, for a prominent example of the opposite of meekness, the false prophet Mahomet. The strength of his cause lies in the fact, that he is *not* meek. He presents himself before those whom he

claims as disciples, and says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am neither meek, nor lowly in heart; I will have no patience with you; there is my creed, or there is the scimitar - death or conversion, whichever you please." The moment the Mahometan religion withdrew that very forcible argument of decapitation or impalement, it stayed in its work of conversion, and never progressed; for the very strength of the false prophet lays in the absence of any meekness. How opposite this is to Christ! Although he hath a right to demand man's love and man's faith, yet he comes not into the world to demand it with fire and sword. His might is under persuasion; his strength is quiet forbearance, and patient endurance; his mightiest force is the sweet attraction of compassion and love. He knoweth nothing of the ferocious hosts of Mahomet; he bids none of us draw our sword to propagate the faith, but saith, "Put up thy sword into its scabbard; they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." "My kingdom is not of this world, else might my servants fight." Nay, Mahomet is not the only instance we can bring; but even good men are subject to the like mistakes. They imagine that religion is to be spread by terror and thunder. Look at John himself, the most lovely of all the disciples: he would call fire from heaven on a village of Samaritans, because they rejected Christ. Hark to his hot enquiry, - "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Christ's disciples were to him something like the sons of Zeruah to David; or when Shimei mocked David, the sons of Zeruah said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." But David meekly said, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah?" - and put them aside. He had something of the spirit of his Master; he knew that *his* honour was not then to be defended by sword or spear. O blessed Jesus! thou hast no fury in thy spirit; when men rejected thee thou didst not draw the sword to smite, but, on the contrary, thou didst yield thine eyes to weeping. Behold your Saviour, disciples, and see whether he was not meek. He had long preached in Jerusalem without effect, and at last he knew that they were ready to put him to death; but what saith he, as, standing on the top of the hill, he beheld the city that had rejected his gospel? Did he invoke a curse upon it? Did he suffer one word of anger to leap from his burning heart? Ah! no; there were flames, but they were those of love; there were scalding drops, but they were those of grief. He beheld the city, and wept over it, and said, "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And for a further proof of the absence of all uncharitableness, observe that, even when they drove the nails into his blessed hands, yet he had no curse to breathe upon them, but his dying exclamation was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O sinners! see what a Christ it is that we bid you serve. No angry bigot, no fierce warrior, claiming your unwilling faith: he is a tender Jesus. Your rejection of him has made his bowels yearn over you; and though you abhor his gospel, he has pleaded for you, saying, "Let him alone yet another year, till I dig about him; peradventure he may yet bring forth fruit." What a patient master is he! Oh! will you not serve him!

2. But the idea is not brought out fully, unless we take another sense. There is a sternness which cannot be condemned. A Christian man will often feel him self called to bear most solemn and stern witness against the error of his times, But Christ's mission, although it certainly did testify against the sin of his times, yet had a far greater reference to the salvation of the souls of men. To show the idea that I have in my own mind, which I have not yet brought out, I must picture Elijah. What a man was he! His mission was to be the bold unflinching advocate of the right, and to bear a constant testimony against the wickedness of his age. And how boldly did he speak! Look at him: how grand the picture! Can you not conceive him on that memorable day, when he met Ahab, and Ahab said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Do you mark that mighty answer which Elijah gave him, while the king trembles at his words. Or, better still, can you picture the scene when Elijah said, "Take you two bullocks, ye priests, and build an altar, and see this day, whether God be God or Baal be God." Do you see him as he mocks the worshippers of Baal, and with a biting irony says to them, "Cry aloud, for he is a god." And do you see him in the last grand scene, when the fire has come down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, and licked up the water, and burned the altar? Do you hear him cry, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one escape?" Can you see him in his might hewing them in pieces by the brook, and making their flesh a feast for the fowls of heaven? Now, you cannot picture Christ in the same position He had the stern qualities of Elijah, but he kept them, as it were, behind, hike

sleeping thunder, that must not as yet waken and lift up its voice. There were some rumblings of time tempest, it is true, when he spoke so sternly to the Sadducees, and Scribes, and Pharisees; those woes were like murmurings of a distant storm, but it *was a distant* storm; whereas, Elijah lived in the midst of the whirlwind itself, and was no still small voice, but was as the very fire of God, and hike the chariot in which he mounted to heaven - fit chariot for such a fiery man! Christ here stands in marked contrast. Picture him in somewhat a like position to Elijah with Ahab. There is Jesus left alone with an adulterous woman. She has been taken in the very fact. Her accusers are present, ready to bear witness against her. By a simple sentence he emptied the room of every witness; convicted by their conscience they all retire. And now what does Christ say? The woman might have lifted her eyes, and have looked at him, and said, "Hast thou found me O mine enemy? " - for she might have regarded Christ as the enemy of so base a sin as that which she had committed against her marriage bed. But instead thereof Jesus said, "Doth no man condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." Oh, how different from the sternness of Elijah! Sinners! if I had to preach Elijah as your Saviour I should feel that I had a hard task, for you might throw it in my teeth - "Shall we come to Elijah? He will call fire from heaven on us, as he did upon the captains and their fifties. Shall we come to Elijah? Surely he will slay us, for we have been like the prophets of Baal?" Nay, sinners; but I bid you come to Christ. Come to him, who, although he hated sin more than Elijah could do, yet nevertheless, loved the sinner - who, though he would not share iniquity, yet spares the transgressors, and has no words but those of love and mercy, and peace and comfort, for those of you who will now come and put your trust in him.

I must put in a word here by way of caveat. I am very far from imputing, for a single moment, any blame to Elijah. He was quite right. None but Elijah could have fulfilled the mission which his Master gave him. He needed to be all he was, and certainly not less stern; but Elijah was not sent to be a Saviour; he was quite unfit for that. He was sent to administer a stern rebuke. He was God's iron tongue of threatening, not God's silver tongue of mercy. Now, Jesus is the silver tongue of grace. Sinners! hear the sweet bells ringing, as Jesus now invites you to come

unto him. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;' for I am not stern, I am not harsh, I am no fire- killing Elijah; I am the meek, tender, lowly-hearted Jesus."

3. Christ is meek in heart. To exhibit this quality in another light, call to your minds Moses. Moses was the meekest of men; and yet Christ far excels Moses in his meekness. Around Moses there seems to be a hedge, a ring of fire. The character of Moses is like Mount Sinai; it hath bounds set about it, so that one cannot draw near unto him. Moses was not an approachable person, he was quiet and meek, and tender, but there was a sacred majesty about the King in Jeshurun that hedged his path, so that we cannot imagine the people making themselves familiar with him. Whoever read of Moses sitting down upon a well, and talking to a harlot like the woman of Samaria? Whoever heard a story of a Magdalene washing the feet of Moses? Can ye conceive Moses eating bread with a sinner, or passing under a sycamore tree, and calling Zaccheus, the thievish publican, and bidding him come down? There is a kind of stately majesty in Moses, no mere affectation of standing alone, but a loneliness of superior worth. Men looked up to him as to some cloud-capped mountain, and despaired of being able to enter into the lofty circle, within which they might have communed with him. Moses always had in spirit what he once had in visible token; he had a glory about his brow, and before he could converse with men he must wear a veil, for they could not bear to look upon the face of Moses. But how different is Jesus! He is a man among men; wherever he goes no one is afraid to speak to him. You scarcely meet with any one who dares not approach him. There is a poor woman, it is true, who hath the flux, and she fears to come near him, because she is ceremonially unclean; but even she can come behind him in the press, and touch the hem of his garment, and virtue goeth Out of him. Nobody was afraid of Jesus. The mothers brought their little babes to him: whoever heard of their doing that to Moses? Did ever babe get a blessing of Moses? But Jesus was all meekness - the approachable man, feasting with the wedding guests, sitting down with sinners, conversing with the unholy and the unclean, touching the leper, and making himself at home with all men. Sinners! this is the one we invite you to - this homely man, Christ. Not to Moses, for you might say, "He hath horns of light, and how shall I draw near to his majesty ! He is bright perfection -

the very lightnings of Sinai rest upon his brow." But sinners, ye cannot say that of Christ. He is as holy as Moses - as great, and far greater, but he is still so homely that ye may come to him. Little children, ye may put your trust in him. Ye may say your little prayer,

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look on me, a little Child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee."

He will not cast you away, or think you have intruded on him. Ye harlots, ye drunkards, ye feasters, ye wedding guests, ye may all come; "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." He is "meek and lowly in heart." That gives, I think, a still fuller and broader sense to the term, "meek."

4. But yet, to push the term a little further. Christ on earth was a king; but there as nothing about him of the exclusive pomp of kings, which excludes the common people from their society. Look at the Eastern king Ahasuerus, sitting on his throne. He is considered by his people as a superior being. None may come in unto the king, unless he is called for. Should he venture to pass the circle, the guards will slay him, unless the king stretches out the golden sceptre. Even Esther, his beloved wife, is afraid to draw near, and must put her life in her hand, if she comes into the presence of the king uncalled. Christ is a king; but where his pomp? Where the Janitor that keeps his door, and thrusts away the poor? Where the soldiers that ride on either side of his chariot to screen the monarch from the gaze of poverty? See thy King, O Sion! He comes, he comes in royal pomp! Behold, Judah, behold thy King cometh! But how cometh he? "Meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." And who are his attendants? See, the young children, boys and girls! They cry, "Hosannah! Hosannah! Hosannah!" And who are they that wait upon him? His poor disciples. They pull the branches from the trees; they cast their garments in the street, and there he rideth on - Judah's royal King. His courtiers are the poor; his pomp is that tribute which grateful hearts delight to offer. O sinners, will you not come to Christ? There is nothing in him to keep you back. You need not say, like Esther did of old, "I will go in unto the king, if I perish I perish. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Christ is more ready to receive you than you are to come to

him. Come to the King! "What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be done unto thee." If thou stayest away, it is not because he shuts the door, it is because thou wilt not come. Come, filthy, naked, ragged, poor, lost, ruined, come, just as thou art. Here he stands, like a fountain freely opened for all comers. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely."

5. I will give you but one more picture to set forth the meekness of Christ, and I think I shall not have completed the story without it. The absence of all selfishness from the character of Christ, makes one ingredient of this precious quality of his meekness. You remember the history of Jonah. Jonah is sent to prophecy against Nineveh; but he is selfish. He will not go for he shall get no honour by it. He does not want to go so long a journey for so small a price. He will not go. He will take a ship and go to Tarshish. He is thrown out into the sea, swallowed by a fish, and vomited by it upon dry land. He goes away to Nineveh, and not wanting courage, he goes through its streets, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." That one man's earnest cry moves the city from one end to the other. The king proclaims a fast; the people mourn in sackcloth and confess their sins. God sends them tidings of mercy, and they are spared. But what will Jonah do? Oh, tell it not, ye heavens; let none hear it - that ever a prophet of God could do the like! He sits himself down, and he is angry with God. And why his anger? Because, says he, "God has not destroyed that city." If God had destroyed the city he would have shouted over the ruins, because his reputation would have been safe; but now that the city is saved, and his own reputation for a prophet tarnished, he must needs sit down in anger. But Christ is the very reverse of this. Sinners! Christ does thunder at you sometimes, but it is always that he may bring you to repentance. He does take Jonah's cry, and utter it far more mightily than Jonah could; he does warn you that there is a fire that never can be quenched, and a worm that dieth not; but if you turn to him, will he sit down and be angry? Oh! no; methinks I see him. There you come poor prodigals; your father falls upon your neck and kisses you, and you are accepted, and a feast is made. Here comes the elder brother, Jesus. What does he say? Is he angry because you are saved? Ah! no! "My Father," saith he, "my younger brother have all come home, and I love them; they shall share my honours; they shall sit upon my throne; they

shall share my heaven." "Where I am, there they shall be also." I will take them into union with myself, and as they *have wasted their* inheritance, *all that* I have shall be their's for ever. Oh! come home, prodigal, there is no angry brother and no angry father. Come back, come back, my brother, my wandering brother, I invite thee; for Jesus is rejoiced to receive thee. Do you not see, then, that the meekness of Christ is a sweet and blessed reason why we should come to him?

II. The second virtue which Christ claims for himself, is LOWLINESS OF HEART.

When I looked this passage out in the original, I half wondered how it was that Christ found such a sweet word for the expression of his meaning; for the Greeks, do not know much about humility, and they have not a very good word to set forth this idea of lowliness of heart. I find that if this passage stood in another connection, the word might even be interpreted "degraded, debased," for the Greeks thought that if a man was humble, he degraded himself - that if he stooped, he debased himself right out. "Well," says Christ, "if you think so, so be it, and he takes the word. The word means, "near the ground." So is Christ's heart. We cannot be so low that he will not stoop to reach us. I would just set out the lowliness of Christ's heart in this way. Christ is "lowly in heart;" that is, he is willing to receive *the poorest* sinner in the world. The pharisee thought that the keeper of the gate of heaven would admit only the rich, and not the poor. Mark Christ's teaching. There were two came to the gate once upon a time; one was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; he knocked, and thought that full sure he must enter; but "in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments." There came another, borne on angel's wings. It was a beggar, whose many sores the dogs had licked and he had not so much as to knock at the gate, for the angel's carried him straight away into the very centre of paradise, and laid him in Abraham's bosom. Jesus Christ is willing to receive beggars into his bosom. Kings, you know, condescend, when they permit even the rich to be presented to them, and the kissing of a monarch's hand is something very wonderful indeed, but to have the kisses of *his* lips who is the King of kings, is no uncommon thing for men that are shivering in rags, or that are sick upon miserable beds, in dingy attics. Christ is "lowly

in heart;" he goes with what men call the vulgar herd; he hath nothing of affected royalty about him - he hath a nobler royalty than that, the royalty that is too proud to think anything of a stoop, that can only measure itself by its own intrinsic excellence, and not by its official standing. He receiveth the lowest, the meanest, the vilest, for he is "lowly in heart." If I have among my congregation some of the poorest of the poor, let them come away to Christ, and let them not imagine that their poverty need keep them back. I am always delighted when I see a number of women here from the neighbouring workhouse. I bless God that there are some in the workhouse that are willing to come; and though they have sometimes been put to a little inconvenience by so doing, yet I have known them sooner give up their dinner than give up coming to hear the Word. God bless the workhouse women, and may they be led to Christ, for he is meek and lowly in heart, and will not reject them. I must confess also, I like to see a smock frock here and there in the midst of the congregation. Oh! what a mercy, that in the palace of the Great King there shall be found these workmen, these blouses, They shall be made partakers of the kingdom of God. He makes no difference between prince and pauper; he takes men to heaven just as readily from the workhouse, as from the palace.

Further, this lowliness of heart in Christ leads him to receive the most *ignorant* as well as the learned to himself. I know that sometimes poor ignorant people get a notion in their heads that they cannot be saved, because they cannot read and do not know much. I have sometimes, especially in country villages, received this answer, when I have been asking anything about personal religion. "Well, you know, sir, I never had any learning." Oh! but, ye unlearned, is this a reason why ye should stay away from him who is lowly in heart? It was said of an old Greek philosopher, that he wrote over his door, "None but the learned may enter here." But Christ, on the contrary, writes over his door, "He that is simple let him turn in hither." There are many great men with long handles to their names who know little of the gospel, while some of the poor unlettered ones spell out the whole secret, and become perfect masters in divinity. If they had degrees who deserve them, diplomas should often be transferred, and given to those who hold the plough handle or work at the carpenter's bench; for there is often more divinity

in the little finger of a ploughman than there is in the whole body of some of our modern divines. "Don't they understand divinity?" you say. Yes, in the letter of it; but as to the spirit and life of it, D.D. often means DOUBLY DESTITUTE.

The lowliness of Christ may be clearly seen in yet another point of view. He is not only willing to receive the poor, and to receive the ignorant, but he is also ever ready to receive men, despite the vileness of their characters. Some teachers can stoop, and freely too, to both poor and ignorant; but they cannot stoop to the wicked. I think we have all felt a difficulty here. "However poor a man may be, or however little he knows," you say, "I don't mind talking with him, and trying to do him good; but I cannot talk with a man who is a rogue or a vagabond, or with a woman who has lost her character." I know you cannot; there are a great many things Christ did which we cannot do. We, who are the servants of Christ, have attempted to draw a line where duty has its bound. Like the domestic servant in some lordly mansion who stoops not to menial employment. We are above our work. We are so fastidious, that we cannot go after the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile. Not so, Christ. "He receiveth sinners and *eateth with* them." He, in the days of his flesh, became familiar with the outcasts. He sought them out that he might save them; he entered their homes; he found his way into the slums. like some diligent officer of the police, he was willing to lodge where they lodged, eat at their table, and associate with their class to find them out. His *mission was to seek* as well as to save. Oh, see him stand, with arms wide open! Will that thief, who is justly executed for his crimes, be recognized by him? Yes, he will. There, with his arms outstretched, he hangs; the thief flies as it were to his bosom, and Jesus gives him a most blessed embrace. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Christ has received the thief with open heart and open arms too. And there is Mary. Do you see her? She is washing the feet of Jesus. Why, she is a bad character, one of the worst women on the town. What will Christ say? Say? Why, hear how he speaks to Simon, the pious, reputable Pharisee. Saith he, after putting the parable concerning the two debtors, "which of them shall love him most?" - and then he explains that this woman hath had much forgiven, and therefore she loves him much. "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," saith he, and she goes her

way in peace. There are many men you and I would not demean ourselves to notice, that Christ will take to heaven at last; for he is "lowly in heart." He takes the base, the vilest, the scum, the offscouring, the filth, the garbage of the world, and out of such stuff and matter as that, he buildeth up a holy temple, and gathereth to himself trophies for his honour and praise.

And further, while I speak of the lowliness of Christ's heart, I must remark another thing. Perhaps one is saying here, "Oh! sir, it is not what I have been, as to my conduct, that keeps me back from Christ; but I feel that what I am as to my nature restrains me; I am such a dolt, I shall never learn in his school I am such a hard-hearted one, he will never melt me, and if he does save me, I shall never be worth his having. Yes, but Christ is "lowly in heart." There are some great goldsmiths that of course can only think of preparing and polishing the choicest diamonds; but Jesus Christ polishes a common pebble, and makes a jewel of it. Goldsmiths make their precious treasures out of precious materials; Christ makes his precious things out of dross. He begins always with bad material. The palace of our king is not made of cedar wood, as Solomon's, or if it be made of wood, certainly he has chosen the knottiest trees and the knottiest planks wherewith to build his habitation. He has taken those to be his scholars who were the greatest dunces; so amazing is the lowliness of Christ's heart. He sits down on the form with us to teach us the A,B,C, of repentance, and if we are slow to learn it he begins again, and takes us through our alphabet, and if we forget it he will often teach us our letters over again; for though he is able to teach the angels, yet he condescends to instruct babes, and as we go step by step in heavenly literature, Christ is not above teaching the elements. He teaches not only in the University, and the Grammar-school, where high attainments are valued, but he teaches in the day-school, where the elements and first principles are to be instilled. It is he who teaches the sinner, what *sinner* means *in deep* conviction, and what faith means in holy assurance. It is not only he who takes us to Pisgah, and bids us view the promised land, but it is he also who takes us to Calvary, and makes us learn that simplest of all things, the sacred writing of the cross. He, if I may use such a phrase, will not only teach us how to write them highly ornamental writing of the Eden Paradise, the richly gilded, illuminated letters of

communion and fellowship, but he teaches us how to make the pot-hooks amid hangers of repentance and faith. he begins at the beginning; for he is "meek and lowly in heart." Come, then, ye dolts, ye fools; come *ye sinners*, ye vile ones; come, ye dullest of all scholars, ye poor, ye illiterate, ye who are rejected and despised of men; come to him who was rejected and despised as well as you. Come and welcome! Christ bids you come!

"Let not conscience make you linger;
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam.

Come, poor sinners! come to a gentle Saviour! and you shall never regret that you came to him.

III. Having thus spoken on the two marks of our Lord's character, I propose to conclude, if God shall help me, by knocking home the nail, by driving in the wedge, and pressing upon you a conclusion from these arguments. The conclusion of the whole matter is this, since Christ is "meek and lowly in heart," sinners come to him.

Come to him, then, first, whoever you may be, for he is "meek and lowly in heart." When a man has done anything wrong, and wants a help through his difficulty, if about to employ some counsel to plead for him in a court of law, he might say, "Oh! don't engage Mr. So-and-so for me; I hear he *is a* very hard-hearted man; I should not like to tell him what I have done, and entrust my case in his hands. Send for Mr. So-and-so; I have heard that he is very kind and gentle; let him come and hear my case, and let him conduct the pleadings for me:" Sinner! you are sinful, but Christ is very tender-hearted. Speed thy way to Christ's private chamber, - your own closet of prayer. Tell him all you have done; he will not upbraid you: confess all your sins; he will not chide you. Tell him all your follies; he will not be angry with you. Commit your case to him, and with a sweet smile he will say, "I have cast thy sins behind my back; thou hast come to reason with me; I will discover to thee a matter of faith which excels all reason, - " Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as

wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow
Come to Christ, then, sinful ones, because he is "meek and lowly in heart," and he can bear with the narrative of your offences. "But, sir, I am very timid, and I dare not go." Ah, but however timid you may be, you need not be afraid of him. He knows your timidity, and he will meet you with a smile, and say, "Fear not. Be of good cheer. Tell me thy sin, put thy trust in me, and thou shalt even yet rejoice to know my power to save. Come *now*," saith he, "come to me at once. Linger no longer. *I* do not strive nor cry, nor cause my voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench; but I will bring forth judgment unto victory." Come then, ye timid ones to Christ for he is meek and lowly in heart. "Oh," says one, "but I am despairing; I have been so long under a sense of sin, I cannot go to Christ." Poor soul! he is so meek and lowly, that, despairing though thou mayest be, take courage now; though it be like a forlorn hope to thee, yet go to him. Say, in the words of the hymn -

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die."

And you may add this comfortable reflection -

"But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died."

Come to him, then, timid and despairing; for he is "meek and lowly in heart." First, he bids thee confess. What a sweet confessor! Put thy lip to his ear, and tell him all. He is "meek and lowly in heart." Fear not. None of thy sins can move him to anger. If thou dost but confess them. If thou keepest them in thy heart, they shall be like a slumbering *volcano*; and a *furnace of destruction thou shalt* find even to the uttermost by-and-bye.

But confess thy sins; tell them all; he is meek and lowly in heart." Happy confession! when we have such a confessor.

Again, he bids thee trust him; and canst thou not trust him? He is "meek and lowly *in heart*." Sinner! put confidence in Christ. There never was such a tender heart as his, never such a compassionate face. Look him in the face, poor soul, as thou seest him dying on the tree, and say, is not that a face that any man might trust! Look at him! Canst thou doubt him? Wilt thou withhold thy cause from such a Redeemer as this? No, Jesus! thou art so generous, so good, so kind Take thou my cause in hand. Just as I am, I come to thee. Save me, I beseech thee, for I put my trust in thee.

And then Jesus not only bids you confess and believe, but he bids you afterwards serve him. And sure, sinners, this should be a reason why you should do it. that he is so "meek and lowly in heart." It is said, "Good masters make good servants." What good servants you and I ought to be, for what a good Master we have! Never an ill word doth he say to us. If sometimes he pointeth out anything we have done amiss, it is only for our good. Not for his profit doth he chasten, but for ours. Sinner! I ask thee not to serve the god of this world - that foul fiend who shall destroy thee after all thy service. The devil is thy master now, and ye have heard the wages he bestows. But come and serve Christ, the meek and lowly one, who will give thee good cheer while thou art serving him, and give thee a blessed reward when thy work is done.

And now, best of all, sinners! come to Christ. Come to him in all his offices, for he is "meek and lowly in heart." Sinner! thou art sick - Christ is a physician. If men have broken a bone, and they are about to have a surgeon fetched, they say, "Oh! is he a feeling tender hearted man?" For there is many an army surgeon that takes off a leg, and never thinks of the pain he is giving. "Is he a kind man?" says the poor sufferer, when he is about to be strapped down upon the table." Ah! poor sufferer, Christ will heal thy broken bones, and he will do it with downy fingers. Never was there so light a touch as this heavenly surgeon has. 'Tis pleasure even to be wounded by him, much more to be healed, Oh! what balm is that he gives to the poor bleeding heart! Fear not; there was never such a physician as this. If he give thee now and then a bitter pill and a sour

draught, yet he will give thee such honied words and such sweet promises therewith, that thou shalt swallow it all up without murmuring. Nay, if he be with thee, thou canst even swallow up death in victory; and never know that thou hast died because victory hath taken the bitter taste away.

Sinner! thou art not only sick, and therefore bidden to come to him, but thou art moreover in debt, and he offers now to pay thy debts, and to discharge them in full. Come, come to him, for he is not harsh. Some men, when they do mean to let a debtor off, first have him in their office, and give him as much as they can of the most severe rebukes; - " You rogue, you! how dare you get in my debt, when you knew you could not pay? You have brought a deal of trouble on yourself, you have ruined your family," and so forth; and the good man gives him some very sound admonition, and very right too; till at length he says, "I'll let you off this time; come, now, I forgive you, and I hope you will never do so again." But Christ is even better than this. "There is all your debt," he says, "I have nailed it to the cross; sinner, I forgive thee all," and not one accusing word comes from his lips. Come, then, to him.

I fear I have spoilt my master in the painting; something like the artist who had to depict some fair damsel, and he so misrepresented her features, that she lost her reputation for beauty. I have sometimes feared lest I should do the same, and so distort the face of Christ, and so fail of giving the true likeness of his character that you would not love him. Oh! could you see him! If he could stand here for one moment, and tell you that he was meek and lowly in heart. Oh, methinks you would run to him and say, "Jesus, we come Thou meek and lowly Messiah, be thou our all!" Nay, you would not come; I am mistaken. If sovereign grace draw you not under the sound of the gospel, neither would you be converted though Christ should appear before you. But hear now the message of that gospel - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved; for he that believeth on him, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not, must be damned."

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Members Of Christ

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. -
Ephesians 5:30

Yesterday, when I had the painful task of speaking at the funeral of our dear friend, Mr. William Olney, I took the text which I am going to take again now. I am using it again because I did not then really preach from it at all, but simply reminded you of a favorite expression of his, which I heard from his lips many times in prayer. He very frequently spoke of our being one with Christ in "living, loving, lasting union" - three words which, in addition to being alliterative, are very comprehensive as to the nature of our union with Christ. Those three words, you will remember, were the heads of my discourse, in the presence of that remarkable gathering which crowded this place to do honour to the memory of our brother, whose highest ambition was always to honour his Lord, whom he so faithfully served.

Paul here speaks only of true believers. Men who are quickened by divine grace and made alive unto God. Of them, he says, not by way of romance, nor of poetical exaggeration, but as an undisputed matter of fact, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." That there is a true union between Christ and his people in no fiction or dream of a heated imagination. Sin separated us from God, and in undoing what sin has done, Christ joins us to himself in a union more real than any other in the whole world.

This union is very near, and very dear, and very complete. We are so near to Christ, that we cannot be nearer; for we are one with him. We are so dear to Christ, that we cannot be dearer. Consider how close and tender is the tie when it is true that Christ loved us, and gave himself for us. It is a

union more intimate than any other which exists among men; for "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." We were his enemies when Christ died for us, that he might save us, and make us so one with himself, that from him our life should be drawn, and that in him our life should be hid. It is, then, a very near and dear union which Christ has established between himself and his redeemed; and this union could not be more complete than it is.

It is, also, a most wonderful union. The more you think of it, the more you will be astonished, and stand in sacred awe before such a marvel of grace. Well did Kent say -

"O sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with Incarnate Deity!"

But so it is. Even the incarnation of Christ is not more wonderful than his living union with his people. It is a thing to be considered often; it is the wonder of the skies; and is chief among those things which "the angels desire to look into." On the surface of this truth you may not see much; but the longer you gaze, and the more the Holy Spirit assists you in your meditation, the more you will see in this wonderful sea of glass mingled with fire. My soul exults in the doctrine that Christ and his people are everlastingly one.

This is a very cheering doctrine. He that understands it has an ocean of music in his soul. He that can really grasp and feed upon it will often sit in the heavenly places with his Lord, and anticipate the day when he shall be with him, and shall be like him. Even now, since we are one with him, there is no distance between us, we are nearer to him than anything else can ever be. The very idea of union makes us forget all distance: indeed distance is altogether annihilated. Love joins us so closely with Christ, that he becomes more to us than our very selves; and though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In passing, I may say that this doctrine is very practical. It is not merely a

piece of sugar for your mouth; it is a light for your path, for "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." We must take care that the love that was round about Christ's feet, is always shining on our path. We must go about doing good, following in the steps of our Lord. It would be giving the lie to this doctrine if we lived in sin; for, if we are one with him, then we must be in this world even as he was; and being filled with his Spirit, must seek to reproduce his life before the world.

These thought may serve as an introduction to a fuller consideration of this great subject; and I shall begin by saying that, in Holy Scripture, the union between Christ and his people is set forth under various forms. Then I will try to show you that the metaphor in our text is full of meaning; and, in the third place, I will prove to you that the doctrine of our union with Christ has its practical lessons. As we delight our hearts in the glorious truth that "we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his "bones," may we determine to live as those who are this closely joined to the Lord of life!

I. Our first thought is, that THIS UNION IS SET FORTH UNDER SEVERAL FORMS. The blessed fact is almost beyond our highest thought: what wonder, then that language fails adequately to describe it! Simile after simile is used. I am only going to mention four of them.

The union between Christ and the believer is described as the union of the foundation and the stone. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." We are built on Christ, and built up into him. We lie upon him just as the stone rests on the foundation. Well may we sing -

"All my hope on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring"!

The stone is one with the foundation in its dependence. In the time of our need we press the closer to Christ; the heavier our hearts, the more we bear our weight upon him. It is the heavy stone that clings to the

foundation; the light stone, perchance, might be blown away. But we cling at all times, depending wholly upon him, even as the stone rests upon the rock beneath. The stone does not bear up its own weight: it just rests where it is put. So do we rest on Christ. He is the foundation, and we repose on him.

Again, the stone is one with the foundation in its adhesion. In the course of time, the stone becomes more and more knit to it. When first the mortar is placed there, and is wet, you might also shake the stone. But, by-and-by, the mortar dries, and the stone seems to bite into the foundation, and holds fast to it. In old Roman walls, you cannot get a stone away; for the cement, which joins the stone to its fellows is as strong as the stone itself; and, truly, that which joins us to Christ is stronger than we are. We might be broken, but the bond of love, which holds us like a mighty cement to Christ, who is our foundation, can never be broken away. We have actually become one with him, as I have often seen stones in the walls of an old castle become one with each other. You could not get them away; they are part and parcel of the wall, and it would have been necessary to blow the wall to pieces before you could separate the stones from one another. So have we, by God's grace, become one with Christ, experimentally and indissolubly. The course of years has bound us still faster to him.

The stone is one with the foundation, moreover, in its design. The architect, in placing the stone, was following out his plan. He planned the foundation, and thought of every course; and the stone is essential to the wall, even as the foundation is essential to the stone. Thus we are one with Christ in the design of God. Reverently we saw it, that God's purpose comprehends not only Christ, but the whole company of his elect; and without his chosen people, the design of Jehovah can never be accomplished. He is building a temple to his praise; but a temple cannot be all foundation. There is a necessity for every stone in the wall; in the divine purpose, there is a necessity that such a one should be a living stone, and such a one should be another living stone. The weakest and the meanest of the Lord's people are as necessary as the noblest and the most beautiful, though indeed all are without any praise until they are built into the wall. He that chose Christ, chose all his people; he arranged

that they should be built up together, and in him "all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Oh, I like to think of each one of us, however insignificant we may appear to be, as being bricks or stones in that great temple of almighty grace! Perhaps some of us may stand where everybody can see us; but what does it matter? If we are in the wall at all, it is well. Wherever you are placed, we are joined to Christ; and therefore no one has a pre-eminence over any other, because we are all alike built upon the one foundation, even Jesus Christ our Lord, into whom we daily grow, pressing closer and closer to him in experience, and holding tighter and tighter to him by faith.

The second aspect in which our union with Christ is represented in the Scripture, is that of the vine and the branches. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," is the word of Christ to his disciples. The former simile of the foundation and the stone does not suggest any idea of life. Hence, the apostle, in using it, had to speak of Christ as a living stone, and of us as living stones. It is a somewhat odd figure, and yet it is strictly true; for you and I have no more spiritual life in us than stones, except as a miracle makes us live; and then, though we are living, yet like stones, we are apparently inert and lifeless, albeit we are really quickened by a supernatural work, and made living stones. But the figure is not congruous.

This second simile, however, conveys to us the idea of life, for a vine is no vine if it is dead, and its branches are no true branches unless they are alive. There is a living union between Christ and his people; and I hope that I can appeal to the experience of many here present who know that there is a living union between them and Christ. Happy is the man who can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"!

The union is even more than a union of life; it is a union of derived life. The branch is in such union with the stem that it receives all its sap from it; it could not live unless the living juices flowed from the stem into it. And such is our life. Christ pours his lifeblood into us. Perpetually, as long as he exists, he seems to be oozing out into his people. In fact, when

his wounds were open, he bled life into us; and when his heart was burst, he changed our hearts, and gave them life, though they once were hearts of stone. We are so one with Christ, that we at first received our life from him, and we continue to receive it from him every moment.

In consequence of the life of Christ in us, we grow. The growing of the branch is really the growing of the vine. It is because the stem grows that it sends its growth into the branch, and manifests it there. As Christ pours his life-force into us, he makes us grow, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Fruit-bearing is the ultimate end of our union to Christ. We are one with him that we may bring forth fruit unto his praise. Dear friends, are we really doing this? Are we not satisfied with a nominal union to Christ, even though we bear no fruit to his honour? We ought to be very distressed when we are barren and unfruitful; remembering that the great Husbandman has a sharp knife, and that it is written, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." Oh, that none of my hearers may ever be in Christ in that false way, but may we all be in him in a union so true and vital as shall cause us to bear fruit to his praise; for then, though we shall be pruned, we shall never be cut from the vine!

The third metaphor which the Saviour deigns to give of this union in that of the husband and the wife. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Here you have a union, not only of life, but also of love. It is worthy of notice that the two words, "live" and "love", should be so like each other. In spiritual things, the two things are not only similar, they are exactly alike. Love is the life; and life is always first sent, and chiefly sent in the form of love.

With the true husband, his wife is himself. The Scripture saith, "He that loveth his wife loveth himself;" and I believe that Christ considers that, when he loves his church, he loves himself. His care for us is now his care for himself. Since he has taken us to be in eternal wedded union with himself, he regards us as himself, and he cares for us as he cares from himself: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." No sane man will injure his own flesh. "No man ever yet hated his own

flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." So Christ takes care of his people, because he regards them as being bound to himself by those bonds which make them to be as himself. Hence we are kept as the apple of his eye.

Remember that, in every family, the wife is the mother of the children; and so it is in the church of Christ. He would have us all bear unto him a holy spiritual seed. If we abide in him, we shall be able to propagate our faith, and bring others into the church. Every believer should have this object before him as the joy of his life; for thus shall Christ "see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

The wife, too, is the keeper of the house. She takes care of the household concerns of her husband. And so would the Lord Christ have his people care for his interests, and for all that belongs to him; for he has committed these things unto us, as the husband commits his treasures to his wife. He has left us in custody of all that he has. In one sense we are the stewards of his household, but in another and a clearer sense, we are united to him by marriage bonds which can never be broken. It is a sweet subject; but I cannot linger upon it. You must let your own thoughts be fragrant with its aroma. However close may be the union of husband and wife, the union between the believer and Christ is closer still. Oh, to realize more and more of it each day!

"O Jesus! Make thyself to me
A living, bright reality;
More present to faith's vision keen
More than any outward object seen.
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie!"

All human imagery fails to set forth the union between Christ and his people; but the figure in our text is that of the head and the member. The apostle says of Christ, that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Christ is the Head, and we are members of his body. Wonderful union this! In the first metaphor, the foundation and the

stone, we had the idea of rest; in the second, the vine and the branches, the idea of life; the union of the husband and wife gave us the thought of love; now here we have the suggestion of identity. There are two lives in the husband and the wife, but there is only one life in the head and the body; and in this respect this metaphor brings out the true relation of Christ to his people more clearly than any other.

There is a wonderful union between the head and the members of the body. It is a union of life, and a union of the body which always continues. The husband may have to travel miles away from the wife; but it can never be that the head can travel away from the body. If I were to hear of any man whose head was a foot, or even an inch away from his body, I should say that he was dead. There must be perpetual union between the head and the members, or else death follows; and the death, mark you, not only of the body, but of the head as well. They are dead when they are divided. How glorious is this thought when we apply it to the Lord, and his redeemed people! Their union is everlasting. They would die if separated from him, and even he would cease to be did he lose them; for, somehow or other, they are so joined, that he will not be without them: he cannot be without them, for that were for the Head of the church to be divided from the members of his mystical body. Thus is we are able to sing -

"And this I do find, were two so joined,
He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind."

II. Having thus shown you these four figures - and there are others, but I have not time to speak upon them - I now come to the one before us in the text, and remark that **THIS METAPHOR IS FULL OF MEANING:** "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." There are seven points to which I would ask your attention.

There is here union of life, union of relationship, and union of service. See what I mean. Your hand never studies what it can do for the head; but when the head wishes the hand uplifted, immediately up goes the hand; and when the head wishes that the hand should go down, down it goes in an instant. There is no deliberation or discussion about the matter. The

head and the members, in a healthy body, are practically one. If you happen to be ill, it may be different. I have sometimes seen, in a person semi-paralyzed, the leg throw itself out without any guidance from the head; and sometimes - how often has it happened to me! - the head has willed that the hand should turn the pages of a book, and the hand has been unable to do it. Did you ever notice when you are falling, how, without thought, your hands always try to save your head? If any person were about to strike you, you would not deliberate; but up would go your arm to protect your head. This law is also true in spiritual life. All true Christians will do anything to save their Head. He saved us, and now our desire is to save him. We cannot bear that he should be insulted, that his gospel should be despised, or that anything would be done against his sacred dignity. We are so one with our glorious Head, that the moment anyone strikes at him, up goes our hand immediately in his defense. Oh! I trust that you know what this means; if you are ever put up to the pain of hearing Christ's gospel falsely preached, or seeing professedly Christian men bringing disgrace upon his dear name, you feel at once that you would rather bear any pain, or any reproach, than that Christ should be injured. The hand is so one with the head, that it endeavours to screen it.

Between the head and the members there is also union of feeling. If the head aches, you feel it all over, you are altogether ill; and if your finger aches, your head does not feel well. There is such a sympathy between all parts of the body that, "whether one member suffer, a;; members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Christ is our Head, and the Head specially suffers with the members. I do not know whether it is always so clear that one hand suffers with another hand, as it is clear that the head suffers with either hand. So is it with the church. It may not always be clear that all the members sympathize with each other, but it is always clear that Christ sympathizes with each one of his people. There is a quicker way, somehow, from the head to the hand, than there is from one hand to the other, and there is a keener sympathy between Christ and his people than there often is between one of his servants and another. It is written concerning his people that "In all their affliction he was afflicted." In all thy sorrows, child of God thy heavenly Head feels the pain!

There is, moreover, a union of mutual necessity between the members and the head. The head wants the body. Now, I must speak very guardedly here, when I refer to the thought to Christ, but still it is true. What would my head be without my body? It would be a ghastly sight. And Christ without his people would be incomplete. A dying Christ, redeeming nobody! A living Christ, with no one to live by his life, would be a grin failure! Christ on Calvary, and souls going down to hell, with none saved by his precious blood! Christ incarnate on the cross, without a single man saved by his incarnation and his death! It would be a fearful sight. The church is said to be Christ's fulness - "The church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." This is a wonderful expression. Now, the fulness of the head is the body; take the body away from the head, what is it? As to the body, what could it be without the head? If your head were gone, you could not have swiftness of foot, or deftness of hand, or strength of heart. No; there remains nothing for the head if it is severed from the body; and nothing for the body if it is separated from the head. There is between them a union of mutual necessity.

There is, farther, between the head and the members a union of nature. I will not attempt to describe the chemical composition of human flesh; but it is quite clear that my head is made of the same flesh as my members. There is no difference between the flesh of one and the flesh of the other. So, though our covenant Head is now in heaven, and his feet are on earth, yet still Christ is so one by nature with his people, that he is very man of very man, as much as he is very God of very God. If you deny his humanity, I do not think you till long hold his divinity. And if you deny his Deity, you have sadly destroyed the perfection of his humanity; for a perfect man he could not be if he so acted as to make men think that he was God, when he was not. To us he is God-Man in one person, whom we love and adore; his nature is the same as our nature, and we art joined to him forever.

"Lord Jesus, are we ONE with thee?
Oh, height! Oh depth of love!
With thee we died upon the tree,

In thee we live above.

"Oh, teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That thou with us art truly ONE,
And we are ONE with thee!"

Between Christ and his people there is also a union of possession. Nothing belongs to my head that does not belong to my hand. Whatever my head can claim as its own, my hand may claim as its own. Whatever belongs to Christ belongs to you, poor believer! Christ is rich, can you be poor? Even his Father is your Father, and his heaven is your heaven; for you are so one with him that all the broad possession of his infinite wealth are given freely to you. He bestows upon you his bounty, not only "to the half of the kingdom", but the whole of it. Joined to him, all that he has is yours.

Between the Lord and his church there is also a union of present condition. Christ is very dear to his Father's heart. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," was the word which came from the opened heaven concerning Christ; and as God delights in Christ, so is he also well pleased with you who are in Christ. Yes, he is as pleased with you as he is with Christ; for he sees you in Christ, and Christ in you. God makes no division between you and him to whom he has joined you. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Certainly God will never separate that which he has united in Christ. Do not put yourself asunder from Christ, even in your thoughts, by supposing that you are not well-beloved of God even as his own covenant Head.

Last of all, there is a union of future destiny. Whatever Christ is to be, you are to be a sharer of it all. How can you die while Jesus lives? How can the body die, while the head lives? If we go through the waters, they cannot overflow us until they overflow our head. While a man's head is above water, he cannot be drowned. And Christ up yonder, in the eternities of glory, can never be conquered: neither can those be vanquished who are one with him. For ever and for ever, till the Christ

shall die, till the immortal Son of God expires, you who are united to him in the purpose of God, and in faith which now lays hold of him, shall live and reign. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Is it not that a quietus to every fear of destruction? You are so one with him that, when the sun becomes a burnt-out coal, and the moon is turned into a clot of blood, when the stars fall as the leaves of autumn, and the heaven and earth shall melt away, going back into nothingness from which Omnipotence hath called them, you shall live, for he shall live who is your Head. "We believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death shall have no dominion over him." Where he goes we shall follow. I have heard it said, that when a thief is able to get his head through the bars of the window, his body can easily follow. I am not sure of that; but I know that where my lord has gone, his members shall surely be. "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore," is a word that is meant for your consolation. Take it home. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," and, as Doddridge sings -

"Since Christ and we are one,
Why should I doubt or fear?
If he in heaven hath fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there."

III. Lastly, and briefly, THIS DOCTRINE HAS ITS PRACTICAL LESSONS, which I will try to set forth plainly so that those of us who are members of Christ may bring greater joy and glory to our Head than we have brought aforetime.

To begin with, I would say, if we are indeed one with Christ, we should have no doubt about it. It used to be a fashion, and I fear in some quarters still, to think that mistrust of our own condition, and doubt concerning our own salvation, is a kind of virtue. I have met with good people, who would not say that they were saved; they "hoped" that they were; and I have met with others who were not sure that they were cleansed by the precious blood of Christ; they "trusted" that they were. This state of mind is not a credit either to Christ, or to ourselves. If I told my son something, and he were to say to me, "I hope you will keep your

word, father," I should not feel that he treated me as he ought. Surely, to believe Christ up to the hilt is the way to honour him. If we are one with him, we lose the comfort of it if we do not know certainly the fact of our blessed union; we miss much of the confidence that comes of it if we do not clearly apprehend the reality; and we are robbed of much of the joy which it brings, and how little of the meaning of that word "the joy of the Lord is your strength," unless we believe simply like children, and take the word to mean what it says, and are certain about it. This is an age of doubt; but, as for me, I will have none of it; I have doubted enough, and more than enough; I have done with it long ago; and I can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep which I have committed unto him against that day." Salvation is by faith. Damnation comes by doubt. Doubt is the death of all comfort, the destruction of all force, the enemy of God and man.

If we are one with Christ, we should go through the world like princes; we should be like Abraham among his fellows, who claimed no principedom, and wore no crown, yet who could say to the King of Sodom what he had already vowed to God, "I will not take from a thread unto a shoe-latchet, and I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." If you are one with Christ, treat the world in that way. O world, thou canst not bless me! God hath blessed me. Thou canst not curse me! God hath blessed me. Dost thou laugh? Laugh if it pleaseth thee. Dost thou frown? What signifieth it to me? If God has smiled upon me, thou mayest spurn me. If I am one with Christ, I expect that thou shouldest think little of me; for thou didst spurn my Head. Should the body of Christ expect better treatment than the Head received?

If we are one with Christ, we shall remember that to dishonour ourselves is to implicate our Lord. If I dishonour any part of my body, my head feels the shame of it; and since we are the members of Christ, we should be very careful how to behave, lest we should cause him pain. Men will judge Christ by his people. If I caught sight of a pair of legs very unsteadily walking along the street, I should be inclined to say that they belongs to a drunken head. If our walk among men is not such "as becometh the gospel", what hard thoughts those around us may have of our Saviour! Of course, we know that any ill estimate of him will be false, for he is all fair,

and there is no spot in him; but still his name and his cause will suffer dishonour. Let us not, then, injure or defile ourselves, lest we should bring reproach upon him whom we love!

In the next place, if we are one with him, to think of him should be very natural. There are many of us who could say, without any exaggeration, that though we do not think so much of our Lord as we should, and are not so much with him in contemplation as we desire, yet we have spent more time with him than we have spent with anybody else. Little as we know compared with what we hope to know, yet his love has become to us now the brightest, the most conspicuous fact in all our history. We know but few things; but we know that we are one with Christ in a union never to be broken. We know him, too, by our intercourse with him. We saw him this morning; we have seen him during the day; we shall see him again to-night. I should not like to go to bed with any other thought upon my mind than this -

"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Saviour's breast."

If we are one with him, to live with him should be the most natural thing in our lives. Have I not heard, however, of some professors who have not had communion with Christ for many a day? I talked once with a brother, who said a great deal about many things; and when he had complained of this and of that, I leant forward to him, and said, "Brother, how long is it since you have had close fellowship with Christ?" He answered, "Oh, there you have got me!" When I asked him, "What do you mean by that?" he answered, "I am afraid that I have not had fellowship with Christ for months." I had suspected that it must have been so, or else his conversation would not have been of the kind it was. What a sad thing it must be for a wife to live in her husband's house, and not speak to him for weeks! But how much worse it is for us to profess to be one with Christ, and yet have no sort of communication with him by the month together! This is something perfectly horrible. God save us all from such a thing! May we think continually of our Lord, and ever live with him, because we

are one with him!

Again, being one with Christ, to serve him should be very natural. Indeed we exist, but to do his will, and to glorify his name. Of what use are my hands and feet unless they move at the impulse of my head? They are but encumbrances unless they are ready to obey the bidding of my mind. If your arms hang helpless, you do not know what to do with them; whichever side you turn, they are in the way. To be paralyzed is most unnatural, yet I fear me there are many of us of but little use to our Master. We hear his word, but do not obey it; he calls for helpers, and we run not at his bidding! Come, come, this will not do. We are members of Christ, and the one purpose of our life should be to serve our Head. God help us all to do it!

I will not continue longer. I leave you to draw the many inferences which naturally spring from our being one with Christ. Our heaven lies in our union with him. Ay, and sometimes when we realize our oneness with Christ, we can hardly think that we should be happier in heaven than we are now! May you all have this enjoyment! Oh, you would think that we raved, if we told you the unspeakable delight, the immeasurable bliss, which communion with Christ has brought into our souls. I desire that all of you should know the same rapture. I never enjoy a thing without wishing everybody to enjoy it; therefore when I come to this point of being one with Christ, and the delight it brings, I would to God that you all knew it, too! But alas! You do not; some of you do not even desire it. I have been talking something like Dutch to some of you to-night; you have not comprehended my language at all. May the very fact that you have not understood it, or cared about it, lead you to suspect that there is a joy which you have not known, and a life which you have not found; and when you know that it is so, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." If you seek him with all your heart, you will surely find him; and very soon you also will be brought into "living, loving, lasting union" with Christ.

Remember that the least touch of faith is sufficient to save the soul. That poor woman, who came behind Christ in the throng, only touched the hem of his garment, yet that timid touch brought healing and health to

her. Virtue went out of him into her, and she was made whole of her plague. If thou canst only touch the Lord by the finger of thy faith, ay, though it be thy little finger; it shall be well with thee; though thy hand be quivering with the palsy of unbelief, yet, still, if thou hast faith enough to touch him, to come into contact with him, thou hast set the whole machinery of salvation in motion. God give thee to find eternal life even now! Why not? If my dear friend were here, of whom this drapery is a memorial, he would say unto me, "Oh, tell them to taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are all they that trust in him!" You know how fond he was of that verse we sang yesterday -

"Oh make but a trial of his love;
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in his truth confide!"

God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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Memento Mori

Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." - Deuteronomy 32:29

Man in unwilling to consider the subject of death. The shroud, the mattock and the grave, he labors to keep continually out of sight. He would live here always if he could; and since he cannot, he at least will put away every emblem of death as far as possible from his sight. Perhaps there is no subject so important, which is so little thought of. Our common proverb that we use is just the expression of our thoughts, "We must live." But if we were wiser we should alter it and say, "We must die." Necessity for life there is not; life is a prolonged miracle. Necessity for death there certainly is, it is the end of all things. Oh that the living would

lay it to heart. Some years ago, a celebrated author - Drelincourt, wrote a work on Death, a valuable work in itself, but it commanded no sale whatever. There were no men who would trouble themselves with Death's heads and cross-bones. And to show how foolish man is, a certain doctor went home and wrote a silly ghost-story, not one word of which was true, sent it to the bookseller, he stitched it up with his volume, and the whole edition sold. Any thing men will think of rather than death - any fiction, any lie. But this stern reality, this master truth, he puts away, and will not suffer it to enter his thoughts. The old Egyptians were wiser than we are. We are told that at every feast, there was always one extraordinary guest that sat at the head of the table. He ate not, he drank not, he spake not, he was closely veiled. It was a skeleton which they had placed there, to warn them that even in their feasting, they should remember there would be an end of life. We are so fond of living, so sad at the very thoughts of death, that such a memento mori; as that, would be quite unbearable in our days of feasting. Yet our text tells us that we should be wise, if we would consider our latter end. And certainly we should be, for the practical effect of a true meditation upon death would be exceedingly healthful to our spirits. It would cool that ardor of covetousness, that fever of avarice, always longing after, and accumulating wealth, if we did but remember that we should have to leave our stores, that when we have gotten our most, all that we can ever inherit for our body is one six feet of earth, and a mouthful of clay. It would certainly help us to set loose by the things which we here possess. Perhaps, it might lead us to set our affections upon things above, and not upon the mouldering things below. At any rate, thoughts of death might often check us when we are about to sin. If we look at sin by the light of that death's lantern by which the sexton shall dig our graves, we might see more of the hollowness of sinful pleasure, and of the emptiness of worldly vanity. If we would but sin on our coffin lids, we should sin far more seldom. Surely we should be kept back from many an evil act if we remembered that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And, mayhap too, these thoughts of death might be blessed to us in even a higher sense, for we might hear an angel speaking to us from the grave, "Prepare to meet your God," and we might be led to go home and set our house in order, because we must die and not live. Certainly, if even one of these effects shall be produced by considering our latter end, it would be the purest wisdom continually to

walk arm in arm with that skeleton teacher - Death.

I propose this morning, as God shall help me, to lead you to consider your latter end. May the Holy Spirit bend your thoughts downward to the tomb. May he guide you to the grave, that you may there see the end of all earthly hopes, of all worldly pomp and show. In doing this, I shall thus divide my subject. First, let us consider Death, secondly, let us push on the consideration by considering the warnings which Death has given us already; and then, further, let us picture ourselves as dying, - bringing to our mind's eye a picture of ourselves stretched upon our last bed.

I. In the first place, then, LET US CONSIDER DEATH.

1. Let us begin by remarking its origin. Why is it that I must die? Whence came these seeds of corruption that are sown within this flesh of mine? The angels die not. Those pure ethereal spirits live on without knowing the weakness of old age, and without suffering the penalties of decay. Why must I die? Why has God made me so curiously and so wondrously - why is all this skill and wisdom shown in the fashioning of a man that is to endure for an hour, and then to crumble back to his native element - the dust? Can it be that God originally made me to die? Did he intend that the noble creature, who is but a little lower than the angels, who hath dominion over the works of God's hands, beneath whose feet he hath put all sheep and oxen, yea and the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea - did he intend that that creature should waste away as a shadow, and should be as a dream that continueth not? Come, my soul, let this melancholy thought thrust itself upon thy attention. Thou diest because thou sinnest! Thy death is not God's primal ordinance, but it is a penalty brought upon thee on account of the transgression of thy first parent. Thou wouldst have been immortal if Adam had been immaculate. Sin, thou art the mother of Death! Adam thou hast digged the graves of thy children! We might have lived on, in everlasting youth, if it had not been for that thrice-cursed theft of the forbidden fruit. Look, then, that thought in the face. Man is a suicide. Our sin, the sin of the human race, slays the race. We die because we have sinned. How this should make us hate sin! How we should detest it because the wages of sin is death! Brand then, from this day forward, the

word Murderer on the brow of sin.

2. In considering Death, let us go a step further, and observe not only its origin but its certainty. Die I must. I may have escaped a thousand diseases, but Death has an arrow in his quiver that will reach my heart at last. True, I have one hope, a blissful hope, that if my Lord and Master shall soon come, I shall be among the number of them that are alive and remain, who shall never die, but who shall be changed. I have that fond anticipation, that he will come ere this body of mine shall crumble into dust, and that these eyes shall see him when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. But, however, if it be not so, die I must. "It is appointed unto All men once to die, end after death the judgment. Run! run! but the 'beet pursuer shall overtake thee. Like the stag before the hounds we By swifter than the breeze, but the dogs of Death shall outstrip us: Fever and plague, weakness and decay; he hath but to let slip these dogs and they are on us, and who can resist their fury? There is a black camel upon which Death rides, say the Arabs, and that must kneel at every man's door. With impartial hand he dashes down the palace of the monarch as well as the cabin of the peasant. At every man's door there hangs that black knocker, and Death hath but to uplift it and the dread sound is heard, and the uninvited guest sits down to banquet on our flesh and blood. Die I must. No physician can stretch out my life beyond its allotted term. I must cross that river Jordan. I may use a thousand stratagems, but I cannot escape. Even now I am today like the deer surrounded by the hunters in a circle, a circle which is narrowing every day; and soon must I fan and pour out my life upon the ground. Let me never forget, then, that while other things are uncertain, Death is sure.

3. Then, looking a little further into shade, let me remember the time of my Death. To God it is fixed and certain. He has ordained the hour in which I must expire. A thousand angels cannot keep me from the grave an instant when that hour has struck. Nor could legions of spirits cast me into the pit before the appointed time.

"Plagues and death around me fly,
Till he please I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit,

Till the God of love sees fit.

All our times are in his hand. The means, the way I shall die, how long I shall be in dying, the sickness and in what place I shall be seized with the contagion, Al these are ordained. God hath in his mind's eye the wave that shall engulf me, or the bed in which I shall breathe out my last. He knows the stones that shall mark my sleeping place, and the very worm that shall crawl o'er this face when it shall be cold in death. He hath ordained everything; and in that Book of Fate it stands, and never can it be changed. But to me it is quite uncertain. I know not when, nor where, nor how I shall breathe out my life. Into that sacred ark I cannot look - that ark of the secrets of God. I cannot pry between the folded leaves of that book which is chained to the throne of God, wherein is written the whole history of man. When I walk by the way I may fall dead in the streets; an apoplexy may usher me into the presence of my Judge. Riding along the road, I may be carried as swiftly to my tomb. While I am thinking of the multitudes of miles over which the fiery wheels are rimming, I may be in a minute, without a moment's warning, sent down to the shades of death. In my own house I am not safe. There are a thousand gates to Death, and the roads from Earth to Hades are innumerable. From this spot in which I stand there is a straight path to the grave; and where you sit there is an entrance into eternity. Oh, let us bethink, then, how uncertain life is. Talk we of a hair; it is something massive when compared with the thread of life. Speak we of a spider's web, it is ponderous compared with the web of life. We are but as a bubble; nay, less substantial. As a moment's foam upon the breaker, such are we. As an instant spray - nay, the drops of spray are enduring as the cars of heaven compared with the moments of our life. Oh, let us, then, prepare to meet our God, because, when and how we shall appear before him is quite unknown to us. We may never go out of this hall alive. Some of us may be carried hence on young men's shoulders, as Ananias and Sapphira of old. We may not live to see our homes again. We may have given the last kiss to the beloved, cheek, and spoken the last word of fondness to those who are near to our hearts. We are on the brink of our tombs,

"Ten thousand to their endless home

This solemn moment fly;
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die!"

4. But I must not linger here, but go on to observe the terrors which surround Death. I would call to your memory to-day the pains, the groans the dying strife, which make our affrighted souls start back from the tomb. To the best men in the world dying is a solemn thing. Though "I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies," and know that I have a portion among them that are sanctified, yet must it always give some trembling to the flesh, some quivering to the human frame, to think of breathing out my soul, and launching on an unknown sea. He that can laugh at death is a fool - stark, staring mad is he. He who can make jokes with regard to his end will find that if he should die jesting, it will be no jest to be damned. When this tent is being taken down, when this clay tenement begins to creak and shake in the rough north wind of Death, when stone after stone tumbles from its place, and all the bonds are loosened, it will be a terrible moment then. When the poor soul stands beneath the temple of the body, and sees it shake, sees rifts in its roof, sees the pillars tremble, and all the ruins thereof falling about it, it will be an awful moment - a moment which, if it were continued and lengthened, would be the most dread picture of hell that can be presented to us, for hell is called the second Death. An endless dying, the pang of death prolonged eternally, the woes and the grief of dissolution made to last without an end, that, I say, is one of the most terrible pictures of hell. Death itself must be a tremendous thing. Let me think, too that when I die I must leave behind me all that I have on earth. Farewell! to that house which I have so fondly called my home. Farewell! to that preside and the little prattlers that have climbed my knee. Farewell I to her who has shared my life and been the beloved one of my bosom. Farewell! All things - the estate, the "old, the silver. Farewell! earth. Thy fairest beauties melt away, thy most melodious strains die in the dim distance. I hear no more, and see no more, Ears and eyes are closed, and men shall carry me out and bury their dead out of their sight. And, now, farewell! to Al the means of grace. That passing bell is the last sound of the sanctuary that shall toll for me. No church bell now shall summon me to the house of God. If I have neglected Christ I shall hear of Christ no more, No grace

presented now; no strivings of the Spirit,

"Fix'd is my everlasting state,
Could I repent, 'tis now too late."

Death hath now closed up the window" of my soul If I am impenitent, an everlasting darkness, a darkness like that of Egypt, that may be felt, rests on me for ever. Ye may sing ye saints of God, but I must howl eternally. Ye may gather round the Sacramental Table and remember your Master's death, but I am cast away for ever from his presence, where there is weeping, and waning, and gnashing of teeth. This is to die, my friends, and to die with a vengeance, too. To the believer there are softening tints; there are lines in the picture which take out the blackness. The very shades help to make the believer's glory brighter, the grim passage of Death makes heaven shine with a superior lustre. He thinks of the lands beyond the flood, of the beatific vision, of the face of the exalted Redeemer, of a seat at his right hand, of crowns of glory, and of harps of immortal bliss. But to you who are ungodly and unconverted, Death has only this black side. It is the leaving of all you have, and of all you love. It is an entering upon eternal poverty, everlasting shame, and infinite woe. Oh that ye were wise, ye careless sinners - oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, and would consider your latter end.

5. I have thus you see pushed into another head which I meant to have dwelt upon for a moment, viz., the results of death. For, verily, its results and terrors to the wicked are the same. Oh that ye were wise to consider them. Let me, however, remind the Christian, in order that there may be a flash of light in the thick darkness of this sermon, that Death to him should never be a subject upon which he should loathe to meditate. To die! - to shake off my weakness and to be girded with omnipotence. To die! - to leave my pangs, and palms, and fears, and woe, my feeble heart, my unbelief, my tremblings and my griefs, and leap into the divine bosom. To die! What have I to lose by Death? The tumult of the people and the strife of tongues. A joyous loss indeed! To the believer Death is gain, unalloyed gain. Do we leave our friends by Death? We shall see better friends, and more numerous up yonder, in the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Do we

leave our house and comforts?" There is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do we lose our life? Ah no, we gain a better far; for remember that we live to die, we die to live, and then are live to die no more. Without any fraction of loss, death to the believer is a glorious gain. It is greatly wise, then, for a Christian to talk with his last hours, because those last hours are the beginning of his glory. He leaves off to sin and begins to be perfect; he ceases to suffer and begins to be happy; he renounces all his poverty and shamed and begins to be rich and honored. Comfort, then, comfort, then, ye sorrowing and suffering Christians. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Say unto them your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, and you shall see your Lord's face without A veil between.

II. I shall now turn to the second head of my discourse. Brethren, fellow immortals. I desire you now to CONSIDER THE WARNINGS WHICH DEATH HATH ALREADY GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US. We are so prone to turn away from this subject, that you must excuse me if I continue to bring you back again, again, and again to it, alluring the brief time that can be allotted to the discourse of this morning. Death hath been very near to many of us; he has crossed the ecliptic of our life many and many a time. That baleful planet has often been in close conjunction with us.

Let us just observe how frequently he has been in our house. Call ye then to mind, first of Al, how many warnings you have had in the loss of relatives. There is not a person here, I imagine who has not had to make a pilgrimage to the tomb, to weep over the ashes of your friends. During the few years that I have been the pastor of this church, how many times have I journeyed to the tomb. One after another of the valiant men in our Israel have been taken away. Many who were my spiritual sons and daughters, whom I buried first in the tomb of baptism, have I had to bury afterwards in the tomb of death. The scene is always changing. As I stand in my pulpit, I remark many an old familiar face. But I have to observe also, how many places there are which would have been empty, if it were not that God has sent other Davids to occupy David's seat. And, my dear friends, it cannot be long with some of you ere it shall be my mournful task, unless I die myself, to go creeping over your bodies to the tomb.

That funeral oration may soon be pronounced over some of you. And you have good reason to expect it when you think how one after another of those who were the friends of your youth have gone. Where is the wife with whom you lived joyously in the early days of your life? Or where is the husband whose fair young face so often looked on you with eyes of love? Where are those children who sprung up like flowers, but withered as they bloomed? Where are those brothers and those sisters, the elder born, that have crossed the flood before us? or, where those younger ones, whom we lived to see born, who shone with us for an hour, but whose sun even before it had reached its zenith, had set in eternal night? Brothers and sisters, Death has made sad inroads into some of our families. There be some of you who stand to day like a man upon the shore when the tide is swelling towards his feet. There came one wave, and it took away the grandmother; another came, and a mother was swept away; another came, and the wife was taken; and now it dashes at your feet. How long shall it be ere it break over you - and you, too, are carried away by the yawning wave into the bosom of the deep of Death? The Lord has given many of you serious and solemn warnings. I do entreat you, listen to them. Darken now, to the cry which comes up from the grave of those who being dead yet speak to you. Hear them now, those lately buried ones, as they cry, "Children, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, prepare to meet your God, lest ye should fail in the lest dread day."

Think, again, what solemn and repeated warnings we have had of late, not in our families, but in the wide, wide world. It is a singular fact, that afflictions and accidents never come alone. A few weeks ago, we were all shocked with the news, that one who sailed across the treacherous sea full many a time, and who at last had risen so high in his profession as to become captain of the largest vessel that was ever launched upon the deep, that he had suddenly perished in calm waters, and his spirit had appeared before his God. It seemed to us to be a sad thing, that one who had endured the tempest and the storm, perhaps a thousand times, should sink as a ship that founders in mid-ocean, when not a wave rocks her keel. He is at home - he has just left his family - his foot slips, and he finds a watery grave. Quick upon that, as one messenger follows another, came the news across the sea of the falling of a mill, in which so many

hundreds were at once overwhelmed by the ruins, and sent hurriedly into the presence of God. We can little tell what a thrill of horror went through the towns which are adjacent to that mill in America. Even ourselves, across leagues of the sea, felt stunned by the blow, when so large a number of our fellow-creatures were hurried from this state of being into another. Immediately after that, there came another calamity, which is just fresh in our memory. A train is whirling along, and suddenly the iron horse leaps from his road, and men who are talking together, as fully at ease as we are, amid the breaking of bones, and the crashing of timber, and whirlwinds of dust and steam, are snatched from time into eternity. And, now, this last week, how many tokens have we had that man is mortal? A judge who has long presided over the trials of his criminal countrymen, delivers his charge before a grand jury. He delivers it with his usual wisdom, calmness, and deliberation. He has finished; he pauses; he lifts the smelling bottle to his nose to refresh himself; he falls back; he is carried from the court to receive his own charge, to go from the judgment-seat on which he sat to the judgment-seat before which he must himself stand. Then, in the same week, a good man who has served his day and generation in a sister church of this city, is suddenly snatched away from before us. He who aided every good cause, and served his day and generation - perhaps you may know that I allude to Mr. Corderoy - is suddenly taken away, and leaves a whole denomination mourning over him. Nay, nearer than that has the stroke of death come to some of us. It was but last Wednesday that I sat in the house of that mighty servant of God, that great defender of the faith, the Luther of his age, Dr. Campbell; we were talking then about these sudden deaths, tattle thinking that the like calamity would invade his very family; but, alas! we observed in the next day's paper, that his second son had been swept overboard in returning from one of his voyages to America. A bold brave youth has found a liquid grave. So that here, there, everywhere, O Death! I see thy doings. At home, abroad, on the sea, and across the sea, thou art doing marvels. O thou mower! how long ere thy scythe shall be quiet? O thou destroyer of men, wilt thou never rest, wilt thou ne'er be still? O Death I must thy Juggernaut-car go crashing on for ever, and must the skulls and blood of human beings mark thy track? Yes, it must be so till He comes who is the King of life and immortality; then the saints shall die no more, but be as the angels of God. So then, Death has spoken very loudly to us

as a nation, as a people, and has spoken to many of us, very loudly, in our own family circles.

Now, man, I will come closer home to you still. Death has given home strokes to all of us. Put thy finger in thy own mouth, for thou hast Death's mark there. What mean those decaying teeth, those twitching pains of the gum? - an agony despised by those alone who feel it not. Why do some parts of the house tremble and hurry to decay? Because the rottenness that is in the teeth is in the whole body. You talk of a decayed tooth: remember, it is but part of a decayed man. You are yourself rotting, but a little less rapidly. For, to some of you, what warnings Death has given. He has laid his cold hand upon your head and frozen your hair; and there it lies in snowy flakes upon your temples. Or, perhaps, he has put that hand yet more heavily upon it, and now your bare head is exposed to the rays of the sun, and, remember, this is but a type of the exposure of your bare soul to the stroke of death. What signs have we all had in our bodies, especially the aged, the infirm, the consumptive, and the maimed? What mean those lungs that are so soon exhausted of their breathing if you travel up a flight of stairs to your bed? Why is it you need your optic glasses to your eyes, but that they that look out of the windows are darkened? Why that affected hearing? Why that failure of the voice, that weakness of the entire body, that accumulation of the flesh, or that prominence of the bones and leanness of the body? What are all these but stabs from the hand of Death? They are, if I may say so, his warrants which he presents to you, summons you in a little time to meet him in another place, to do your last work, and take your last farewell. Oh! if we would but look at ourselves, we bear Death's signs and tokens about us in every part of our body. But some of us have had yet more solemn warnings than these. If these suffice not, Death gives us a more thundering sermon. It is but a little while ago with me since Death with his axe seemed to be felling my tree. How the chips flew about me and covered the ground! It is a marvel to myself that I am here. Brought to Death's door, till the mind became distracted, and the body weakened, so that one could scarce stand upright, and yet again recovered.

"Tell it unto sinners - tell,
I am, I am, out of hell."

Still spared, and yet alive. You have had fever, cholera it may be. You have been stretched on your bed time after time; and each time the branch has creaked and bent almost double, till we have said, "Surely, it must snap." As a bowing wall have we been, and as a tottering fence; down it must come, so we thought; for a rough hand was shaking it, and moving us to and fro. There was not a pillar that stood firm. There was not a beam or rafter that did not quiver. We said, in the bitterness of our soul, "My days are cut off, and I shall go down to my tomb before my time." Well, man, and yet you are living in sin, as careless and unconcerned as you were before. Remember, if you will not hear Death's tongue you shall feel his dart. If you will not think of God when he gives you a warning from a distance, you shall be made to feel God, for "he shall tear you in pieces, and none shall deliver." Methinks I see this morning, Death fitting his arrow to the bow. He is drawing it, pulling it tighter, and tighter still; and the marvel is that he can hold the arrow in his hand so long. "Shall it fly?" saith Death; "shall I let fly at yon wretch's heart? he will not repent; let me cut him off, and send him to his destruction." But the Lord saith, "Spare him yet a tattle longer." But, anon, Death's fingers are itching. He saith, "My Lord, let me take aim; I have bent my bow, and made it ready. So sharp is it that it would cut through bars of brass, or triple steel, to reach a human heart. My throat is thirsting after his blood. Oh, let me lay him; let him die." "No," cries the longsuffering voice of God; "spare him, spare him, spare him yet a little longer." But the time will soon arrive. Perhaps, ere that clock shall reach the half hour, it may be said in heaven, "Time is! Time was!" And then shall Death let fly; his arrow shall reach your heart; and you, fading down on earth, shall appear before the awful Judge of the quick and the dead, and receive your final sentence. And, good God, if you are unprepared to die! O careless sinner, what then will become of thee?

I have thus tried to make you think of Death's warnings in the loss of friends, and the deaths of many abroad; moreover in the failing of our bodies, and in the diseases which have begun to prey upon us.

III. And now to conclude, will you in the last place, PICTURE YOURSELF AS DYING NOW. Antedate for a very little while your last day. Suppose it

to have come. The sun has risen. "Throw up that window! let me see that sun for the last time! - this is my last day!" The physicians whisper with one another. You catch some syllables, and you learn the sad news that the case is hopeless. Much has been done for you, but skill has its limit. "He may survive," says the physician, "perhaps another twelve hours, but I hardly expect it will be so long as that. You had better gather his friends together to see him. Telegraph for the daughter; let her come up and see her father's face for the last time in the world." Yes, and now I begin to feel that the hour is coming. They are gathering round my bed. "Farewell! to you all, a last farewell! A father bids you follow him upwards to the skies. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' My hope stands fast and firm in Christ Jesus! Farewell! Farewell! I commend you to him who is the Father of the fatherless and the husband of the widow." But the hour draws nearer still. And now the lips refuse to speak. We have a something to communicate - a last word to a wife. We mutter through our closed teeth, but no audible sounds are heard, no words that can be interpreted. We breathe heavily. They stay us up in the bed with pillows. And now we begin to understand that expression of the hymn, "The cracking of the eyestrings." Now, we cannot see. Strange to say, we have eyes still, but we cannot see. If we want anything we must feel about us for it; but, no, we cannot lift our hands. They begin to hang down. We can still hear, and we hear the whisper the question, "Is he dead?" One of them says, "I think there is still a little breath." They come very near and try to hear us breathing. That can hardly be heard. What must our sensations be in that solemn moment! There is a hush now in the room. The watch alone is heard ticking, as the last sands drop from the hour glass. And now, the last moment is come. My soul is severed from my body. And where am I now - a naked, disembodied spirit? My soul, if thy hope be sound and real, thou art now where thou hast longed to be; thou art in the presence of thy Savior and thy God. Thou art now brother to the angels. Thou standest in the mid-blaze of the splendor of divinity. Thou seest Him, whom having not seen, thou hast loved; in whom believing, thou hast rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Ah, but there is another picture, the reverse of this, I cannot attempt to draw it, I will give you but the rough outline of it - a crayon sketch without the filling up. Yes, you are dying; and bad as you have been, you

have some that love you, and they gather round you. You cannot speak to them. Alas! you tell them more than if you could speak, for they see in your face that clammy sweat, those staring eyes. They see tokens that you have a vision of a something which would not bear to be revealed. You try to be composed; you quiet yourself. The doctor assists you to be damned easily: he drugs you, helps to send you to sleep. And now you feel that you are expiring. Your soul is filled with terror. Black horrors and thick darkness gather round you. Your eyestrings break. Your flesh and your heart fail. But there is no kind angel to whisper, "Peace, be still." No convoy of cherubim to bear your soul away straight to yonder worlds of joy. You feel that the dart of death is a poisoned dart, that it has injected hell into your veins; that you have begun to feel the wrath of God before you enter upon the state where you shall feel it to the full. Ah, I will not describe what has happened. As your minister it may be, I shall have to come up and see you in your last extremity, and I shall have to say to the mother, to the children, to your brothers and to your sisters, "Well, well, we must leave this in the hands of a Covenant God." I must speak as gently as I can, but I shall go away with the reflection: "O that he had been wise, that he had understood this, that he had considered his latter end." My heart, as I go down the stairs, shall ask me this question, "Was I faithful to this man? did I tell him honestly the way to heaven? if he is lost, will his blood be required at my hands?" I know that with regard to some of you the answer of my conscience will be, "I have preached as well as I possibly could the Word of God, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with a desire to be simple and to come home to the heart. I must leave the matter there. If they are lost, oh, horror of horrors! but I am clear of their blood." Ah, my hearers, I hope it will not be so with you, but that each one of you, dying, may have a hope; and rising again may possess immortality, and ascend to the throne of my Father and of your Father, to my God and to your God.

And, now, if there is any impression upon your minds, any serious thought, let me send you away with this one sentence. The way of salvation is plain: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damped." Believe - that is, trust - trust the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved. My God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust him now, for with some of you - and mark this last sentence - with some

of you it is NOW or NEVER.

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Men Chosen - Fallen Angels Rejected

Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. - Hebrews 2:16

The Almighty God, who dwelt alone, was pleased to manifest himself by created works, which should display his wisdom and his power. When he set about the mighty work of creation, he determined in his own mind that he would fashion a variety of works, and that all his creatures should not be of one form, nature, grandeur, or dignity; hence he made some grains of dust, and others mountains of stupendous magnitude; he created some drops and some oceans; some mighty hills and some valleys. Even in his inanimate works he preserved a wonderful variety; he gave not to all stars the same glory, neither to all worlds the same ponderous mass; he gave not to all rocks the same texture, nor unto all seas the same shape of fashion, but he was pleased, in the work of his hands, to observe an infinite variety. When he came to create living creatures, there, too, are distinctions that we must note. From the worm up to the eagle, from the eagle to the man, from the man to the angel; such are the steps of creating goodness in the fashion of things that are animate. He hath not made all creatures eagles, neither hath he fashioned all beings worms, but having a right to do what he wills with his own, he has exercised the right in making one creature—the majestic lion—king of the forest, and another, the harmless lamb, which shall be devoured, without power to resist its enemy, or defend itself. He has made his creatures just as it seemed him fit; he has given to one swiftness of foot, to another, speed of wing; to one, clearness of eye, to another, force of sinew. He hath not followed any fixed rule in his creation; but he hath done exactly as it pleased him in the arrangement of the forms which he hath animated. So, also, we must observe a great difference in the rational beings which he has created. He has not made all men alike; they differ mightily; from the man of the smallest intellect to the man of majestic mind, there are no few steps. And then there is the higher order of rational creatures, more superior to unrenewed man than man ever

can be to his fellows; namely—the order of angels. And in the fashioning of angels and men, God, again, has exercised his own right to create as he pleases; to do just as he wills with his own. Thence, all angels may not be alike in dignity, and all men are not alike in intellect. He hath made them to differ.

But now we wish to draw your attention to two instances of God's doing as he pleases in the fashioning of the works of his hands—the case of angels, and in the case of men. Angels were the elder born. God created them, and it pleased him to give unto them a free will to do as they pleased; to choose the good or to prefer the evil, even as he did to man: he gave them this stipulation—that if they should prefer the good, then their station in heaven should be for ever fixed and firm; but if they sinned, they should be punished for their guilt, and cast out from the presence of his glory into flames of fire. In an evil hour, Satan, one of the chiefs of the angels, rebelled; he tempted others, and he led astray a part of the stars of heaven. God, in his divine vengeance, smote those rebel angels, drove them from their heavenly seats, banished them from their abodes of happiness and glory, and sent them down to dwell for ever in the abyss of hell; the rest he confirmed, calling them the elect angels; he made their thrones eternally secure, and gave them an entail of those crowns which, sustained by his grace, they had preserved by the rectitude of their holy conduct. After that it pleased him to make another race of beings, called men. He did not make them all at once; he made but two of them, Adam and Eve, and he committed to their keeping the safety of their entire progeny throughout all generations; he said to Adam, as he had said to the angels, "I give unto thee free-will; thou mayest obey or disobey, as thou pleasest. There is my law; thou art not to touch yon tree. The command is by no means irksome. To keep that command will not be difficult to thee, for I have given thee free-will to choose the good." However, so it happened, much to the misery of man, that Adam broke the covenant of works; he touched the accursed fruit, and in that day he fell. Ah! what a fall was there! Then you, and I, and all of us fell down, while cursed sin did triumph over us; there were no men that stood; there were some angels that stood, but no men, for the fall of Adam was the fall of our entire race. After one portion of the angels had fallen, it pleased God to stamp their doom, and make it fast and firm; but when man had

fallen, it did not so please God; he had threatened to punish him, but in his infinite mercy he selected the major portion of the human race, whom he made the objects of his special affection, for whom he provided a precious remedy, to whom he covenanted salvation, and secured it by the blood of his everlasting Son. These are the persons whom we call the elect; and those whom he has left to perish, perish on account of their own sins, most justly, to the praise of his glorious justice. Now, here you notice divine sovereignty; sovereignty, that God chose to put both men and angels on the footing of their free-will; sovereignty, in that he chose to punish all the fallen angels with utter destruction; sovereignty, in that he chose to reprove the whole human race, and to grant an eternal pardon to a number, whom no man can number, selected out of men, who shall infallibly be found before his right hand above. My text mentions this great fact, for when properly translated it reads thus:—"He took not up angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." As this text has two translations, I shall give you the two meanings as briefly as I can.

I. In the first place, the translation of our authorised version runs thus:—"He took not on him the nature of angels." Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he came from heaven to die, did not take upon himself the nature of angels. It would have been a stoop, more immense than if a seraph should have changed himself into an emmet, for the Almighty Son of God to have been clothed in the garb of even the archangel Gabriel; but his condescension dictated to him, that if he did stoop, he would descend to the very lowest degree; that if he did become a creature, he would become, not the noblest creature, but one of the most ignoble of rational beings, that is to say, man; therefore, *he did not stoop to the intermediate step of angelship, but he stooped right down and became a man.* "He took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Let us notice the wisdom and the love of this, and I think there will be something to cause us to glorify God for so doing.

1. In the first place, if Christ had taken upon himself the nature of angels, *he could never have made an atonement for man.* Setting aside the thought that if he came to save man it would have seemed improper if he had come in the garb of angels, you must allow, that if he had done so, he could not have seen death. How could angels die? We can suppose that

their spirit may become extinct, if God should will it; we can suppose the entire annihilation of that to which God alone supplies immortality; but since angels have no bodies, we cannot suppose them capable of death, for death is the separation of the body and the soul; therefore, it behooved Christ that he should take upon himself the form of a man, that he might become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Had angels been standing by, they would have said, "Oh! mighty Master, take our radiant robes. Oh! take not the poor every-day garb of humanity, take our glittering garments all bedight with pearls." And Gabriel would have said, "Come, take my wings, thou mighty Maker, and I shall count myself too honoured to have lost them for thy sake. There, take this crown and this mantle of azure, wherewith to clothe thyself, thou Son of God; put my silver sandals on thy feet; become not man, but an angel, if thou wilt stoop." "But no," he would have said, "Gabriel, if I were in thy dress I could not fight with death; I could not sleep in the tomb; I could not feel the pangs and agony of dissolution, therefore, I must, I will, become a man." "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

2. Had our Saviour become an angel, we must note, in the next place, that *he would never have been a fitting example for us*. I cannot imitate an angelic example in all points, it may be very good, so far as I can imitate, but it cannot, in all points, be my pattern. If you would give me something to imitate, give me a man like myself; then I may attempt to follow him. An angel could not have set us the same holy and pious example that our Saviour did. Had he descended from on high in the garb of one of those bright spirits, he might have been a fine example for those brilliant cherubs who surround his throne; but we, poor mortal men, condemned to drag the chain of mortality along this earthly existence, would have turned aside and said, "Ah! such a thing is too high for us, we cannot attain unto it;" and we, therefore, should have stopped short. If I am to carve marble, give me a marble statue which I am to copy; and if this mortal clay is to be cut out into the very model of perfection, as it is to be by God's Spirit, then give me man for my example; for a man I am, and as a man, I am to be made perfect. Not only could not Christ have been a Redeemer, but he could not have been our exemplar, if he had taken upon himself the nature of angels.

2. Sweetly, also, let us remember that if Christ had been an angel, *he could not have sympathised with us*. In order to sympathise with our fellow-creatures we must be something like them. Suppose a man made of iron, or of brass; could be told of sickness or of illness: could he understand it? I would not have him for a nurse; I would not care to have such a being for my physician; he could not feel for me; he could not sympathise with me. No, even our own fellow-creatures cannot sympathise with us unless they have suffered as we have done. I have heard of a lady who never knew poverty in all her life, and consequently she could not sympathise with the poor. She heard the complaint that bread was extremely dear, when it was running up to fourteen-pence a loaf. "Oh!" she said, "I have no patience with the poor people, grumbling about the dearness of bread. If bread is so dear, let them live on penny buns; they are always cheap enough." She had not been in the position of the poor, and, therefore, she could not sympathise with them; and no man can sympathise with another, to any great extent, unless he has been in some measure in the same position, and endured the same trouble. "It behooved him, therefore, that he should be made in all points like unto his brethren, that he might be a faithful high priest;" "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." But if he had been an angel, what sympathy could he have had for me? Suppose I should tell an angel that I could scarcely resist my corruptions: the angel would look at me, and wonder what I meant. If I should tell him that I find this world a vast howling wilderness: how could he believe me, for he has never heard howlings, his ears have only been saluted by golden harps and sweet choral symphonies of praise. If I should tell him that I found it hard work to hold on my way, and keep close to my Saviour, the angel could only say, "I cannot sympathise with you, for I am not tempted as you are; I have no clogging nature to abate my ardent zeal, but day without night, with unflagging wing, I circle his throne rejoicing; nor have I a wish nor will to depart from my great Maker." There you see the Saviour's wisdom. He would become a man and not an angel.

4. Once more, Christ became a man, and not an angel, *because he desired to be one with his dear church*. Christ was betrothed to his church ere

time began; and when he came into the world he virtually said, "I will go with thee, my bride, and I will delight myself in thy company. Angels' garments were not a fitting wedding dress for me to wear, if I am to be bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh. I am allied to thee by a union firm and strong. I have called thee Hephzibah, my delight is in thee; and I have said, thy land shall be called Beulah, that is, married. Well, if I am married to thee, I will live in the same condition with thee; it were not fit that husband should live in palace, and that wife would live in cottage; it were not meet that husband should be arrayed in gorgeous robes, and wife in meaner garments." "No," said he to his church, "if thou dwellest upon earth, I will; if thou dwellest in a tabernacle of clay, I will do the same;

"Yea, said the Lord, with her I'll go,
Through all the depths of care and woe,
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear."

Christ cannot bear to be different from his church. You know, he would not be in heaven without her, therefore, did he make that long, long journey, to redeem her and visit her, and when he came on this good errand, he would not that she should be made of clay, and he should not be made of clay too; he was the head, and it would have been out of order that the head should have been of gold, and the body of clay; it would have been like Nebuchadnezzar's image, that must be broken. "Since the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he must also take part in the same," for he became "perfect through suffering," since he was "the captain of our salvation." Thus, again, you see his love and his wisdom, that he "took not on him the nature of angels, but took upon him the seed of Abraham."

5. Again, if Christ had not taken upon him the nature of man, *then manhood would not have been so honorable or so comfortable as it is*. I consider that to be a Christian man is to be the greatest thing that God has made. Little as I am, I can say of myself, if I am a child of God, I am next to my Maker. There is an infinite, an awful, an immeasurable distance; but, save Jesus Christ himself, there is no being between man

and God. As for an angel, he is less than redeemed man. "Are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to be ministers unto us who are heirs of salvation?" Without controversy, the less is minister unto the greater, and the greater shall not attend the less; therefore, the angels are less than men, for they minister to us. Manhood is a noble thing, for God wore manhood once; manhood is a glorious thing, for it was the robe of the eternal; "God was made flesh and dwelt among us;" therefore, flesh is dignified and glorified. As I said, it would not be so comfortable to be a man, if Christ had not been a man. For I know that I must die; now, my comfort is, that I shall rise again; but I should not have had that comfort if Christ had not been a man, and if he had not died and risen again. Oh! death, I have often seen thy dungeon, and I have thought, how can it be that any should escape therefrom; the walls thereof are thick, and against the door is a ponderous stone; it is sealed fast, and watchers guard it. Oh! death, where is the man that can rend thy sepulchre, or open thy door? Thine iron bars, O death, cannot be filed by mortal, and thy chains are too heavy to be snapped by the finite; but I take comfort, for there was a *man* who broke the bonds of death; there was one who snapped the fetter, cut the bars of brass, unlocked the gates, and made his way triumphant through the sky; in that man I see an instance of what I, too, shall do; when the loud trump of the archangel shall startle my sleeping atoms, I, too, shall find it easy to rise, for as the Lord my Saviour rose, so all his followers must; and therefore, death, I look upon thy dungeon as one that must be opened again, for it has been opened once; I look upon thy worm as but a little thing that must yield up its prey, and give back the flesh whereon it fed; I look upon the stone of thy sepulchre as but some pebble of oceans' shingly beach, which I shall cast away with eager hand, when I shall burst the cerements of the grave, and mount to immortality. It is a comfortable thing to be a man, because Christ died and rose again; but had he been an angel, the resurrection would not have had that great and glorious proof, nor should we have been so content to be human, seeing there would be death, but no immortality and life.

II. Thus I have tried to explain the first part of the subject; and now for the second. The literal translation, according to the marginal reading, is, "*He took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham,*" by which is

meant, that Christ did not die to save angels, though many of them needed salvation, but he died to save fallen man. Now, I like every now and then to give the opponents of the great doctrines of grace something hard to put between their teeth. I have often been told, that election is a most dreadful doctrine and to teach that God saves some, and lets other perish, is to make God unjust. Sometimes I have asked how that was; and the usual answer I have got is this: Suppose a father should have a certain number of children, and he were to put some of his children into a terrible dungeon, and make the rest of them happy, would you think that father was just? Well, I reply, you have supposed a case, and I will answer you. Of course I should not: the child has a claim upon his father, and the father is bound to give him his claim; but I want to know what you mean by asking that question. How does that apply to the case of God? I did not know that all men were God's children; I knew that they were God's rebellious subjects, but I did not know that they were his children. I thought they did not become his children till they were born again, and that when they were his children, he did treat them all alike, and did carry them all to heaven, and give them all a mansion; and I never did hear that he sent any of his children to hell; true, I have heard *you* say so; I have heard *you* say that some of his children fall from grace, and he therefore sends them to hell, and I leave you to solve the problem how that is just; but, sir, I do not allow that all God's creatures are his children, and I have got a small question for you. How do you explain this—that the devils and fallen angels are all lost, and yet, according to your own showing, fallen men have all a chance of being saved? How do you make that out? "Oh!" say you, "that is a different matter; I was not calculating about fallen angels." But if you were to ask the devil about it, he would not tell you it was a different matter; he would say, "Sir, if all men are God's children, all devils are quite as much so. I am sure they ought to stand on the same footing as men, and a fallen angel has as much right to call himself one of God's children as a fallen man." And I should like you to answer that devil on that subject on your own hypothesis. Let Satan, for once, ask you a question, "You say it is unfair of God to send one of his children to hell, and take another to heaven. Now, you have said all creatures are his children. Well, I am a creature, and, therefore, I am his child. I want to know, my friend," says Satan, "how you make it just that my Father should send me to hell, and let you go to

heaven?" Now, you must settle that question with the devil; I will not answer for you. I never supposed such a case; my views never bring me into such a dilemma, but you are in for the trouble, and you may get out of it the best way you can. On my principle, the deed is just enough; men and devils have both sinned and have both deserved to be damned for their sins; God, if he shall so resolve, can justly destroy them all, or he may save them all, if he can do it with justice; or, he may save one of them if he pleases, and let the others perish; and if as he has done, he chooses to save a remnant, and that remnant shall be men, and if he allows all the fallen angels to sink to hell, all that we can answer is, that God is just, and he has a right to do as he pleases with his creatures. You know, you give to the queen the right to pardon a rebel when she sees fit, and will you not give that right to God? "No," say you, "not unless he pardons all." Well, sir, then there were no right at all in that; the queen would not thank you if you gave her liberty to pardon all; she would say, "No, there are instances where it is to my honor and to the honor of my laws not to pardon, and, therefore, I will not do it; there are other instances where it is to the honor of my clemency, and not hurtful to my laws, and, therefore, these I pardon, and I uphold my right to do it." Now, what you will give to a king or an emperor you will deny to God; but I stand here to claim this right for him, and deny it, if you please; you will have to deny it in the teeth of the Scriptures, for they do authoritatively declare, that God is a Sovereign; that he "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens."

Now, come, if our friend will let us, we will, for a moment, just consider this case: how it is that devils are lost, and some men are saved.

1. In the first place, *I do not think it is because of any difference in the sin*. When two criminals are brought before a judge, if one of them is to be saved, and the other punished, very likely the judge will say, "Who is the greatest offender? Let the greatest offender die, and let the less offender be saved." Now, I do not know that Satan was a greater offender than man; I am not sure that the fallen angels sinned more than man did. "Why, sir," you say, "man's sin was a very little one; he only stole some of his Master's fruit." Ay, but if it was such a thing to do, what a little thing it would have been not to do it! If it were so little a thing, how easily he

might have avoided it! and, therefore, because he did it, it became all the greater sin. "Oh!" you say, "but Satan was proud, and the fallen angels were proud." And are not *you* pretty tolerably in the same direction my friend? at any rate, Adam was. "But," you say, "Satan was rebellious." Well if *you* were not a rebel, you would not talk so; if you had not rebelled against God, you would not set yourself up to deny his sovereignty. "But," you say, "the devil was a liar from the beginning." I wonder how long it is since *you* have spoken the truth, sir; you know how to lie as well as he, and though you may not have developed your sin as much as the fallen angels have done, if God were to let you alone, and take the curb off, I wonder that would be the difference between you and the devil. I believe, that if men were allowed to do just as they liked, and there were no government over them, they would almost go beyond Satan. Look at Robespierre, in France; look at the doings of the Reign of Terror; turn to heathen countries; I dare not tell you what abominable vices, what lascivious sins are committed there in public; I point you to Sodom and Gomorrah, and I ask you what man may become; and I say that I do not know but that a man might become as vile as a devil, if God's restraining mercy were taken from him; at any rate I do not say but that Adam's sin was as great as Satan's. "Ah!" you say, "but Adam was tempted to do it." Yes, that was some excuse; but so were the greater part of the devils. It is true, Satan was not tempted; he did it of his own free will; but he tempted the other spirits, and therefore, the excuse which will do for man will do for the great mass of fallen spirits; and why did not God, therefore, select a portion of the fallen spirits to be saved? I answer, that you can never find any reason except this, "Shall I not do what I will with mine own;" and we must fall down, and breathlessly admire the infinite sovereignty that passed by angels, and saved man.

2. But suppose there is not much difference in their sin, the next question is, *which of those two beings is the most worth saving?* Which is the most valuable creature? Which would serve his Maker most, if his Maker should spare him? And I defy any of you to hold, that a sinful man is a more valuable creature than an angel. Why, if God had looked at profit, speaking after the manner of men, it would be more profitable to him to save the angel. Could not the restored angel serve him better than restored man? If I serve God, day after day, yet at night I must rest; but

the angels serve day without night in his temple. If my zeal be ever so intense, yet my body must flag; but angels know not weariness; and if saved, I shall make but a poor courtier to stand around his throne, but yon bright fallen seraph would, if he had been delivered, have made a very peer to grace the halls of the Almighty. If I shall ever be carried to heaven, I have no bright angelic honors, and my nature when ennobled, will not surpass what an angel might have been if God has so decreed; but if Satan had been saved, oh! how loudly would he have sung, and with what glory would he have marched through heaven, to the praise and glory of the grace which rescued him from hell! Therefore, if God had in that thought of his own profit, he would sooner have saved angels than have saved men.

3. Another thought. Sometimes the government will say, "Well, here are two persons to be executed; we desire to save one; *which of the two would be the most dangerous character to allow to continue an enemy?*" Now, which could hurt God the most, speaking as man would speak, a fallen angel, or a man? I answer, that fallen man can do but little injury to divine government, compared to a fallen angel; a fallen angel is so subtle, so powerful, so swift, so able to fly on the lightning's wings, that he can do ten times more injury to his Maker, if indeed, his Maker can be injured, than ever man could do; so that if there had been any consideration of this kind in the divine mind, God would have selected the devils to save them, since they could, if saved, do him the most glory, and if not saved, do him the most injury.

4. And yet one more consideration here, to show you still further how sovereign is the divine will in this matter. Perhaps it would be said, if one is to be saved, let that one be saved who would take the least trouble to saved. Now, which could be saved with the greatest ease, should you suppose a fallen angel, or a fallen man? For my part, I can see no difference; but if there be any, it strikes me that a restoration does not put things one-half so much out of order as a revolution; and to have restored the angels to the place from which they had fallen, speaking as a man must speak, would not have been so hard as to have taken fallen man out of the place from which he had fallen, and placed him where fallen angels had once stood.

If Satan had entered heaven, it would have been like a restoration—an old king come back to his ancient throne; but when man goes there, it is like a king going to a new dynasty—a new kingdom; it is man entering into the angel's place; and for that you know, there must be sanctifying grace and purchasing love. That might have been needed for fallen angels, but certainly not more for them than for fallen man. Here, then, we are brought back to the one only answer, that God saves men, and not angels, just because he chooses to do it; and he says to angels who have perished, "nay, but O! Satan, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

5. But, you may say, *God saved man because he pitied him*. But then why did not he pity the devils? I know two men living on three or four shillings a week. I pity one of them very much, indeed; but the other, who is no better off, I pity him the most, for he once knew better times. Man, it is true, fell out of Eden; but Satan fell out of heaven, and is the more to be pitied on account of the greatness of his fall; and, therefore, if pity had ruled the day, God would have decided for the fallen angels, and not for fallen man.

But I think I hear some one whispering again, "Ay, but I do not see that first part: you said, that you did not know but the sin of man was as great as the sin of Satan." Well, I beg to repeat it; and I say another thing, that, mighty wise as you may be, you do not know any difference either; for do you think, if the sins were different, the punishment would be the same? Certainly not, you say; the same punishment for the same sin. Well, now, devils and men are to be in the same hell; the lake of fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels is the place into which men are cast; and therefore I defy you to prove that their sin is not the same. I believe, if it be not the same in degree, it is the same in quality, and the same in nature. And, therefore, a fallen angel and a fallen man stand on a par; so that if God makes a difference, he makes it only because he will make it, and gives no account of his dealings. This is a knife which cuts up root and branch everything like merit; it takes away from the free-willer any chance of charging God with injustice; for how can he prove God unjust in saving one man and not another, when he dares not hint that he is

unjust in saving some men, and letting devils perish?

And now I have closed this subject; and I must just make a practical reflection or so, and then I shall have done. Some may rail at this doctrinal preaching, and they will go out and call me an Antinomian. I will not be at all particular about that, so long as I can make them angry; for if a man hates the truth, I shall never be backward in stirring up his wrath; and if any man offends my God then let him be offended. Far better for him to show his opposition; for then, perhaps, he may know that it is in him, and repent of it before God. But I will show you that this is a practical subject. It is practical in this way: that if any man does not submit to God's right to do with him as he pleases, he has very grave reason to doubt his own piety. "Ay," you say, "too cutting by half." Now, I do not mean to say anything harsh or bigoted; but I do mean to say that again. I do not assert that if you doctrinally deny it, but if you in your hearts hate the doctrine, that God has a right to save or to destroy you, you give me very grave cause to suspect whether you ever knew your own position in the sight of God; for I am quite sure that no humble sinner will doubt God's right to destroy him, and I believe that no man who has any love to his fellow-creatures, believing that God has a right to destroy him will ever quarrel with God, if he chose to save another who is only as bad as himself. I tell you, it is your unhumiliated pride that kicks against these doctrines; it is your infernal self-conceit, born of hell, that makes you hate this truth. Men have always kicked at it, and they always will. When Christ preached it once, they would have dragged him out to the brow of the hill, and cast him down headlong; and I expect always to meet with opposition, if I speak out broadly and plainly; but let me tell you solemnly, if you do not believe God's right over you, I am afraid your heart has never been right before God.

But another practical conclusion. If you do feel this to be true, that God has a right to send you soul to hell, and that if he saves another, and not you, he will be just, but if he save you it will be an act of free distinguishing love, you show a spirit which is very near to the kingdom of heaven. I do not think a man will admit this truth unless he has a change of heart: he may admit it in his mind, but he will not feel it to be true, unless he has got a new heart and a right spirit. I will not go so far as

to say that a man who believes divine sovereignty must be a Christian; that were to stretch the truth; but I do say, that if a man is humble enough, meek enough, contrite enough, to lay himself down at the Saviour's feet with this,

"Nothing in my hands I bring;"

"I have no righteousness, no claims; if thou shouldst damn me, thou wouldst be just; if thou savest me I will thank thee for ever;" such a man must have had a work of grace in his heart to bring him to such a conclusion. If thou canst say that, then, poor sinner, come to Jesus, come to Jesus; for he will never cast you out. Let me tell you a story about the prodigal, and then I have done. The prodigal set out one morning, and he had a long, long journey to go; he had a high hill to climb, called the hill of his own sins and follies. He had scarcely got to the top of it, and was getting near the tower, called the tower of true repentance, when his father, who was sitting on the top of the house, saw him; and when he saw him, he ran out immediately, and ere his son had got to the door, he had fallen on his neck and kissed him. He took his son into his house, and a feast was prepared, and they sat down to it; but after the son had sat down, the farther turned his eye to him, and he was not eating, but the tears were rolling down his cheeks. "My son," said the father, "why don't you eat? Why dost thou weep, my son? The feast is all prepared for thee." Bursting into tears, the son said, "Father, dost thou forgive me all?" "Yes," says the father, "I do. Eat my son. Do not weep." The prodigal went on. The father turned his eye to the other guests, and by-and-bye, looking on his son, he saw that he was weeping again, and not eating. Said the father, "Son, why don't you eat? The feast is all for you. Why do you weep, my son?" "Father," said he, with the tears rolling down his cheeks again, "will you let me stay here?" "Oh, yes, my son," said the father, "eat; do not weep; you shall stay here; you are my beloved son." Well, the prodigal went on, and the father looked at the other guests; but by-and-bye he turned his eyes again, and there was his son weeping once more. "My dear son," he asks, "why do you weep?" "Oh, father," said he, "will you *keep* me here? for if you do not, I know I shall run away. Father, will you *make* me stop here?" "yes, my son," said he, "that I will."

"My grace shall like a fether bind
That wandering heart to me."

The son wiped his eyes, went on with his meal, and never wept again. There, poor prodigal, there is something for thee; if thou wilt come to Christ, thou shalt always stay there; and over and above that, he will keep thee there. Therefore rejoice; for though he has a right to destroy thee, recollect, he will not; for his heart is full of love and pity towards thee. Only come to him, and thou shalt be saved.

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Mercy, Omnipotence, And Justice

The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. - Nahum 1:3

Works of art require some education in the beholder, before they can be thoroughly appreciated. We do not expect that the uninstructed should at once perceive the varied excellencies of a painting from some master hand; we do not imagine that the superlative glories of the harmonies of the prince of song will enrapture the ears of clownish listeners. There must be something in the man himself, before he can understand the wonders either of nature or of art. Certainly this is true of character. By reason of failures in our character and faults in our life, we are not capable of understanding all the separate beauties, and the united perfection of the character of Christ, or of God, his Father. Were we ourselves as pure as the angels in heaven, were we what our race once was in the garden of Eden, immaculate and perfect, it is quite certain that we should have a far better and nobler idea of the character of God than we can by possibility attain unto in our fallen state. But you can not fail to notice, that men, through the alienation of their natures, are continually misrepresenting God, because they can not appreciate his perfection. Does God at one time withhold his hand from wrath? Lo, they say that

God hath ceased to judge the world, and looks upon it with listless phlegmatic indifference. Does he at another time punish the world for sin? They say he is severe and cruel. Men will misunderstand him, because they are imperfect themselves, and are not capable of admiring the character of God.

Now, this is especially true with regard to certain lights and shadows in the character of God, which he has so marvelously blended in the perfection of his nature: that although we can not see the exact point of meeting, yet (if we have been at all enlightened by the Spirit) we are struck with wonder at the sacred harmony. In reading holy Scripture, you can say of Paul, that he was noted for his zeal - of Peter, that he will ever be memorable for his courage - of John, that he was noted for his lovingness. But did you ever notice, when you read the history of our Master, Jesus Christ, that you never could say he was notable for any one virtue at all? Why was that? It was because the boldness of Peter did so outgrow itself as to throw other virtues into the shade, or else the other virtues were so deficient that they set forth his boldness. The very fact of a man being noted for something is a sure sign that he is not so notable in other things; and it is because of the complete perfection of Jesus Christ, that we are not accustomed to say of him that he was eminent for his zeal, or for his love, or for his courage. We say of him that he was a perfect character; but we are not able very easily to perceive where the shadows and the lights blended, where the meekness of Christ blended into his courage, and where his loveliness blended into his boldness in denouncing sin. We are not able to detect the points where they meet; and I believe the more thoroughly we are sanctified, the more it will be a subject of wonder to us how it could be that virtues which seemed so diverse were in so majestic a manner united in one character.

It is just the same of God; and I have been led to make the remarks I have made on my text, because of the two clauses thereof which seem to describe contrary attributes. You will notice that there are two things in my text: he is "slow to anger," and yet he "will not at all acquit the wicked." Our character is so imperfect that we can not see the congruity of these two attributes. We are wondering, perhaps, and saying, "How is it he is slow to anger, and yet will not acquit the wicked?" It is because his

character is perfect that we do not see where these two things melt into each other - the infallible righteousness and severity of the ruler of the world, and his loving-kindness, his long-suffering, and his tender mercies. The absence of any one of these things from the character of God would have rendered it imperfect; the presence of them all, though we may not see how they can be congruous with each other, stamps the character of God with a perfection elsewhere unknown.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to set forth these two attributes of God, and the connecting link. "*The Lord is slow to anger;*" then comes the *connecting link*, "great in power." I shall have to show you how that "great in power" refers to the sentence foregoing and the sentence succeeding. And then we shall consider the next attribute - "He will not at all acquit the wicked:" *an attribute of justice.*

I. Let us begin with the first characteristic of God. He is said to be "SLOW TO ANGER." Let me declare the attribute and then trace it to its source.

God is "slow to anger." When Mercy cometh into the world, she driveth winged steeds; the axles of her chariot-wheels are glowing hot with speed; but when Wrath cometh, it walketh with tardy footsteps; it is not in haste to slay, it is not swift to condemn. God's rod of mercy is ever in his hands outstretched; God's sword of justice is in its scabbard: not rusted in it - it can be easily withdrawn - but held there by that hand that presses it back into its sheath, crying, "Sleep, O sword, sleep; for I will have mercy upon sinners, and will forgive their transgressions." God hath many orators in heaven; some of them speak with swift words. Gabriel, when he cometh down to tell glad tidings, speaketh swiftly; angelic hosts, when they descend from glory, fly with wings of lightning, when they proclaim, "Peace on earth, good will toward men;" but the dark angel of Wrath is a slow orator; with many a pause between, where melting Pity joins her languid notes, he speaks; and when but half his oration is completed he often stays, and withdraws himself from his rostrum, giving way to Pardon and to Mercy; he having but addressed the people that they might be driven to repentance, and so might receive peace from the scepter of God's love.

Brethren, I shall just try to show you now how God is slow to anger.

First I will prove that he is "slow to anger;" *because he never smites without first threatening.* Men who are passionate and swift in anger give a word and a blow; sometimes the blow first and the word afterward. Oftentimes kings, when subjects have rebelled against them, have crushed them first, and then reasoned with them afterward; they have given no time of threatening, no period of repentance; they have allowed no space for turning to their allegiance; they have at once crushed them in their hot displeasure, making a full end of them. Not so God: he will not cut down the tree that doth much cumber the ground, until he hath digged about it, and dunged it; he will not at once slay the man whose character is the most vile; until he has first hewn him by the prophets he will not hew him by judgments; he will warn the sinner ere he condemn him; he will send his prophets, "rising up early and late," giving him "line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." He will not smite the city without warning; Sodom shall not perish, until Lot hath been within her. The world shall not be drowned, until eight prophets have been preaching in it, and Noah, the eighth, cometh to prophesy of the coming of the Lord. He will not smite Nineveh until he hath sent a Jonah. He will not crush Babylon till his prophets have cried through its streets. He will not slay a man until he hath given many warnings, by sicknesses, by the pulpit, by providences, and by consequences. He smites not with a heavy blow at once; he threateneth first. He doth not in grace, as in nature, send lightnings first and thunder afterward; but he sendeth the thunder of his law first, and the lightning of execution follows it. The lictor of divine justice carries his axe bound up in a bundle of rods, for he will not cut off men, until he has reproved them, that they may repent. He is "slow to anger."

But again: God is also *very slow to threaten.* Although he will threaten before he condemns, yet he is slow even in his threatening. God's lips move swiftly when he promises, but slowly when he threatens. Long rolls the pealing thunder, slowly roll the drums of heaven, when they sound the death march of sinners; sweetly floweth the music of the rapid notes which proclaim free grace, and love, and mercy. God is slow to threaten. He will not send a Jonah to Nineveh, until Nineveh has become foul with

sin; he will not even tell Sodom it shall be burned with fire, until Sodom has become a reeking dung-hill, obnoxious to earth as well as heaven; he will not drown the world with a deluge, or even threaten to do it, until the sons of God themselves make unholy alliances and begin to depart from him. He doth not even threaten the sinner by his conscience, until the sinner hath oftentimes sinned. He will often tell the sinner of his sins, often urge him to repent; but he will not make hell stare him hard in the face, with all its dreadful terror, until much sin has stirred up the lion from his lair, and made God hot with wrath against the iniquities of man. He is slow even to threaten.

But, best of all, when God threatens, *how slow he is to sentence the criminal!* When he has told them that he will punish unless they repent, how long a space he gives them, in which to turn unto himself! "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for naught;" he stayeth his hand; he will not be in hot haste, when he hath threatened them, to execute the sentence upon them. Have you ever observed that scene in the garden of Eden at the time of the fall? God had threatened Adam that if he sinned he should surely die. Adam sinned: did God make haste to sentence him? 'Tis sweetly said, "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day." Perhaps that fruit was plucked at early morn, mayhap it was plucked at noontide; but God was in no haste to condemn; he waited till the sun was well nigh set, and in the cool of the day came, and as an old expositor has put it very beautifully, when he did come he did not come on wings of wrath, but he "*walked* in the garden in the cool of the day." He was in no haste to slay. I think I see him, as he was represented then to Adam, in those glorious days when God walked with man. Methinks I see the wonderful similitude in which the Unseen did veil himself: I see it walking among the trees so slowly - ay, if it were right to give such a picture - beating its breast, and shedding tears that it should have to condemn man. At last I hear its doleful voice: "Adam, where art thou? Where hast thou cast thyself, poor Adam? Thou hast cast thyself from my favor; thou hast cast thyself into nakedness and into fear; for thou art hiding thyself Adam, where art thou? I pity thee. Thou thoughtest to be God. Before I condemn thee I will give thee one note of pity. Adam, where art thou?" Yes, the Lord was slow to anger, slow to write the sentence, even though the command had been broken, and the

threatening was therefore of necessity brought into force. It was so with the flood: he threatened the earth, but he would not fully seal the sentence, and stamp it with the seal of heaven, until he had given space for repentance. Noah must come, and through his hundred and twenty years must preach the word; he must come and testify to an unthinking and an ungodly generation; the ark must be builded, to be a perpetual sermon; there it must be upon its mountain-top, waiting for the floods to float it, that it might be an every-day warning to the ungodly. O heavens, why did ye not at once open your floods? Ye fountains of the great deep, why did ye not burst up in a moment? God said, "I will sweep away the world with a flood." why, why did ye not rise? "Because," I hear them saying with gurgling notes, "because, although God had threatened, he was slow to sentence, and he said in himself, 'Haply they may repent; peradventure they may turn from their sin;' and therefore did he bid us rest and be quiet, for he is slow to anger."

And yet once more: even when the sentence against a sinner is signed and sealed by heaven's broad seal of condemnation, even then *God is slow to carry it out*. The doom of Sodom is sealed; God hath declared it shall be burned with fire. But God is tardy. He stops. He will himself go down to Sodom, that he may see the iniquity of it. And when he gets there guilt is rife in the streets. 'Tis night, and the crew of worse than beasts besiege the door. Does he then lift his hands? Does he then say, "Rain hell out of heaven, ye skies?" No, he lets them pursue their riot all night, spares them to the last moment, and though when the sun was risen the burning hail began to fall, yet was the reprieve as long as possible. God was not in haste to condemn. God had threatened to root out the Canaanites; he declared that all the children of Ammon should be cut off; he had promised Abraham that he would give their land unto his seed for ever, and they were to be utterly slain; but he made the children of Israel wait four hundred years in Egypt, and he let these Canaanites live all through the days of the patriarchs; and even then, when he led his avenging ones out of Egypt, he stayed them forty years in the wilderness, because he was loth to slay poor Canaan. "Yet," said he, "I will give them space. Though I have stamped their condemnation, though their death warrant has come forth from the court of King's Bench, and must be executed, yet will I reprieve them as long as I can;" and he stops, until at last mercy had had

enough, and Jericho's melting ashes and the destruction of Ai betokened that the sword was out of its scabbard, and God had awaked like a mighty man, and like a strong man full of wrath. God is slow to execute the sentence, even when he has declared it.

And ah! my friends, there is a sorrowful thought that has just crossed my mind. There are some men yet alive who are sentenced now. I believe that Scripture bears me out in a dreadful thought which I just wish to hint at. There are some men that are condemned before they are finally damned; there are some men whose sins go before them unto judgment, who are given over to a seared conscience, concerning whom it may be said that repentance and salvation are impossible. There are some few men in the world who are like John Bunyan's man in the iron cage, can never get out. They are like Esau - they find no place of repentance, though, unlike him, they do not seek it, for if they sought it they would find it. Many there are who have sinned "the sin unto death," concerning whom we can not pray; for we are told, "I do not say that ye shall pray for it." But why, why, why are they not already in the flame? If they be condemned, if mercy has shut its eye forever upon them, if it never will stretch out its hand, to give them pardon, why, why, why are they not cut down and swept away? Because God saith, "I will not have mercy upon them, but I will let them live a little while longer; though I have condemned them I am loth to carry the sentence out, and will spare them as long as it is right that man should live; I will let them have a long life here, for they will have a fearful eternity of wrath for ever." Yes, let them have their little whirl of pleasure; their end shall be most fearful. Let them beware, for although God is slow to anger he is sure in it.

If God were not slow to anger, would he not have smitten this huge city of ours, this behemoth city? - would he not have smitten it into a thousand pieces, and blotted out the remembrance of it from the earth? The iniquities of this city are so great, that if God should dig up her very foundations, and cast her into the sea, she well deserveth it. Our streets at night present spectacles of vice that can not be equaled. Surely there can be no nation and no country that can show a city so utterly debauched as this great city of London, if our midnight streets are indications of our immorality. You allow in your public places of resort - I mean you - my

lords and ladies - you allow things to be said in your hearing, of which your modesty ought to be ashamed. Ye can sit in theaters to hear plays at which modesty should blush; I say naught of piety. That the ruder sex should have listened to the obscenities of *La Traviata* is surely bad enough, but that ladies of the highest refinement, and the most approved taste, should dishonor themselves by such a patronage of vice is indeed intolerable. Let the sins of the lower theaters escape without your censure, ye gentlemen of England, the lowest bestiality of the nethermost hell of a playhouse can look to your opera-houses for their excuse. I thought that with the pretensions this city makes to piety, for sure, they would not have so far gone, and that after such a warning as they have had from the press itself - a press which is certainly not too religious - they would not so indulge their evil passions. But because the pill is gilded, ye suck down the poison; because the thing is popular, ye patronize it: it is lustful, it is abominable, it is deceitful! Ye take your children to hear what yourselves never ought to listen to. Ye yourselves will sit in gay and grand company, to listen to things from which your modesty ought to revolt. And I would fain hope it does, although the tide may for a while deceive you. Ah I God only knoweth the secret wickedness of this great city; it demandeth a loud and a trumpet voice; it needs a prophet to cry aloud, "Sound an alarm, sound an alarm, sound an alarm," in this city; for verily the enemy groweth upon us, the power of the evil one is mighty, and we are fast going to perdition, unless God shall put forth his hand and roll back the black torrent of iniquity that streameth down our streets. But God is slow to anger, and doth still stay his sword. Wrath said yesterday, "Unsheath thyself, O sword;" and the sword struggled to get free. Mercy put her hand upon the hilt, and said, "Be still!" "Unsheath thyself, O sword!" Again it struggled from its scabbard. Mercy put her hand on it, and said, "Back!" - and it rattled back again. Wrath stamped his foot, and said, "Awake, O sword, awake!" It struggled yet again, till half its blade was outdrawn; "Back, back!" said Mercy, and with manly push she sent it back rattling into its sheath; and there it sleeps still, for the Lord is "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

Now I am *to trace this attribute of God to its source*: why is he slow to anger?

He is slow to anger *because he is infinitely good*. Good is his name; "good" - God. Good is his nature; because he is slow to anger.

He is slow to anger, again, *because he is great*. Little things are always swift in anger; great things are not so. The surly cur barks at every passer-by, and bears no insult; the lion would bear a thousand times as much; and the bull sleeps in his pasture, and will bear much, before he lifteth up his might. The leviathan in the sea, though he makes the deep to be hoary when he is enraged, yet is slow to be stirred up, while the little and puny are always swift in anger. God's greatness is one reason of the slowness of his wrath.

II. But to proceed at once to the link. A great reason why he is slow to anger, is because he is GREAT IN POWER. This is to be the connecting link between this part of the subject and the last, and therefore I must beg your attention. I say that this word *great in power* connects the first sentence to the last; and it does so in this way. The Lord is slow to anger; and he is slow to anger because he is great in power. "How say you so?" - says one. I answer, he that is great in power has power over himself; and he that can keep his own temper down, and subdue himself, is greater than he who rules a city, or can conquer nations. We heard but yesterday, or the day before, mighty displays of God's power in the rolling thunder which alarmed us; and when we saw the splendor of his might in the glistening lightning, when he lifted up the gates of heaven and we saw the brightness thereof, and then he closed them again upon the dusty earth in a moment - even then we did not see any thing but the hidings of his power, compared with the power which he has over himself. When God's power doth restrain himself, then it is power indeed, the power to curb power, the power that binds omnipotence in omnipotence surpassed. God is great in power, and therefore doth he keep in his anger. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted, can bear offenses, because he is strong. The weak mind snaps and snarls at the little; the strong mind bears it like a rock; it moveth not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it, and cast their pitiful malice in the spray upon its summit. God marketh his enemies, and yet he moveth not; he standeth still, and letteth them curse him, yet is he not wrathful. If he were less of a God than he is, if he

were less mighty than we know him to be, he would long ere this have sent forth the whole of his thunder, and emptied the magazines of heaven; he would long ere this have blasted the earth with the wondrous mines he hath prepared in its lower surface; the flame that burneth there would have consumed us, and we should have been utterly destroyed. We bless God that the greatness of his power is just our protection; he is slow to anger because he is great in power.

And, now, there is no difficulty in showing how this link unites itself with the next part of the text, "He is great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." This needs no demonstration in words; I have but to touch the feelings, and you will see it. The greatness of his power is an assurance, and an assurance that he will not acquit the wicked. Who among you could witness the storm on Friday night without having thoughts concerning your own sinfulness stirred in your bosoms? Men do not think of God the punisher, or Jehovah the avenger, when the sun is shining, and the weather calm ; but in times of tempest, whose cheek is not blanched? The Christian oftentimes rejoiceth in it; he can say, "My soul is well at ease, amid this revelry of earth; I do rejoice in it; it is a day of feasting in my Father's hall, a day of high-feast and carnival in heaven, and I am glad.

"The God that reigns on high,
And thunders when he please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas,
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love,
He shall send down his heavenly powers,
To carry us above."

But the man who is not of an easy conscience will be ill at ease when the timbers of the house are creaking, and the foundations of the solid earth seem to groan. Ah! who is he then that doth not tremble? Yon lofty tree is riven in half; that lightning flash has smitten its trunk, and there it lies for ever blasted, a monument of what God can do. Who stood there and saw it? Was he a swearer? Did he swear then? Was he a Sabbath-breaker? Did

he love his Sabbath-breaking then? Was he haughty? Did he then despise God? Ah! how he shook then! Saw you not his hair stand on end? Did not his cheek blanch in an instant? Did he not close his eyes and start back in horror when he saw that dreadful spectacle, and thought God would smite him too? Yes, the power of God, when seen in the tempest, on sea or on land, in the earthquake or in the hurricane, is instinctively a proof that he will not acquit the wicked. I know not how to explain the feeling, but it is nevertheless the truth; majestic displays of omnipotence have an effect upon the mind of convincing even the hardened, that God, who is so powerful, "will not at all acquit the wicked." Thus have I just tried to explain and make bare the link of the chain.

III. The last attribute, and the most terrible one, is, "HE WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED." Let me unfold this, first of all; and then let me, after that, endeavor to trace it also to its scarce, as I did the first attribute.

God "will not acquit the wicked." How prove I this? I prove it thus. Never once has he pardoned an unpunished sin; not in all the years of the Most High, not in all the days of his right hand, has he once blotted out sin without punishment. What! say you, were not those in heaven pardoned? Are there not many transgressors pardoned, and do they not escape without punishment? Has he not said, "I have blotted out thy transgressions like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities?" Yes, true, most true, and yet my assertion is true also - not one of all those sins that have been pardoned were pardoned without punishment. Do you ask me why and how such a thing as that can be the truth? I point you to yon dreadful sight on Calvary; the punishment which fell not on the forgiven sinner fell there. The cloud of justice was charged with fiery hail; the sinner deserved it; it fell on him; but, for all that, it fell, and spent its fury; it fell there, in that great reservoir of misery; it fell into the Saviour's heart. The plagues, which need should light on our ingratitude, did not fall on us, but they fell somewhere; and who was it that was plagued? Tell me, Gethsemane; tell me, O Calvary's summit, who was plagued. The doleful answer comes, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is Jesus suffering all the plagues of sin. Sin is still punished, though the sinner is delivered.

But, you say, this has scarcely proved that he will not acquit the wicked. I hold it has proved it, and proved it clearly. But do ye want any further proof that God will not acquit the wicked? Need I lead you through a long list of terrible wonders that God has wrought - the wonders of his vengeance? Shall I show you blighted Eden? Shall I let you see a world all drowned - sea monsters whelping and stabling in the palaces of kings? Shall I let you hear the last shriek of the last drowning man as he falls into the flood and dies, washed by that huge wave from the hill-top? Shall I let you see death riding upon the summit of a crested billow, upon a sea that knows no shore, and triumphing because his work is done; his quiver empty, for all men are slain, save where life floats in the midst of death in yonder ark? Need I let you see Sodom with its terrified inhabitants, when the volcano of almighty wrath spouted fiery hail upon it? Shall I show you the earth opening its mouth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? Need I take you to the plagues of Egypt? Shall I again repeat the death-shriek of Pharaoh, and the drowning of his host? Surely, ye need not to be told of cities that are in ruins, or of nations that have been cut off in a day; ye need not to be told how God has smitten the earth from one side to the other, when he has been wroth, and how he has melted mountains in his hot displeasure. Nay, we have proofs enough in history, proofs enough in Scripture, that "he will not at all acquit the wicked." If ye wanted the best proof, however, ye should borrow the black wings of a miserable imagination, and fly beyond the world, through the dark realm of chaos, on, far on, where those battlements of fire are gleaming with a horrid light - if through them, with a spirit's safety, ye would fly, and would behold the worm that never dies, the pit that knows no bottom, and could you there see the fire unquenchable, and listen to the shrieks and wails of men that are banished for ever from God - if, sirs, it were possible for you to hear the sullen groans and hollow moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts, then would ye come back to this world, amazed and petrified with horror, and you would say, "Indeed he will not acquit the wicked." You know, hell is the argument of the text; may you never have to prove the text by feeling in yourselves the argument fully carried out, "He will not at all acquit the wicked."

And now we *trace this terrible attribute to its source*. Why is this ?

We reply, God will not acquit the wicked, *because he is good*. What! doth goodness demand that sinners shall be punished? It doth. The Judge must condemn the murderer, because he loves his nation. "I can not let you go free; I can not, and I must not; you would slay others, who belong to this fair commonwealth, if I were to let you go free; no, I must condemn you from the very loveliness of my nature." The kindness of a king demands the punishment of those who are guilty. It is not wrathful in the legislature to make severe laws against great sinners; it is but love toward the rest that sin should be restrained. Yon great flood-gates, which keep back the torrent of sin, are painted black, and look right horrible; like horrid dungeon gates, they affright my spirit; but are they proofs that God is not good? No, sirs; if ye could open wide those gates, and let the deluge of sin flow on us, then would you cry "O God, O God! shut-to the gates of punishment again, let law again be established, set up the pillars and swing the gates upon their hinges; shut again the gates of punishment, that this world may not again be utterly destroyed by men who have become worse than brutes." It needs for very goodness' sake that sin should be punished, Mercy, with her weeping eyes (for she hath wept for sinners), when she finds they will not repent, looks more terribly stern in her loveliness than Justice in all his majesty; she drops the white flag from her hand, and saith - "No; I called, and they refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; let them die, let them die;" - and that terrible word from the lip of Mercy's self is harsher thunder than the very damnation of Justice. O, yes, the goodness of God demands that men should perish, if they will sin.

And again, *the justice of God demands it*. God is infinitely just, and his justice demands that men should be punished, unless they turn to him with full purpose of heart. Need I pass through all the attributes of God to prove it? Methinks I need not. We must all of us believe that the God who is slow to anger and great in power is also sure not to acquit the wicked. And now just a home-thrust or two with you. What is your state this morning? My friend, man or woman, what is thy state? Canst thou look up to heaven and say, "Though I have sinned greatly I believe Christ was punished in my stead,
"My faith looks back to see,

The burden he did bear,
When hanging on the cursed,
And knows her guilt was there?"

Can you by humble faith look to Jesus, and say, "My substitute, my refuge, my shield; thou art my rock, my trust; in thee do I confide?" Then, beloved, to you I have nothing to say, except this, Never be afraid when you see God's power; for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you, than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify his wife or his child. "Nay," saith the woman, "is he strong? He is strong for me. Is his arm brawney, and are all his sinews fast and strong? Then are they fast and strong for me. While he lives, and wears a shield, he will stretch it over my head; and while his good sword can cleave foes, it will cleave my foes too, and ransom me." Be of good cheer; fear not his power.

But hast thou never fled to Christ for refuge? Dost thou not believe in the Redeemer? Hast thou never confided thy soul to his hands? Then, my friends, hear me; in God's name, hear me just a moment. My friend, I would not stand in thy position for an hour, for all the stars twice spelt in gold! For what is thy position? Thou hast sinned, and God will not acquit thee; he will punish thee. He is letting thee live; thou art reprieved. Poor is the life of one that is reprieved without a pardon! Thy reprieve will soon run out; thine hour-glass is emptying every day. I see on some of you death has put his cold hand, and frozen your hair to whiteness. Ye need your staff: it is the only barrier between you and the grave now; and you are, all of you, old and young, standing on a narrow neck of land, between two boundless seas - that neck of land, that isthmus of life, narrowing every moment, and you, and you, and you, are yet unpardoned. There is a city to be sacked, and you are in it - soldiers are at the gates; the command is given that every man in the city is to be slaughtered save he who can give the password. "Sleep on, sleep on; the attack is not to-day; sleep on, sleep on." "But it is to-morrow, sir." "Ay, sleep on, sleep on; it is not till to-morrow; sleep on, procrastinate, procrastinate." "Hark! I hear a rumbling at the gates; the battering-ram is at them; the gates are tottering." "Sleep on, sleep on; the soldiers are not yet at your doors; sleep on, sleep on; ask for no mercy yet; sleep on, sleep

on!" "Ay, but I hear the shrill clarion sound; they are in the streets. Hark, to the shrieks of men and women! They are slaughtering them; they fall, they fall, they fall!" "Sleep on; they are not yet at your door." "But hark, they are at the gate; with heavy tramp I hear the soldiers marching up the stairs! "Nay, sleep on, sleep on; they are not yet in your room." "Why, they are there; they have burst open the door that parted you from them, and there they stand!" "No, sleep on, sleep on; the sword is not yet at your throat; sleep on, sleep on!" It is at your throat, You start with horror. Sleep on, sleep on! But you are gone! "Demon, why toldest thou me to slumber? It would have been wise in me to have escaped the city when first the gates were shaken. Why did I not ask for the password before the troops came? Why, by all that is wise, why did I not rush into the streets, and cry the password when the soldiers were there? Why stood I till the knife was at my throat? Ay, demon that thou art, be cursed; but I am cursed with thee for ever!" You know the application; it is a parable ye can all expound; ye need not that I should tell you that death is after you, that justice must devour you, that Christ crucified is the only password that can save you; and yet you have not learned it - that with some of you death is nearing, nearing, nearing, and that with all of you he is close at hand! I need not expound how Satan is the demon, how in hell you shall curse him and curse yourselves because you procrastinated - how, that seeing God was slow to anger you were slow to repentance - how, because he was great in power, and kept back his anger, therefore you kept back your steps from seeking him; and here you are what you are!

Spirit of God, bless these words to some souls that they may be saved! May some sinners be brought to the Saviour's feet, and cry for mercy! We ask it for Jesus, sake. Amen.

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Mercy's Master Motive

For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. - Isaiah 48:9-11

The people of Israel in all their generations were full of evil. Those who came out of Egypt were a rebellious people, and for forty years multiplied their provocations of the Lord in the wilderness, till at last they all found a grave in the desert. The generation following were stiff-necked and rebellious like their fathers, and they continually went astray after false gods. Though by the good hand of the Lord they were settled in a goodly land which flowed with milk and honey, yet they forgot the covenant and sinned grievously. Though they were smitten and bruised for their idolatries, yet their successors did the same: whether they were ruled by the high priest, or governed by the judges, or presided over by a king, it little mattered, they started aside still, they were never to be depended upon. Idolatry and rebellion against God were ingrained in their nature; this sin was in their bone, and it would come out in their flesh. At last the Lord, whose glory tabernacled in Zion, appeared to grow weary of keeping house with such ungracious children and unfaithful servants, and he broke up the house altogether: he gave up his temple to be destroyed, the whole land to be ravaged, and the inhabitants to be carried away captive into Babylon. The Lord was wroth with his heritage, and therefore he gave his holy and beautiful house to the fire, and the carved work thereof to be broken down with hammers, while the whole Jewish state was utterly shattered, and of the kingdom not one stone was left upon another that was not cast down. Yet such is the immutability of God in his affection, that he had not long sent his people into captivity before his bowels yearned towards them again. He cast his eye over to Babylon, and saw his chosen sitting in sadness by the far-off rivers, hanging their silent harps upon the willows, and weeping at the remembrance of Zion; and he said unto himself, "I have chosen this people of old, and I have loved their fathers, and I have made them to be people unto me above all the people that are upon the face of the earth, therefore again I will have mercy upon them." Then the Lord looked to find a reason for mercy in their past conduct, but could see none. He looked at their present character for a

plea, and found none, for even while they were under the rod they exhibited hardness of heart, so that even the eyes of mercy could see no reason for favor in them. What should the Lord do? He would not act without a reason: there must be something to justify his mercy, and show the wisdom of his way. Since there is none in the offender, where shall mercy find her plea? Behold the inventiveness of eternal love! The Lord falls back upon himself; and within himself finds a reason for his grace. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." Finding a motive in his own glory which was bound up in the existence of Israel, and would have been compromised by their destruction, he turned unto them in love and kindness; Cyrus wrote the decree of emancipation, the Israelites came back to the land, and once again they sat every man under his own vine and fig tree, and ate the good of the land. So far we give the historical meaning of the passage.

We shall now use the text as an illustration of divine love in other cases, for from one deed of grace we may learn all. As God dealt with his people Israel after the flesh, in the same manner he dealeth with his people Israel after the spirit; and his mercies towards his saints are to be seen as in a mirror in his wondrous lovingkindness towards the seed of Abraham.

I shall take the text to illustrate—first, the conversion of the sinner; and secondly, the reclaiming of the backslider; and I pray, dear friends, most earnestly, that while I speak God may move with his Spirit upon your hearts, so that many of you may follow me, sincerely feeling that which I describe. While I am speaking may your souls be silently saying, "Yes, we know what that means, we have felt it; we gladly yield assent thereto, for we know it to be even so."

I. First, then, in reference to THE CONVERSION OF THE SINNER.

Let us suppose a case. It is God's will to save yonder sinner; he has ordained him to eternal life, and predestinated him to be conformed to the image of his dear Son. In due time the Lord begins to deal with the

man in a way of grace, and where does he find him? This shall be our first point this morning. He finds him so utterly ruined and depraved, that in him there is no argument for mercy, no plea for grace. I will suppose that such a soul is here this morning, awakened into a perception of his true condition, and craving for pardon. Soul, canst thou upon calm reflection find in thyself some good thing which may be pleaded in extenuation of guilt, or as a reason for forgiveness? What has been thy past conduct? Are there redeeming features in it? Alas, no! You must at once confess that your neck has been an iron sinew and your brow brass. You have been obstinate in sin; against many warnings, entreaties, and chastisements, you have persisted in it. Neither law nor gospel, providence nor conscience, has sufficed to turn you from your perverse ways. Your neck would not bend before either the terrors or the mercies of God. You have heard sermons which seemed enough to melt the heart of a stone, but you have been unmoved. You have seen others bowing themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ with holy joy, and yet you have done no such thing, but have been exceeding stout against the Lord of Hosts. Looking back upon the past also, you have to confess great impudence in your dealing with God; your brow has been brass. You have gone direct from his house to sin. He claims but one day in a week to himself but you have robbed him of that. It may be you have used his name in common jests, if not worse; you have dared to employ it profanely; you have scoffed at his people; you have derided everything that has been good, and in looking back you are obliged to confess that there are ten thousand reasons why God should not refrain from his anger, and overwhelming reasons why he should cut you off; but you cannot find so much as one single argument why he should be pleased to spare and save you. Every man who is really brought to Christ is first stripped of all on which he placed reliance as a ground of hope, and made to see that in himself there is guilt deserving condemnation, and rebellion demanding, punishment, but there is no quality which can enlist divine sympathy or secure, by its own excellence, divine regard. In us, by nature, there are no beauties of character, no charms of virtue, or loveliness of conduct to win the Almighty heart. We were called "transgressors from the womb," and rightly were we named.

O awakened soul, where art thou this morning? I wish I could speak with thee face to face, and hear thee say, "How can I expect divine goodness to

spare such a one as I am, for, in addition to all other sins, I have behaved very treacherously towards the Lord my God. Not long ago I was laid upon a sick bed, and then I repented, or thought I did, and I sought God very vehemently, and I vowed unto the Lord, that if I was raised up again, I would not rest till I had sought his face. But I left my couch and my repentance died on my sick bed. No sooner had I recovered than I returned to my sin, as a dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. After this, how can I have the face to go to God again? I lied unto him, I flattered him with my tongue, and my heart was not sound in his ways. My goodness was gone as the dew from the grass, or the meteor from the sky." Yes, poor soul, this confession is true, and it proves, beyond all question, that no reason for mercy can be drawn from your past conduct when you have been under the rod. Why should you be stricken any more? you will revolt more and more. Chastisement is lost upon you; your nature is hopeless; do what he may with you, you will not turn unto the Lord.

Ah, and I think I hear you say, "neither can I promise to God anything as to the future. I dare not say to him to-day, have mercy upon me, and then I will be very different from what I have been. No, my heart is too treacherous for me to trust it. I might sooner promise what the sea will be to-morrow, than pledge my future character. Changeful as the winds that blow from every quarter of the sky is my nature a fickle and false am I. I seem to-day resolved for good, to-morrow I may be resolved evil, and what I vowed to do most vehemently will never become fact. I dare not say that in the future I can see any reason why God should have mercy upon me." Oh, how glad my heart is when I can meet with a person who confesses this to be his case. It is a very sad difficulty to be in, a very painful one, when the soul at last abandons all arguments, extenuations, and apologies, and says, "Lord, I am guilty, I stand at thy judgment-seat and I can say nothing but guilty. Thou art clear when thou judgest, thou art just when thou condemnest, and if thou shouldst put on the black cap, and say, 'Prisoner at the bar, hast thou anything to say why sentence should not be speedily executed upon thee?' I could not even stammer out an apology, but must stand speechless before my judge."

My lips, with shame, my sins confess

Against thy law, against thy grace:
Lord, should thy judgment grow severe,
I am condemn'd, but thou art clear.

Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And, if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

In the text I beg you specially to remark our second thought, namely, that God himself finds the reason for his mercy, and, O ye heavens hear it, and be astonished O earth, he finds it in himself. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off." Here is the drift of the thought—the Lord is a patient God, and determines to make his patience glorious. When all was darkness the Lord said, "Let there be light!" and light was;—thus he glorified his power. When all was chaos Jehovah brought fair order out of grim confusion, and so glorified his wisdom. So in the sinner's case the Lord sees a wretch who has provoked him to his face for thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, perhaps seventy or eighty years, and as the Lord desires an opportunity to glorify his patience, he finds it ready to his hand. Having permitted that sinner to live when he scoffed at the gospel, scorned the atonement, and rejected the Redeemer, the Lord at length crowns his longsuffering by blotting out his sins, and forgiving all his misdeeds, whereat all creatures stand amazed, and men, and angels, and devils in astonishment cry out, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" Who but the God of boundless grace could have borne with such a provoking sinner, and then after all have taken him into his own bosom as his child.

God also would illustrate in the salvation of a sinner not only his patience, but his sovereign and abundant mercy towards sinners. If the Lord were to select this morning as the object of his grace some soul possessing merit, if such were the case, if he were to choose some soul in whom there was a claim for pity (of course I am supposing an impossibility), then there would be little glory to his grace; but when, casting his divine eyes of compassion all round this assembly, he selects a

soul that is bad throughout, black without and black within, a soul that has laid soaking in sin like the wool in the scarlet dye, till the color is ingrain, then he magnifies the glory of his grace. When he looks upon a wretch who confesses either by his silence or by his tearful speech, that he deserves his wrath, and says, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee: I have laid them on the Savior's head, go and sin no more, thy transgressions are blotted out, I have purchased thee unto myself by the death of my Son," oh, then, how the sinner's heart melts with gratitude, love, and wonder in the presence of such a God. The Lord is loved much in that heart which feels that much has been forgiven; thus God's glory begins to be known, and soon it spreads abroad; The neighbors and friends and kinsfolk of the pardoned penitent say unto one another, "Was it ever done after this sort before? Have you ever heard the like of this? Here is this man saved—this man who lay at hell's dark door, and seemed only fit to be cast into the pit!" Oh, how the shouts go up to high heaven from the watchful angels who joy over penitents, "Glory be unto almighty grace."

Now, look thee, man, once more, God can, by saving such a one as thou art, not only glorify his patience and grace but display his power. It is evident that it is not an easy task to conquer thee. Thou hast been like Leviathan whose heart is hard as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. "The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon; the arrow cannot make him see; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." Thou hast laughed at all men who would convince thee, and even the thunders of God's providence have not solaced to alarm thee; yet now the Lord intends to show what his Almighty grace can do. Now will he by a miracle of gracious power turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove. The conversion of little sinners, if such there be, would but little honor him; but if they be desperately set on mischief there is room for the eternal and ever blessed God to display the glory of his name. For his name's sake will he do it; even for his own sake will he do it, that men may see what his patience, grace, and power can accomplish. Truly the Lord's love does accomplish great moral wonders. Forgiveness even among men is often more potent than punishment. I have heard it related of a soldier at Woolwich, that he had frequently been drunk and disorderly; and, though he had been very frequently

imprisoned, and otherwise punished for his offenses, he was incorrigible. On one occasion he had incurred the severe penalty of the lash, and expected to receive it. He had no excuse to offer, and did not pretend to make any. He was sullen and obdurate. At last the commanding officer said to him, "We cannot do anything with you; we have imprisoned you; we have dogged you; yet we cannot improve you. There is only one thing we have never done with you, and that we are going to try; we forgive you." The culprit broke down at once. Hard as he was, this new treatment overcame him. That word, "You are fully forgiven," broke him down far more than the nine-thonged cat; he was never an offender again. Many a soul that has been very obstinate against God, even to persecuting the followers of the Lord Jesus, when the Lord has by the Holy Spirit said in his heart, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, I gave my Son to die for thee; I laid thy sins on him, and now I freely forgive thee, and take thee to be my child, my well-beloved." Oh, the heart dissolves and the rebellious will surrenders.

"I yield—by mighty love subdued,
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior's arises."

God grant that in many and many a case this may be true at this moment.

But, now, it may be that a soul here present is saying, "Well, I can see that God can thus find a motive for mercy in himself, when there is none in the sinner, but why is it that the Lord is chastening me as he is?" Possibly you are sickly in body, have been brought low in estate, and are grievously depressed in mind. God now, in our text, goes on to explain his dealings with you, that you may not have one hard thought of him. It is true he has been smiting you, but it has been with a purpose and in measure. "I have refined thee, but not with silver." You have been put into the furnace of affliction, but not,—note the "but,"—"but not with silver." Now, when silver is refined it requires the most vehement heat of all metals. God has not brought upon you the severest troubles. You have been chastised, but not as you might have been, nor as you deserved to have been. You have been made to suffer, but his strokes have been fewer

than your crimes and lighter than your guilt. You are now bowed down and depressed, but you are not quite without some rays of hope, especially now that you have heard the glad sound of a free-grace gospel. You have been "refined," that was God's object, but the process has been slight, it is "not with silver." The Lord has not dealt with you as men do with silver. What do they do with it? They put it into a fire that the dross may be consumed, and the silver may be made pure. Now, if you, poor sinner, had been put into such a fire as that, you would have been utterly destroyed, for in you there was no silver at all. As you are by nature you are not at all like silver, and the heat of a silver furnace would quite consume you. True it is that now his grace has created a vein of silver in your heart, but he does not yet intend to put you to extreme tests, for your weak graces would fail in the process. What he has sent to you has been with a view to awaken and to quicken, to take away your self-confidence and false peace, and so in a measure to refine you; but he does not depend for the refinement of either you or his people upon the furnace of affliction, he has other and more effectual modes of purification. The furnace of trouble is often used as a mode of refining, but after all it is only a means; the real refining fire is the Holy Ghost, the true purification lies in the blood of him who sits as a refiner. Remember it is not said that trouble will purify the sons of Levi; but "HE is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's sope," and "he," not with trouble but by himself, "shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Here suffering would only make a man more drossy; apart from divine grace affliction has no good effect. If we are not sanctified by the Eternal Spirit when in the furnace of affliction, and if the precious blood of Jesus be not applied to our soul, all the distress and grief in the world will not purify us. And so, poor soul, God has wrought in your trouble, but he does not mean to continue to vex you until your soul is perfectly refined, for that would be more than you could bear, even could it be possible. No, no, he will put away your sin by better means. Behold the precious blood! You have not to suffer for your sins, for Christ has suffered for them in thy stead. You are to be refined, but not by processes of a fiery character. Behold the sacred water from the river side of your Redeemer, for that will take your filthiness away. Behold the Eternal Spirit waiting to renew your soul—that will effectually remove your dross. The Spirit has refined you, in a measure, by what you have suffered, by awakening and

convincing you; but the true refining shall come to you in another way, therefore be of good courage, thank God for what you have felt, but be not bowed down with abject terror as though your trials would quite consume you. They shall be both mitigated in degree, and useful in result.

And now, notice the next thing: the Lord declares that the time of trial is the chosen season for revealing his love to you: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." This verse does not teach that God's choice of any man begins in time, or begins when he is under affliction. Oh, no, the choice of God is without beginning, it is eternal. God seeth the things that shall be as though they were; everything is now with him. But it often happens that the time in which God reveals his choice and manifests his electing love to a soul is when that soul is almost consumed with trouble. And now, dear hearer, I must again picture thee, for my object is not to preach to the winds, but to preach right into thy soul; thou hast been brought very low of late, thou hast been like a field ploughed, harrowed, cross-ploughed, scarified; there is no rest to thee; and thou canst plead no reason why God should give thee rest. Thou art brought into abject distress of spirit. Now is the time when the Lord reveals his love to such as thou art. I never knew his love when I strutted abroad in the bravery of my selfrighteousness, and I never should have known it. I never heard him say "I have chosen thee," when I fared sumptuously every day at the table of my own self-sufficiency. I never heard him say, "My son that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found," when I had still the gold in my purse and was spending my living riotously. But, I will tell you when I heard him say, "I have chosen thee": it was when I came fresh from the swine-trough with my belly aching because I could not fill it with husks, with my filthy rags about me, and my soul all sinking in despair; with no argument upon my lip except this: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Then for the first time I heard him say, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." It is when we are down to the very lowest, when we are brought to bankruptcy and beggary spiritually, when we lie at Christ's feet as though we were dead, it is then he puts his hand upon us, and says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last": it is then he anoints us with the oil of joy, it is then he clothes us with the garments of salvation, it is then we hear the voice of eternal love, saying, "I have loved thee with an

everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

But note, once more, before I leave the sinner's case, that lest the soul should forget it, the Lord repeats again the point he began with, and unveils the motives of his grace once more. What is the eleventh verse but the echo of the ninth: "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." God cannot save you, sinner, for your own sake, you are not worth the saving. If you are cast away upon the dunghill of oblivion for ever, it is as much as you deserve; you are not worthy of God's notice, you are a mere speck in his great universe, and having dared to sin against him, it is as fit that he should destroy you, as it is fit that a venomous reptile should be crushed beneath your foot. Yet the Lord declares that he will refrain from wrath. He will have mercy upon you, oh, broken heart, for his own sake; do you observe why it is "for his own sake," namely, that his name "may not be polluted." Now, suppose a sinner shall come to him and cry, "Lord, I am a guilty soul, I have no merit to plead, but I appeal to thy mercy, I trust in thy love. Thou hast said that through Christ Jesus, thou wilt forgive sinners. Lord, I trust in thy dear Son. Save me for his sake. Now if he does not save you, we speak with reverence and bated breath, but we use his own words, his name will be "polluted," because then it will be said, "Here is a soul that came to the Lord, and he cast it out, and yet he said, 'him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Here is a poor sinner that rested on the love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus and yet was confounded, whereas, he promised that they that trust in the Lord should never be confounded, nor ashamed, world without end." I know this morning that my hope is fixed on Christ Jesus alone. If I am ever lost I shall be a soul in hell resting upon Christ, and do you think that can ever be? Will they not publish it in the streets of Tophet; here is a soul that dared believe in Jesus, but Jesus repelled him as presumptuous. Here is a poor soul who cried

"If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there;"

and yet this soul is damned." Why, surely such an one would be carried in

triumph through the blazing streets of hell, and held up as an insult to the God of mercy, as a proof that he had not kept his word. O soul, he will save you, for his own sake, lest his name should be "polluted," for he is jealous of his name. He will never permit it to be truthfully said, even by a devil, that he ever broke a promise, even to a devil. If you will go to him in Christ Jesus, though you be all but damned already, and feel that your death warrant is signed; he will not, he cannot, reject you. Throw yourself at the cross-foot, and say, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" and God will never tarnish his name by thy destruction.

And then, he adds, "And I will not give my glory unto another." But if a soul should perish while trusting in the blood of Christ, the glory of God would go over to Satan. It would be proved that Satan had overcome the truthfulness of God, or the power of God, or the mercy of God; that at last evil had proved more mighty than good, and sin had abounded over grace. Can it ever be that goodness shall find a difficulty which it cannot overcome, a Red Sea it cannot divide, or a Lebanon which it cannot climb? No, never, while God is God. Oh, that I had before me the biggest sinner that ever lived! I would like to look this morning into the face of a criminal who has piled up mountains on mountains of sins, defied his God, and derided the laws of his country; a ruffian red-handed with murder, and dripping with lust; for I would glory in saying to him, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Come but to God's arms through Jesus Christ his Son, and you shall find him a God ready to forgive, and abounding in lovingkindness. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

I do not know how to preach the gospel more fully than I am now doing. I am laboring to set before downcast sinners an open door, and to show them how effectually grace has removed every hinderance out of the way, by basing its arguments of love upon the name of God, and not upon the merit of the creature.

II. Thus much to the sinner; we shall now speak OF THE RECLAIMING OF THE BACKSLIDER.

Backsliding professor, your case is more evidently meant in the text even

than that of the sinner, for God was speaking to his own people Israel in these remarkable words. Now your crime, if any thing, is a more censurable one than that of the sinner. I can see no more reason why God should have mercy upon you than upon the ungodly, indeed, I see more reason for punishing you, for you have made a profession and belied it. "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness." That is your character, you have taken Christ's name upon you, I cannot say altogether that you have been deceived and a deceiver, but your actions look as if you have been, for you have gone aside from the faith, and turned aside from your Lord. You did know something of his love; and, unless awfully deceived, you once rested on the Lord Jesus. Shall I publish abroad your guilt? How hath the much fine gold become dim! How hath the blazing sun of your profession been altogether eclipsed? You have transgressed in opposition to light and knowledge; you knew more than the sinner, and yet you have sinned as he did; you knew something of the sweets of Christ's table, but you have joined yourself to the table of devils. And you have been very perverse about it too, for providence has dealt sharply with you, but you would not come back to your God. Your neck has been an iron sinew, and your brow has been brass! Alas, how treacherously have you dealt with the Lord your God! No sin is so destructive to married love as that of adultery, yet the Lord puts the backslider's case on the same footing, in the third chapter of the book of Jeremiah. "They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Cavil not at the imagery for its coarseness, but rejoice in its matchless grace. Read on in that same chapter, from the twelfth verse to the end, and note the verse, "Turn unto me, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." But why should the Lord bid his chosen nation come back? Not because she deserved to be received again, not because in heaven, or earth, or hell, there could be found any reason why she should for her own sake be restored. Her sins said, "Put her away, put her away; shall the holy God have anything to do with such an one as this?" Justice said, "Put her away, the law demands it." Holiness said, "Put her away, how shall she come into God's house?" But, his

infinite love replied, "The Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." He will not hear of a divorce; and again he cries, "Return, ye backsliding children, I am married unto you, saith the Lord." Backslider, you see there is no reason for God's grace that can be found in your person or in your character, but it is found in the divine heart. I must go over the same ground again. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off."

The Lord has a reason for not cutting off backsliders, and it is this—first, his many promises must be kept in which he has declared that his chosen shall not perish, neither shall they utterly depart from him. Is not this the very tenor of the covenant? "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." His gifts and calling are without repentance, irrevocable. It shall not be said that his promise was ever revoked or broken; he has made a covenant with our Lord Jesus, and that covenant is sealed with blood; know ye not the sum and substance of it? "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Thus the faithfulness of God to his promises would be questioned if any of his people finally apostatised.

God's grace is also interested in it; for if after all your provocations God were to say, "I have given thee up, I will never deal with thee in grace again," then it would be said that God's grace had a limit, that it could not abound over sin, and after all was a mutable thing. Can it be that forgiving grace should punish the forgiven? That adopting grace could unchild the child? That wrath should dismember the body of Christ, and mangle the Redeemer, to be avenged upon the backslider? Oh, no, such is Jehovah's truth, that he will keep every promise to the letter; such is his grace, that his people shall never sin to such an extent but what his grace will overtop it all; and such is his immutability, that though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself. Hath he said, and

will he not do it; hath he commanded, and shall it not come to pass? Come back, backslider, God has not changed towards you; return at once to him. His heart is still full of love to you. Return unto him, for still doth he say, "How can I set thee as Admah, how can I make thee as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled; I will not destroy him, for I am God and not man." There is a free course for mercy to those who have wandered furthest, when God finds a motive for grace in his own name and in his own praise. Why, do you not see, poor trembling backslider, that if God forgives you, and you once get to heaven, you will be among the heartiest of heaven's choristers? I mean to sing the loudest of any if I ever enter the celestial seats, for I shall owe so much to the sweet love and grace of God; but David and other great backsliders will also love most intensely. It is amazing grace which not only saves at first, but restores the wandering sheep after it has gone astray. Oh, you Christians who are kept by divine grace walking with God, you have much to praise him for, you ought to bless him every day you live; but you who have fallen and gone aside, if the Lord brings you back you must henceforth render double diligence and sevenfold love. Henceforth you must be like the woman who broke the alabaster box over Christ's head, you must feel that you cannot do enough for that dear Lord and Savior who saw you in all your rebellions, and yet loved you. Loving you because he would love you; not because you were lovely, but because he would love you; not because you were deserving, but because he would love you. This ought to make you the very choicest of Christians, this should place you in the front of the champions of the Lord in the day of battle.

Please to observe, that God having thus declared the reason of his love to the backslider goes on to tell him, that the present sufferings which he is now enduring as the result of his backslidings should be mitigated. "I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have put thee into the fire, but I have not blown the heat to such an extreme degree that thy sin should be melted from thee: that would be a greater heat than any soul could bear. I have refined thee, that was needful, but not as silver; that would have been destructive to thee." Thou sayest, "All that waves and billows have gone over me." Not so; you know not what all God's waves and billows might be, for there is a depth infinitely lower than any you have ever seen. The deeps of hell are far more horrible than anything you can imagine. If

you are in the furnace to-day do not repine, do not say like Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," but rather say, "I will kiss the rod, and bless my Father's name that he allows me to live at all, and now bids me to return to him. I will thank him for the rod; it is the token of the Father's love to his child."

Then comes his next word: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction;" that is, as if he said, "I will renew my election of you." It was never revoked, but now it shall be more manifestly declared. God has looked at you in prosperity and he has seen you treacherously forgetting him. You prospered in business and you grew very worldly, God could see no beauty in your face. You had your children about you, and your wife made you glad, and you lived almost without prayer, without reading the scriptures; God therefore hid his face from you. Now, however, your affairs are at a low ebb and you begin again to pray; the neglected Bible is brought down again; now the seat that could be left unoccupied half the Sabbath-day is always filled by you; now you begin saying, "My God, my God, have mercy on me." Hear this for your comfort,—the Lord never thinks his children's faces more lovely than when they are slobbered with tears; when repentance defiles the face before men it beautifies it before God; when the eyes grow red with sorrow they are lovely unto the Lord. Do you beat upon your breast, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," then know, that no sound of tabor is so sweet to God as the sound of beaten breasts, no music hath more melody in it than the sigh of a broken heart.

Brethren, all of you, though you are not open backsliders, perhaps you may be worse than those who are. I know in my own soul, I never feel safe except when I stand as a sinner at the cross foot; and though I desire to grow in grace, and to be a saint, and would use language suitable to a child of God, and would not keep my hands off a single covenant privilege that belongs to me as one with Christ; yet, for all that, while I am in this flesh, I feel my happiest moments are those lowly times when I feel that I am nothing, and that Jesus is my all in all. God chooses his people over again when he sees them contrite in the furnace of soul affliction. When he sees them how he loves them; when he sees them down he lifts them up; when he sees them withered in themselves then he makes them

flourish; when they are nothing his love is everything. When they are swollen with pride and self-reliant, he turns his face away from them; but to his dear brokenhearted children, he is all kindness; and this is his reason, "How shall my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." If one poor believer who is pining after Jesus' face were forgotten by him, his name would be polluted—where would be his immutability? And then again, Satan would glory over that child of God and say, "I have dragged a child of God down to hell!" Christ's blood would suffer dishonor, for it would be said that a soul was punished though Christ was punished in its stead, and that were to obliterate the atonement, and to make the substitution of Christ to be of none effect. If it could once be said, "Here is a spirit that God justified, and yet condemned it," where were God's immutability? There were no God at all. He were a changeable being, and not Jehovah. If it could be said, "Here is one that was espoused unto Christ in righteousness, a soul that was one with Jesus in vital union, yet he suffered this sheep of his flock to perish, this jewel of his crown to be cast away, this member of his body to rot into corruption, God's glory could be given to another, and he would not be what he now is. Oh, beloved, let us to one and all, whether we be unsaved sinners or backsliders, or may suspect ourselves to be either the one or the other, let us go to the dear fountain of his blood, whose open veins are the gates of healing to us; let us go again and touch the hem of his garment and be made whole, and together let us rejoice that he for his mercy's sake can save us, and magnify himself by the deed of mercy.

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A Merry Christmas

And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. - Job 1:4-5

Job was an exceedingly happy man before his great trial. He was as much blessed in the fruit of his body as in his basket and in his store. Our text gives us a very pleasing picture of Job's family. He was a happy man to have had so many children all comfortably settled in life; for you will perceive that they all had houses; they had left his roof; they had all established themselves, and had so prospered in the world that there was not one of them who had not enough of the world's goods to entertain all the rest. So that it seemed as if Job's prosperity in his business had attended his children in the different places where they had settled. To add to his comfort, they were an undivided family: not like Abraham's household, where there was an Ishmael who mocked Isaac; nor like Isaac's household, where there was an Esau, and a Jacob who sought to supplant him; nor like Jacob's household, where there was a Joseph, and all the rest of his brethren were envious and jealous of him; nor like David's household, where there was perpetual strife and bickering between the one and the other. Job's descendants were a large tribe; but they were all united and knit together in bonds of perfect happiness; and moreover they seem to have had a great desire to preserve their unity as a family. Perhaps Job and his family were the only ones who feared God in the neighborhood; they wished therefore to keep themselves together as a little flock of sheep in the midst of wolves, as a cluster of stars in the midst of the thick darkness; and what a brilliant constellation they were, all of them shining forth and proclaiming the truth of God! I say it was their desire not only to enjoy pleasantness and peace, but to maintain it;

for I think that these annual meetings at the different houses were intended to knit them together, so that if any little strife had arisen, as soon as they met at the next brothers house all might be settled, and the whole host might go on again shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, as one phalanx of soldiers for God. I think Job must have been a right happy man. I do not know that he always went to their feasts; perhaps the soberness of age might have a little disqualified him for joining in their youthful enjoyments, but I am sure he commended their feasting; I am quite certain he did not condemn it. If he had condemned it he would never have offered sacrifice to God, lest they should have sinned, but he would have told them at once it was a sinful thing, and that he could give no countenance to it. I think I see the happy group, so happy and holy that surely if David had been there, he would have said. "Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." But Job was a godly man, and so godly, that unlike Eli, he brought up his household in the fear of God, and was not only quick to observe any known sin, but was exceedingly jealous over his children, lest secretly and inadvertently in their hearts, while they were at their loaded tables, they might have said or thought anything which might be termed blaspheming God. He therefore as soon as the feasting was over, called them all together, and then as a preacher, told them of the danger to which they were exposed, and as a priest, (for every patriarch before the law was a priest) he offered burnt sacrifices, lest any sin should by any possibility remain upon his sons and daughters. So saith the text. I pray that now we may have grace to listen to it; and may what we shall now hear abide with us during the coming week, when some of you shall meet together in your own houses! May God grant that our parents, or we, if we be parents, may be as Jobs, and when the feasting shall be over, may there come the sacrifice and the prayer, lest we should have sinned and blasphemed God in our hearts!

I shall divide my sermon thus. First, the text, and that is festive: so we will ring in a merry bell. Secondly, that which is in the text, and that is instructive: so we will ring the sermon bell. And, thirdly, that which follows the text, and that is afflictive: so we will ring the funeral bell.

I. First, then, the text itself, and that is festive let us therefore, RING THE

MERRY BELL. I think I hear distinctly three notes in its merry peal. First, the text gives a license; secondly, it suggests a caution; and thirdly, it provides a remedy.

And, first, the text gives a licence. Now, ye souls who would deny to your fellowmen all sorts of mirth, come and listen to the merry bell of this text, while it gives a license to the righteous especially -- a license that they meet together in their houses, and eat and drink, and praise their God. In Cromwell's days, the Puritans thought it an ungodly thing for men to keep Christmas. They, therefore, tried to put it down, and the common crier went through the street, announcing that Christmas was henceforth no more to be kept, it being a Popish, if not a heathenish ceremony. Now, you do not suppose that after the crier had made the proclamation, any living Englishman took any notice of it; at least, I can scarcely imagine that any did, except to laugh at it; for it is idle thus to strain at gnats and stagger under a feather. Albeit, that we do not keep the feast as Papists, nor even as a commemorative festival, yet there is a something in old associations that makes us like the day in which a man may shake off the cares of business, and disport himself with his little ones. God forbid I should be such a Puritan as to proclaim the annihilation of any day of rest which falls to the lot of the laboring man. I wish there were a half-a-dozen holidays in the year. I wish there were more opportunities for the poor to rest; though I would not have as many saint's days as there are in Romish countries; yet, if we had but one or two more days in which the poor man's household, and the rich man's family might meet together, it might perhaps, be better for us. However, I am quite certain that all the preaching in the world will not put Christmas down. You will meet next Tuesday, and you will feast, and you will rejoice, and each of you, as God has given you substance, will endeavor to make your household glad. Now, instead of telling you that this is all wrong, I think the merry bell of my text gives you a license so to do. Let us think a minute. Feasting is not a wrong thing, or otherwise Job would have forbidden it to his children, he would have talked to them seriously, and admonished them that this was an ungodly and wicked custom, to meet together in their houses. But, instead of this, Job only feared lest a wrong thing should be made out of a right thing, and offered sacrifices to remove their iniquity; but he did by no means condemn it. Would any of you ask a blessing upon your

children's attendance at the theater? Could you say, when they had been in such a place, "It may be they have sinned?" No, you would only talk thus of a right thing. I think I can prove to you that this was a good thing, for first you will notice, they met in good houses; they did not go to an ale-house to feast; they had no need to enter the tavern; but they met in their own houses; houses where prayer and praise were wont to be made. How much better for the working man to spend his money on his family than upon liquor sellers! And then it was in good company. They did not scrape together all the ruffians of the place to feast with them; but they kept to their own kith and kin; and feasting is good when good men feast; especially when they spare for the poor, as no doubt Job's children did, or else they were quite unworthy of their generous ancestor. They feasted in good houses, and in good company. And they observed during their feasting, good behavior. Job never heard of a wrong expression they had used; no one ever told him that they had become riotous, or that they had uttered one wrong word, or else Job could not have said, "It may be," but he would have said, "It is so." He must be a good son of whom a father could say, "It may be he has erred." All that he had was a fear lest secretly they might have done wrong; but it appears that openly their feasting had been such that even the busy tongue of scandal could not find fault with them. And besides, their feasting was a good thing, because it had a good intent; it was for amity, for cheerfulness and family union. It was that they might be bound together as a bundle of rods -- strong and unbroken -- that they might be as a strongly intertwined cord, interwoven by these their family greetings and meetings. Now, I say, that if in their case the thing was not wrong -- and I think I have proved in four respects that it was right, -- it was in good houses, in good company, with good behavior, and for a good purpose, -- the text gives a license for us to do the like, and to meet in our houses, in the company of our kith and kin, provided we feast after a good sort, and do it with the good intent of knitting our hearts the one towards the other.

But again: good men of old have feasted. Need I remind you of Abraham's making a great feast in his house, when his child Isaac was weaned? Shall I tell you of Sampson and his feasts, or of David, or of Hezekiah, or of Josiah, and of the kings who gave to every man a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine, and they cheered their hearts,

and made merry before God?

But let me remind you, that feasting, so far from being evil, was even an essential part of divine worship under the old law. Do you not read of the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, the feast of the Passover, the feast of the new moons, and how many other feasts besides? Come they not over again and again? Now, if the thing were wrong in itself, God would certainly never employ it as an emblem and token of the divine, the pure, and the heavenly doctrines of his grace. It is impossible that God should have taken a wrong thing to be the type of a right thing. He might take a common good, and make it the type of a special favor, but not an evil thing. It be far from us to suppose such a thing of our God.

Besides, did not the Savior himself countenance a feast, and help to provide the guests with the wherewithal that they might have good cheer? Do you think the Savior out of place, when he went to the wedding feast? and suppose ye that he, went there and did not eat and drink? Was it not said of him, "Behold a drunken man and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners?" Not that he was either drunken or a wine bibber, but that he "came eating and drinking," to dash to pieces the Pharisaism which says that that which goeth into a man defileth a man, whereas Christ teacheth "not that which goeth into a man, but that which cometh out of a man, that defileth a man." Jesus Christ, I say, was at the feast; and suppose ye that he bore a sad countenance? Did he sour with the vinegar of a morose behavior the wine with which he had filled the watering pots? I trow not, but I believe that at that marriage feast he joined with the guests; and if he were indeed "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as he certainly was, yet did he not keep his griefs to himself, for if he came to suffer himself, he came to make others glad, and I doubt not that at the feast he seemed the gladdest of the guests, most glad because he was really the master of the feast, and because he saw in the wedding the type of his own marriage, his own divine espousals with the Church, which is "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

And, let me add once more, God has certainly made in this world provision for man's feasting. He had not given just dry bread enough for a man to eat, and keep body and soul together, for the harvests teem with

plenty, and often are the barns filled to bursting. O Lord, thou didst not give simply dry bread and water for mankind, but thou hast filled the earth with plenty, and milk and honey hast thou given to us; and thou hast besides this laden the trees with fruit, and given to men dainties. Thou art not illiberal, thou dost not dole out with miserable hand the lean and scanty charity which some men would give to the poor, but thou givest liberally, and thou upbraidest not! And for what purpose is this given? to rot, to mould, to be trodden on, to be spoiled? no, but that men may have more than enough, that they may have all they want, and may rejoice before their God, and may feed the hungry, for this indeed is one essential and necessary part of all true Christian feasting. My text, I say, rings a merry bell, and gives us license for sacred feasting.

2. But now the same merry bell suggests a caution. Job said -- "It may be "They were good sons; good, godly young men, I am sure, or else Job would not have said, "It may be." But "it may be," said he; "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts;" or, as some translate it, "have blessed God too little in their hearts." They may not have been grateful enough for their prosperity, and for the enjoyments which God had given them. "It may be." Well, hearken, brethren, "it may be," too, that you and I may sin, and blaspheme God in our hearts, and be as Job's sons may have been, too little thankful. If, though they were true men and true women, though they all had a Job for their father, and though their feasting was in their own houses, and after a right sort, and a commendable sort, yet there was a "may be" that there might be sin; am I too superstitious or too careful, when I say, brethren, "it may be," it may be that in our happiest gathering of our family together, it may be that we shall sin! I think we could not prefer ourselves before the sons and daughters of Job -- that were self-righteousness indeed -- we are surely not proud enough to think ourselves better than the sons of that "perfect and upright" man, "who feared God and eschewed evil." I think I am not too severe and too strict, when I say, "It may be; "it" may be; "look to it; take heed to yourselves, be careful, be on your watch tower. Let me give you some reasons and arguments why this caution is not unnecessary.

And, first, remember there is no place free from sin. You may set bounds about this mount, but the beast will touch the mountain. You may

endeavor as much as you will to keep out Satan; but wherever there were two met together, Satan was ever the third. There was never a company met, but the Evil One somewhere intruded. Does he not come into your business? Do you not find him entering into your very closet? Yea, and the very table of the Lord, has not Satan sat there and tempted Judas; ay, and tempted you too? How, then, can you hope that when your family are met together, Satan shall not be there? Is it not written, "The sons of God came together, and Satan came also among them? "I am sure they never invited him; but he does not stay for that. And you will find it so. Never invite him by anything ungodly or unchristian-like. But since there are temptations everywhere, however pure and upright your intentions may be, however excellent your company, think you hear my little bell ringing -- "It may be, it may be, it may be; "and" it may be "a blessed check to you.

Beside this, remember that there is many a special temptation where there is a loaded table. Old Quarles said, "Snares attend my board;" and certainly they do. More men have perished by fullness of bread than ever died by hunger. Hunger may break through stone walls, but I have known feasting leap over golden walls -- the golden walls of grace. Some men cut their throats with their teeth, and many a man has swam to hell down his own throat. More have been drowned in the bowl, `tis said, than ever were drowned in the sea. I trust I need not say aught of that to you. I hope not. If there be a man here who falls into drunkenness, in God's name, let him tremble, for there is no admittance for the drunkard into the kingdom of heaven. I am speaking now to Christian men -- not to men who fall into these vices -- and I say to them, where you use the most proper moderation in receiving the things which God gives you, where you even totally abstain from that which might be a temptation, yet even there your table may be a snare unto you. Therefore, take heed to yourself, believer, lest Satan lie in ambush beneath the family table.

Remember also, that they who sit at the table are but men, and the best of men are but men at the best, and men have so little grace, that if they be not on the watchtower, they may soon be overtaken, and they may say or do that which they will have to repent of afterwards. I have heard say that there are men who swallow mouthfuls of earth which they will have to

digest in hell, and I do not doubt it. There have been times when a happy company have gathered together, and the conversation has become trifling, then full of levity; perhaps it has gone so far, that afterwards, when they retired to their homes, they would have recalled their words, if it had been possible. Let this caution, then, sound in all our ears, "It may be -- it may be -- it may be!" -- and let us so act, that if Christ were at the feast, we should not be ashamed to see him; let us so speak that if Christ sat at our table, we should not count it a hindrance to our joy, but rather that we should be the more free, joyous, and glad, because of such thrice-blessed company. Oh! tell me not that Christianity curbs our joy. My brethren, it shuts up one of its channels -- that black and filthy kennel into which the sinner's joy must run; but it opens another channel, wider, broader, deeper, purer, and fills it to the very banks with joy, more lustrous and more full of glory. Think not that we who follow Christ, and seek to walk strictly in our integrity, are miserable. We tell you that our eyes sparkle as much as yours, and that we have not the redness of the eyes in the morning. We can say to the worldling that our heart, despite its sometimes heaviness, does rejoice in the Lord, and we have peace which is like a river, and a righteousness which is like the waves of the sea. O Christian men! let not the world think of you that you are shut out here from anything like happiness; but so act and so live, at all times, that you may teach men that it is possible to be happy without sin, and to be holy without being morose. This, then, is the caution which our merry bell rings out to us.

But, then, in the third place, having given a license and suggested a caution, the merry bell provides a remedy. "It may be -- it may be we have done wrong. What then? Here is a remedy to be used, by parents, and heads of families, and by ourselves.

Job sent for his sons as a father; he sanctified them as a preacher; he sacrificed for them as a priest; by all which I understand, that he first bade them come together, and then he sanctified them: that is, he first spoke to them; commended them for the excellent and admirable manner in which they had met together, told them how pleased he was to see their love, their union; but then he said, "It may be, my sons, you are like your father; there is some sin in you, and it may be you have sinned; come, let

us repent together;" and so, being, as I believe, all godly persons, they sat down and thought over their ways. Then no doubt the good old man bade them kneel down, while he prayed with them; and then he expressed his faith in the great coming Mediator, and so, though one man's faith cannot prevail for another, yet the faith of the father helped to quicken the faith of the sons, and the prayer of the father was the means of drawing forth the prayer of the sons, and so the family was sanctified. Then after that he would say, "There is no putting away of sin, except by the shedding of blood; so they fetched the bullocks, a bullock for every son and for every daughter: the old patriarch slew the victims, laid them on the altar, and as the smoke ascended, they all thought if they had sinned against God, yet the blood shed, and the victim offered could, as the type of Christ, take away their sin. I think I see the good old man, after the sacrifice was all complete. "Now, my children," he says, "return to your homes; if you have sinned, your sin is put away; if you have transgressed, the atonement made has cancelled your transgression; ye may go to your habitations, and take a father's blessing with you."

Call to your recollection, that Job is said to have seen to his sacred work "early in the morning." It is ill lying in bed when we have sin on the conscience. He that hath a sin unforgiven should never travel slowly to the cross, but run to it. So Job would sleep in the morning not an hour, till he had seen his sons and his daughters sanctified, and the sacrifice made Mark well, that "he offered according to the number of his sons "He did not leave out one. If he prayed for the eldest, he prayed for the youngest too; and if he made supplication for the sons, he did not forget the daughters Ah! parents, never forget any of your children; carry them all before God; let them all be consecrated to him, and let your earnest prayer go up for them all, from your Reuben down to your Benjamin; leave not one of them out, but pray God to grant that they may all be bound up together in the bundle of life.

And notice once again, "So did Job continually." As often as they visited, so often was there the sacrifice. I suppose they had ten feasts in the year; and it is supposed by the old commentators that they assembled on their birth-days. They were not always feasting: that were sinful. In fact, that was the sin of the old world, for which God drowned it. "They ate and

they drank, they married and they were given in marriage," all which things are right enough in themselves; but if we are wholly immersed in them, always eating, always drinking, always feasting, then they become sins, and indeed at all times they become sin, unless, like Job's feasts they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If our meetings be thus sanctified, we can in everything give thanks, then "he that eateth, eateth to the Lord, and giveth God thanks," and being accepted in his thankfulness, the eating is to God's glory. I say, then, my dear friends, that Job did this continually, which teaches to the parent his duty of continually pleading for his sons and daughters.

The aim of my remarks is just this. You will most of you meet together next Tuesday, and keep the household feast. I beg you to imitate Job on the morrow, and make it your special and peculiar business to call your children together, and sanctify them by prayer, and by pleading the precious sacrifice of Christ Jesus. So "it may be" there has been sin; but there will be no "may be" as to the putting away of the sin; for pleading with prayer, and laying hold on the sacrifice by faith, you shall stand accepted still, both you and your households.

Now, some may think that what I have said upon this point is unnecessary, and that we ought not to speak about such common things as these. Do you suppose that the Christian pulpit was set up by God that we might always talk to you about the millennium, or the antediluvians, or the things that are to happen in Ethiopia or Palestine? I believe that the Christian ministry has to do with you in your daily life, and the more the preacher delivers that which is practically suggestive of profit to our souls, the more closely does he keep to the Master. I am sure, if my Lord Jesus Christ were here, he would say somewhat in these words to you, "Go your way, and eat your bread with a joyous heart, for God hath accepted you through my blood, but watch, and be ye as men that look for their Lord. Still keep your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, and your loins girt about, and be ye stedfast and watch unto prayer, that should I come in the morning, or at cock-crowing, I may find you ready for my appearing." As for you young men and women, who will be separated on that day from your own parents, having no family circle in which to join, yet perform this pleasant privilege yourselves. Set apart a

season the next morning, in which by prayer and supplication you shall make confession of sin; and whenever the feast-time comes round, whenever you are invited to a social meeting, or the like, look upon it as a necessary successor of the social gathering, that there be private supplication, private confession of sin, and a personal laying hold anew upon the great sacrifice. If this be done, your meetings, instead of being unprofitable, shall be the beginning of better days to you, and you shall even grow in grace through that prayer, that repentance, and that faith, which have been suggested by your gatherings together.

I think all this is most fairly in my text; and if I ought not to preach from such a passage, then the text ought not to be in the Bible.

II. And now let us turn to the second head, or what is in the text, and that is instructive; we must, therefore, ring the SERMON BELL.

Well, it will be a short sermon. My sermon shall not be like the bell and preacher of St. Antholin's church, which were said to be both alike, the bell was pulled a long while, and was exceeding dreary in its tone, and the preacher was precisely the same. The sermon which is fairly in my text is this. If Job found it right with a holy jealousy to suspect lest his sons might have sinned, how much more do you think he suspected himself? Depend on it, he who was so anxious to keep his children clean was himself more anxious that he might always fear his God, and eschew evil. God said he was a perfect and an upright man; and yet was he jealous. How much more, then, shall you and I be jealous of ourselves? Say not in thine heart, Christian, "I may go hither and thither and may not sin;" you are never out of danger of sinning. This is a world of mire; it will be hard to pick your path, so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch; you will need to watch often, if in handling it you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber in every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels; there is a thief behind every bush; there is a temptation in every mercy; there is a snare in every joy; there is not a stone on which you tread under which there is not a viper's nest; and if you shall ever reach heaven it will be a miracle of divine grace; if you shall ever come safely home to your Father's house, it will be because your Father's power brought you there. If Job's sons were in danger at their own tables, how

much more are some of you in danger, Christians, when you have to go among the ungodly? It may be that some of you are called to do business where you hear oaths and blasphemy; your way of life is such that you cannot help being exposed to many temptations. Be on your guard. It was said of a certain great man, that he was so afraid of losing his life, that he always wore armor under his clothes. Take care you always wear armor. When a man carries a bomb-shell in his hand, he should mind that he does not go near a candle; and you too must take care that you do not go near temptation. But if you are called to go through the temptation, how watchful, how anxious, how careful, how guarded should you be! Brethren, I do not think that we are any of us watchful enough. I have heard of a good woman, who would never do anything till she had sought the Lord in prayer about it. Is that over custom? If we do even a common thing without seeking the Lord's direction, we may have to repent it as long as we live. Even our common actions are edged tools; we must mind how we handle them. There is nothing in this world that can foster a Christian's piety, but everything that can destroy it. How anxious should we be, then, to look up -- to look up to God, that He may keep us! Let your prayer be, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe" let your daily cry be, you young Christians especially, ay, and you old Christians too, be, "Lord, keep me! Keep my heart, I pray thee, for out of it are the issues of my life." Do not expose yourselves unnecessarily but if called to exposure, if you have to go where the darts are flying, never go abroad without your shield; for if once the devil catches you abroad, and your shield at home, then he will say, "Now is my time," and he will send an arrow which may rattle between the joints of your harness, and you may fall down wounded, even though you cannot be slain. The Lord grant, then, that this sermon bell of my text may ring in your ears during the next week, and as long as ever you live, may you hear it saying to you, "Be careful; be watchful, be vigilant; danger may be in an hour when all seemeth securest to thee." Inspect the vessel, see to her keel, look to the sails; look to the rudder bands, watch every part of the ship, for the storm may be coming though the calm rule at present, and the rocks may be ahead though the breakers roll not, and the quicksands may underlie thy keel, though thou thinkest all is well. God help thee then, Christian, to watch unto prayer! What we say unto you, we say unto all: Watch!

III. But now what follows the text -- and that is afflictive: and here let us ring the FUNERAL BELL.

What follows the text? Why hear ye this, "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and behold there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fed upon the young men and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Between the table and the coffin there is but a step, between the feast and the funeral there may be but a day, and the very bell that rings the marriage peal tolls the funeral knell. Here is a death's head for you to put on your table. The old Egyptians set a corpse among the guests, that all might know that they must die: I set the bodies of Job's sons and daughters at your table, to make you think that you will die. Our very eating is the grave of God's mercies, and should remind us of our own graves. What do we when we eat, but patch the old tenement, put fresh plaister on the delapidated and naked rafters? So, then, we should remember, that the time will come when we can no more do this, but when the tenement itself shall be shaken and be blown down. Sinner! let no joy cross thy face, till death and thou art friends. Saint! let no joy be in thine heart either, till thou canst say, "Welcome, death; I gladly go with thee." Do nothing that you would not willingly die doing; be found in no position in which you would be unwilling to stand for ever. Be you to-day what you would wish to be in eternity; and so live, and so act, and so sit at the table, that if the wind should come and smite the four corners of the house, and you should die, yet you fall asleep at one feast, to wake up at another feast, where there would be no "may be," about sin, but where you should eat bread in the kingdom of God, and drink the new wine of which Jesus Christ spoke, when he rose from the supper, and left his disciples. Ah! my spirit rises on wings of delight at the solemn tones of that funeral knell, for it has more music in it after all than my merry bell. There is a pleasing joy in sorrow, and mirth is akin to sadness. Hearken, friends, the bell is speaking, "GONE, GONE, GONE, GONE. "Who is that for? Who is dead in this parish? "That is poor So-and-so." My God, when it shall be my turn, may my soul behold thy face with joy. O may my spirit, when it receives the last summons, cry with delight, "Blessed be God for that sound! It was the merriest sound my soul could have desired, for now I sit with Jesus, and eat at his table, and feast with

angels, and am satisfied and have the privilege of John, to lean my head upon my Savior's breast." Christian! I say never let the thought of dying plague thee; let it be a comfort to thee, and stand thou so, ready, that when the Master shall say, "Arise!" thou wilt have nothing to do but to rise at his bidding, and march to heaven, leading thy captivity captive.

But thou, sinner, when thou art sitting at thy table, think thou hearest my funeral bell tolling in thy ears, and if thou shouldst step aside, and the rest should say, "What ails you?" -- if you should be compelled to rise while they are laughing, and go up stairs to pray, I shall not mind, though some may say I have made thee melancholy and have marred thy feast, for, sinner, it is no time for thee to be feasting, while God's sword is furbished, and sharp, and ready to divide soul from body. There is a time to laugh, but it is not till sin is pardoned there is a time to dance, but it is not till the heart stands with joy before the ark, there is a time to make merry, but it is not till sin is forgiven. Your time is a time to weep and a time to rend your garments, and a time to sorrow, and a time to repent. May God's Holy Spirit give you the grace! The time is now. And the grace being given, may you fan before the cross, and find pardon and mercy there, and then we may say, in the words of Solomon -- 'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.'

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A Message From God For Thee

The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins. - Lamentations 4:22

Every sabbath we are insisting upon it that both the Law and the Gospel

have a voice to universal manhood: the Law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway, and the Gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the Law and the Gospel have a special voice to certain characters, that the law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, that the Gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favored persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice. While there are texts which are universal, and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are at the same time a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished, and whose sin is pardoned; or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom resteth the curse of God, and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right-hand of the Most High. I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind prophet of old, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings;" but I have also to say, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without." According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Our two messages we will try to deliver in their order; we shall then want your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—Why the difference? and then we will press upon each character the force of the message, that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. Our FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity."

1. We find, at the outset, a joyous fact. Read it with glistening eyes ye to whom it belongs—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion." In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in his anger had put them from him, felt his repentings kindle together, and considered that they had suffered enough; "For she hath received at the Lord's hand," said the prophet, "double for all her sin." Brethren, in our case we have not been punished at all, but yet the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. Remember that Sin must be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without a punishment, ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if he had no love, and yet as intensely loving as if he had no justice. To gain a just view of the character of God you must perceive all his attributes as infinitely developed; justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin must be punished. This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—"The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "Sin must be punished" is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire; and, as the damned in hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes. Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the Gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated or foregone, or that justice has had a sop given it to close its mouth. The consolation is far more sure and effectual; say ye unto the daughter of Zion that "the punishment of her iniquity is accomplished." Christ hath for his people borne all the punishment which they deserved; and now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." God is satisfied, and asks no more.

Sin deserved God's wrath; that wrath has spent itself on Christ. The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. "Stand thou aside!" said Jesus—"Stand thou aside, my spouse, my Church, and I will suffer in thy stead." Down dashed the drops of fire; the burning sleet swept terribly over his head, and beat upon his poor defenceless person, until the clouds

had emptied out their awful burden, and not a drop was left. Beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it be again called forth, but it was annihilated, it spent itself entirely upon Christ. There is no more punishment for the believer since Christ hath died for him. In his dying, our Lord has satisfied the divine vengeance even to the full. Then this, too, must satisfy our conscience. The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inexorable as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but crieth out for something more. Like the horse-leech it saith—"Give, give, give." Until you can offer to God a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience a quietus. But now, O daughter of Zion, let thy conscience be at rest. Justice is satisfied; the law is not despised: it is honored; it is established. God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that thy punishment is accomplished, thou mayest come with boldness unto him, for no guilt doth lie on thee. Thou art accepted in the Beloved; thy guilt was laid on him of old, and thou art now safe."

In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With his spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Come thou boldly unto God, and rejoice thou in him.

Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight, how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of heaven and of earth wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder I see hmt in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labors for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for heaven. He sweats "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It is not the sweat of his brow only, but "All his head, his hair, his garments, bloody be." God is smiting him, and laying upon him the punishments of our iniquities. He rises, with his heart exceeding sorrowful even unto death. They hurry him to Pilate's judgment-seat. The God of heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed, and falsely accused before the tribunal of his recreant

creature. He is taken by the soldiery to Gabbatha, they strip, they scourge him; clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from his back. They buffet him, and bruise him with their blows; as if his robe of blood were not enough, they throw about his shoulders an old cloak, and make him a mimic king. Little knew they that he was the King of kings. He gives his back to the smilers, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair, he hides not his face from shame and spitting. Oh! what shall be said of thee, thou Son of man? In what words shall we describe thy grief? All ye that pass by behold and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto his sorrow that was done unto him! Oh God, thou hast broken him with a rod of iron; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over him. He looks, and there is none to help; he turns his eye around, and there is none to comfort him. But see, through the streets of Jerusalem he is hastened to his death; they nail him to the transverse wood; they dash it into the ground; they dislocate his bones; he is poured out like water; all his bones are out of joint; he is brought into the dust of death; agonies are piled on agonies; as in the classic fable the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to heaven, misery is piled on misery, what if I say hell on hell! but Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last he reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" was the sum total of all human misery; the gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence. And thus he dies! Say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. "It is finished!" Let the angels sing it; hymn it in the plains of glory, tell it here on earth, and once again say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins! This, then, is the joyous note we have to sound this morning.

2. But—but—and here comes the solemn, soul-searching part of our discourse—Is the punishment of mine iniquity accomplished? Let us see to whom this message is sent. Will you open your Bibles at the book of Lamentations—it is but a slender volume—and follow me a moment with your eyes and with your hearts, for this promise is sent to a certain character, and I know there are some here who will read their own history therein.

In the first chapter and at the sixth verse you find it said of her—"From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed." We should have thought that Christ would have died for those who had some form and comeliness, but no. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." At the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul, all self-righteousness melts away, our merit is dissolved like the rime of the morning frost before the heat of the rising sun. In the light of the Holy Spirit the darkness of the creature is removed, and the fancied goodness of fallen humanity dies like a dream. Now the man perceives himself to be utterly vile; that which once he esteemed as making him lovely in the sight of God has withered before his eyes, and all his glory is trailed in the mire. My hearer, has all thy self-righteousness been taken from thee? for rest assured thou art not this daughter of Zion unless thy beauty has all departed, and all thy boastful thoughts have been utterly slain.

Wonder of wonders! the eighth and ninth verses tell us "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned," and the ninth verse tells us yet more, that "her filthiness is in her skirts." Thus, those for whom Christ died are made to feel their sin. While their righteousness becomes as filthy rags, their unrighteousness becomes loathsome and detestable in their sight. Holy Scripture rakes up the most terrible figures to set forth the abominable character of sin, some, even, which we would hardly dare to quote to meet the public ear, but which the renewed heart feels to be perfectly true. The heart discovereth itself to be all wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, till it abhorreth itself before God. "O Lord, I am vile." "We are all together as an unclean thing." "We are laden with iniquity." Such are the cries of awakened souls, and it is to such as these that the gracious message is directed.

Look on, again, to the seventeenth verse, and there you find that this filthiness has brought her into utter distress—"Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her." So those to whom this message is sent are brought, through a sense of sin, into a comfortless state. Ceremonies, Baptism, the Lord's Supper—all these yield them no peace. They can no longer rest in their Church-goings and Chapel-goings. A

formal, notional religion would once satisfy them, but they find no rest for the sole of their foot in such a presence now. Time was when if they went through a prayer at night and morning, and read a verse or two of the Bible, they thought all would be well; but now there is none to comfort them. These refuges of lies are all swept away, for the furious hail of conviction has laid them level with the ground. Let us be certain of this, that there is no word of peace or comfort for us in our text until the beauty in which we once boasted has all been withered before the wintry blasts of the law; till our filthiness has been discovered before our sight, and we have been led to an experimental acquaintance with our ruined and comfortless condition on account of our iniquities.

To make the case worse, this poor daughter of Zion is obliged to confess that she deserved all her sufferings. In the eighteenth verse she says—"The Lord is righteous: for I have rebelled against his commandments." The soul feels now that God is just. Unrenewed persons find fault with God's justice. Eternal punishment they cavil at; hell is such a bugbear to them, that, just as every culprit will, of course, find fault with the prison and the gallows, so they rail at the wrath to come, though that wrath is just as sure, notwithstanding all their objections to it. But when the heart is really touched by divine grace, then it has no more to say for itself, but pleads guilty at the bar of God's great assize; and if the Judge should put on the black cap, and condemn it to be taken instantly to the place of execution, that soul could only say, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, for I have sinned." I despair of ever finding a word of comfort for any man or woman among you, if you have not been brought to feel that you deserve the wrath of God. Come with the ropes about your necks, ready for execution, and you will find a God ready to forgive.

Further still: in the first verse of the second chapter you find that her prayer was not yet heard—"How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!" Well do I remember the time in my own experience when I prayed in vain; when I bowed my knees and the heavens were as brass, and not a word or answer of comfort was given to my languishing spirit! All who are converted do not pass through this, for no one experience is a

standard for all, but remember I am seeking out a certain class this morning, for my text is addressed to a special character. If thou hast been for months, ay, even for years, crying for mercy, and still hast not found it, let not this cast thee down, for to thee is this message sent this morning. Thou art this daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and I have to say unto thee that "the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." Thy prayer has come up with acceptance, for the Spirit inspired it and Jesus offered it. God absolves thee, from heaven thy forgiveness comes. Oh, believe the word of the Lord, and rejoice therein. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Further: as her prayer was not heard, so every place of refuge was broken down. In the eighth verse of the second chapter you find—"The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying, therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament: they languished together." Even what few stones of the ruined wall remained as an heap behind which the Israelitish warriors might defend themselves were to be broken down. So God goes on overturning, overturning, overturning in the sinner's heart till Christ comes in. After every hope has been broken down we are apt to build up another. "Peace, peace, where there is no peace," is the sinner's constant cry. Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner's confidences, till at last there is not one stone left upon another that is not thrown down; then the sinner yields himself a captive, and free grace leads him in triumph to the cross. Is this your case this morning, my dear hearer? If it be then, my sweet message is for you. "Go in peace, they sins which are many are all forgiven thee!"

Further still: this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of deep humiliation. Look at the tenth verse of the second chapter: "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads: they have girded themselves in sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not want to enlarge on these points, because we have not time; and, what is more, there is no

necessity for doing so, for you that have been brought through them understand them; and some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, "There is my picture; as face answereth to face in a glass so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition." Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you, to you is this gracious message sent—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

Furthermore: it seems from the thirteenth verse that all her foes here let loose against her, and her grief exceeded all bounds and prevented all comparison:—"What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring. That trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—"There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it!" Ye give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentance. Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all thine enemies, thine own heart, and all the devils in hell should conspire against thee, yet to thee, even to thee, thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

Not to keep you longer on this point let me take you on to another. In the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the same chapter you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to constant prayer:—"Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him," and so on. Thus the soul is brought to abide fast by the mercy-seat, and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer

is not so much an act as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany I was about to call it -

"Wealth and honor I disclaim,
Earthly comfortd, Lord, are vain,
These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Every verse ends with that intense desire—"Give me Christ or else I die." This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless; it falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—"Give me Christ or else I die." "I can no denial take." Again, and again, and again, the sound of its moaning goeth up before the Lord God of Sabbaoth; its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks to-day. (Lord! open the ear that it may hear!) "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction, if the law has ever had its perfect work in you, you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you, and when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you; lay hold on it by faith; feed on it, live on it, and rejoice.

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is a precious promise. "I will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thou art in captivity now, but it is the last thou shalt ever have. Thou art sorrowing on account of sin, and troubled even to despair; but thou art now forgiven—not thou shalt be, but thou art; all the wrath was laid on Christ; there is none remaining upon thee; thou art forgiven, and

thy captivity is turned as the streams in the south. Let thy mouth be filled with laughter, and thy tongue with singing, for the Lord hath done great things for thee. These convictions of thine shall never return again in their present terror; only do thou cling to the Rock of Ages, and no wave shall bear thee back into the deeps. Thou shalt go through the wilderness but once; thou shalt pass through the Jordan of a Savior's blood, and then thou shalt enter into Canaan and rest, for "we that have believed do enter into rest." And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for thee. All thy hell is past; Tophet burns not for thee, neither can the pit shut its mouth upon thee. All that thou deservest of the wrath of God, Christ hath endured, and there is not a drop remaining for thee. Come thou to the golden chalice into which God drained his wrath, and look at the sparkling wine of love which filleth it. Ah, how changed from what it once was. 'Twas full, and foul, and black; each drop was Tophet, and the whole of it eternal misery. Christ drained it; to the very dregs he drained it; turning it upside down, he said, "It is finished!" and not a drop was left. Come thou, I say, to it, for it is not empty now; it is full again, but with what is it filled withal? 'Tis full to the brim and overflowing with love unsearchable, eternal, divine. Come thou and drink.

"Calvary's summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of grace;
Count the purple drops, and say,
Thus my sins were borne away.
Now no more his wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head;
Justice now demands no more,
He hath paid the dreadful score.
Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in the Saviours blood,
Zion O! how bless'd art thou,
Justified from all things now.

"I will take the cup of salvation, and will call on the name of the Lord."
You may have troubles, but you will never have punishment; you may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath; you may go to the grave, but you shall never go to hell; you shall descend into the regions of the

dead, but never into the regions of the damned; the Evil One may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head; you may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation. "He will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thy punishment is all accomplished on another. Thou art free to-day; come thou forth out from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, and brought out his people, and delivered them with his own right hand!

Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message; I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus saith the Lord unto thee—"I will visit thine iniquity." Unbeliever, thou who hast never felt thy need of Christ, and never fled to him, to thee he says, "I will visit thine iniquity." His justice tarries, but it is sure; his axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried; or if they be, they shall have a resurrection. Thy thoughts, thy words, thy deeds, shall all return in terror on thy head. Thou shalt begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On thy dying bed thy frail tenement shall creak, and thou shalt see the blazings of the furnace of fire through the rifts of thy crumbling cottage. When thou shalt lie a-dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of heaven stand about thy bed and summon thee to judgment. Thy cheek shall blanch, however brazen may now be thy brow. Then, strong man, thou shalt be bowed down, and thy loins shall be loosened, for when God dealth with thee thou shalt feel his hand, even though thou wert girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then thou diest; thy death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Thy soul descends into the pit amongst thy kindred, and thou beginnest to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied him. Then shall thine oaths be all fulfilled then shall thy lustings and thy revellings come to thee in their true light. Then shalt thou hear ringing in thy conscience the echo of the divine sentence, "Thou deserves" all this, for God gave thee warning when he said "I will surely visit thee for thine iniquity." Then shall the trumpet ring—"Awake! Awake! ye dead and come to judgment!" From sea and land they start to live again. Thy soul comes back to its body which

was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the great white throne is lifted up on high; the righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain; and, now, hark ye! hark ye! to a voice more dread than thunder—"Bind them up in bundles to burn them!—the drunkard with the drunkard; the swearer with the swearer: the careless, the proud, the self-righteous, each with each, and cast them into the furnace of fire." It is done, and where art thou now, sinner? Dost thou say of me this morning—"I knew that thou would speak not good but evil unto me?" Another day thou shalt bless thy stern reprover! Call me not thine enemy; it is thy sin that is thine enemy. I make not hell. I do but warn thee of it with a brother's love. Thou diggest hell thyself; thou thyself fillest it, and the breath of thy sins shall fan the fire. "The Lord of Hosts will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom." Hear it; hearken thou to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns thee. Beware, O careless soul, beware of forgetting God, lest he tear thee in pieces, and there be none to deliver thee. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to thee.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which are now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the twenty-first verse, that the daughter of Edom was a mirthful one. In irony and sarcasm the prophet says—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked." There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God; there is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state. You say from day to day, "How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety; and what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Pleasure is your life, your only thought. Ah! daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for thy fine linen; there are ashes for all thine ornaments; thine earrings shall give place to everlasting tears-drops, and all thy beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay! Weep, all ye that thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging

Judge, for the day cometh when he shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! "Thus saith the Lord: say, a sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should he then make mirth?"

Edom, moreover dwelt very carelessly, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, "Who shall come hither to disturb the eagle's nest? The son of Esau dwelleth like an eagle in his eyrie, and he pounceth down upon his prey or ever his victim is aware? Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo! he dareth to look in the face of the sun, and he laugheth at the spear of the hunter; who shall bring him down?" Thus saith the lord, "O daughter of Edom, I will visit thine iniquity." "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Ye proud men and women, ye say, "Will God deal with us? Will he treat us as common sinners? Even if he should, we will not care; fill high the bowl and let us drink, even though it be at Belshazzar's feast; we will drink, though there be damnation in the cup!" Thus speak ye, but thus saith the Lord, even as he said unto Moab—"I will bring down thy high looks. I will trample thee like straw is trodden for the dunghill, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

More than this; it appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and merriment over the sorrows of others. Do you not hear even the wise men say—"Ah! These drivelling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!" "Look," says one—"I am a man of the world. I know nothing of these women's fears and child-like tremblings: why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of hell and of judgment—do you believe it? "No," says this man "I know nothing of your care; I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!" O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God liveth, the day shall come when thou shalt be trodden as ashes under the soles of our feet. Beware ye, for when the Avenger cometh forth a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods

bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at, and called an old hypocrite for talking of God's destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark, and what think ye now of the prophet, what think ye now of the preacher of righteousness? Ye are swept away; the waves have covered you; a few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills, but the all-devouring waters reach you there. I hear your last shriek of awful anguish; there is not a single note of unbelief in it now; as you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the prophet was right and you were fools. To your death-beds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt to day; I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help thee! God help thee to repent! but heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is thy curse; God will visit thine iniquity upon thee!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain, a self-sufficient confidence. "Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, the border of wickedness, and, the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." So there are some of you who say, "I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges; I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment yet I pluck up heart again." Ah! daughter of Edom, God will visit thee for thine iniquity, and thy vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame.

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the forty-ninth chapter and the sixteenth verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last; and so also all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves low at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings, and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins.

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, "I will discover thy sins." Let every sinner here be

afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin; He will discover it. It may be it was last night; 'twas in a very secret place, and you contrived so that none might track you; but the All-seeing One will discover your sin. "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbors, but if those neighbors did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are rent, your masks are plucked away; the Revealer of Secrets cometh forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published in the house-tops. The day cometh when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." This is thy portion, daughter of Edom! Thy secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit thee!

III. The time expires, but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES?

The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was sovereign grace. The daughter of Zion had no right to pardon; she had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her, and had entered into covenant with Abraham concerning her, that he would not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in his sovereignty, because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, he sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignty, but the line of justice; he sent it because the daughter of Edom deserved it. Sinner, when God says he will punish sin, thou mayest kick against it if thou wilt, but thy conscience tells thee thou deservest to be punished. God will not smite thee more than thou deservest, but let him only give thee as much, and wrath will come upon thee to the uttermost. Edom hath waxed proud; she hath been careless; she hath despised God; she is unbelieving; she repenteth not; therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it; it is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The scullions of Zion's household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him. We did think at first that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn; ridicule is the only answer they deserve; let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We believe still, and I hope that ever in this Christian land, and from this pulpit, I may always say that we believe this Book to be the Word of God. Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it. You said, as I read the description just now, "That is my case." Very well, then, the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, "I will try and believe it," but believe it. Do not say, "I hope it is true;" it is true; believe it, and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in thy spirit, "My punishment was borne by Christ; I shall never be carried into captivity any more; being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I am accepted, I am forgiven." Praise him every day now that his anger has passed away for ever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Does anybody object to that quotation? Object to Solomon and not to me; I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days.

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God's Word, and it is true. Believe it. "Oh," says one, "but if I believed it, I should be full of awful anguish." Would to God you were; for do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the law sent for? To dog men to hell? No, but to be our pedagogue to bring us to Christ. The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows, that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a pedagogue who with a stick, went round

to the parents' houses and whipped the boys to school. Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though he is a good and tender Master, that he employs the law to go round to our houses to whip us to himself, his peace, his great salvation. Ah! I would I could drive you to the Savior, for these thunders of to-day are meant to bring you from under the law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, thy doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure. Oh that thou wouldest but believe this, and that thy heart were broken, for then we might come to thee again, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins."

May God bless the words of this morning, and unto his name be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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The Messenger Of The Covenant

The messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. - Malachi 3:1

The Lord's people delight in the covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them to its green pastures, and makes them to lie down beside its still waters. They can sweetly sing of it from youth even to hoar hairs, from childhood even to the tomb, for this theme is inexhaustible:

"Thy covenant the last accent claims
Of this poor faltering tongue;
And that shall the first notes employ
Of my celestial song."

They delight to contemplate the antiquity of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember the sureness of the covenant. They love to

meditate upon "the sure mercies of David." They delight to celebrate the covenant in their songs of praise, as "signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well." It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its immutability, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall ever be able to violate;—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of ages. They rejoice also to feast upon the fullness of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them.—God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their comforter, earth their lodge and heaven their home. They see in it not only some things, but all things; not only a help to obtain some desirable possessions, but an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul that has an interest in this ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but O how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate the graciousness of this covenant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because grace is the basis, grace the condition, grace the strain, grace the bulwark, grace the foundation, grace the topstone. From the beginning even to the end, it is all of grace. They see that the covenant runneth on this wise, not "I will if you will," but "I will and you shall;" not "I will reward if you deserve," but "I will forgive even if you sin;" not "I will cleanse if you are clean," but "I will cleanse if you are filthy," not "I will keep if you assist," but "I will bring you back even if you be lost, I will surely save you and preserve you even to the end." I know some Christians—bleared-eyed, like Leah—who cannot see afar off, and hence the councils of eternity they cannot behold. I know some believers of weak knees and feeble joints who are afraid of that strong word "Covenant." But they that are men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of years have had their senses exercised, know that the covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a store-house of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy. The covenant! let my soul but anchor here, then howl ye winds, and roar ye hurricanes! I will not fear. The covenant! let my soul but cast its anchor here, and come life with all its tribulations, and death with all its pains and terrors, my soul laughs them

all to scorn.

"The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.

We advance a step further towards our text, and remark that the "Messenger of the covenant" is a welcome ambassador to those who are interested in those exceeding great and precious promises which pertain to life and godliness. But, waiving further preface, let us notice, first, that we delight in the office of Christ as the messenger of the covenant; next, that we delight in the way in which he fulfils that office; and then, we shall conclude by noticing some ways in which we show our delight.

I. First, then, WE DELIGHT IN CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE OF MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

What is that office? I shall need two or three words to explain it. When we read of Christ as messenger of the covenant, I think we may understand him to be a covenanted messenger. Now, God has sent many messengers, whose words, when they have spoken in His name, he has not suffered to fall to the ground. So far they were covenanted messengers; but these persons sometimes spoke of themselves, and then God had not bound himself by promise to keep their words. Sometimes, even like the apostle Paul, they would have to pause and say, "I think I have the Spirit of God," but they might not be certain. But Christ is a covenanted messenger. God hath sworn to him to do for us whatever he may promise to us, so that if we believe in God we may believe also in him, since he speaks for God, and his every word is settled in heaven -

"Array'd in mortal flesh
He like an angel stands,
And holds the promises
And pardons in his hands:
Commission'd from his Father's throne
To make his grace to mortals known."

Again, he is the covenanted messenger; on our behalf Christ swore to God to carry out that part of the covenant which was left for man, and so he stood as a covenanted messenger between God and man. The word "plenipotentiary" just hits my thought. You know sometimes kings send out ambassadors to try and negotiate peace, but they have limited powers. On other occasions ambassadors are sent with unlimited, unrestricted power, to make peace or not, and to make it just as they will. Now Christ comes as the covenanted ambassador of God, as the plenipotentiary of heaven. Let him do what he will, God is with him; let him promise what he may, God ratifies it; let him speak what he will to our souls, his word shall certainly be fulfilled. Now do you not rejoice in Christ in this office. He has said to us, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Rest," saith the eternal Father, as he confirms Jesus' word. "Go in peace, thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." "They are forgiven thee," saith the court of heaven, "go in peace." "He that believeth on me is not condemned," saith Christ; and the Father saith himself "He is not condemned." There is not a word of the gospel which the Father has left unsanctioned. You need not therefore, when you venture upon Christ's word and Christ's merit, think you are resting on a something which God will not accept. He is God's covenanted messenger. He is sworn to accept whom Christ accepts, and since Christ saves all that trust in him, the Father accepts them likewise. He will save certainly all whom Christ hath declared shall be saved.

This, however, does not exhaust the meaning. Christ is the messenger of the covenant, in the next place, as the messenger of the Father to us. Moses was messenger of the covenant of works, and his face shone, for the ministration of death was glorious; but Christ is the messenger of the covenant of grace. O let his face shine in your esteem, ye saints of the Lord, for the ministration of life must be more glorious, far! Christ comes to us to tell us all that God will tell. The revelation of God is Christ. If you would know God, he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father. God's word is Jesus, he speaketh fully by him. Would you know the father's decree? "I will declare the decree," saith Christ. Would you know his character? See every attribute of God in the man, Christ. Would you know his designs? See the designs of God effected in the works of Jesus. Would

you know in fact all that is knowable of God? Understand that you can see it, not in nature, nor in providence, but in Jesus,

"God in the person of his Son,
Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

And will you not delight in him as such—as God's messenger to you?—If the very ministers of Christ are delightful to you, if their feet are beautiful upon the tops of the mountains when they bring glad tidings, how much more beautiful is he who comes from God to man, with messages of peace, declaring to us that God is reconciled to us, and accepteth us in the beloved. Sing his praises, O ye that have heard his voice. Glory ye in his holy name, O ye that have received his report, unto whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed, for as God's messenger to you, ye should delight in him.

But then, he is, as the messenger of the covenant, our messenger and mediator with the Father. You want to tell your Father something; Jesus stands to carry the message for you. George Herbert, in one of his poems, pictures Christ as using the hole in his side as a bag to carry our letters to glory -

"If ye have anything to send or write,
(I have no bag, but here is room)
Unto my father's hands and sight
(Believe me) it shall safely come.
That I shall mind, what you impart;
Look, you may put it very near my heart."

In the wounds of Christ we put our messages to God, and they go up to heaven with something more added to them. The blots and blurs of our petition Christ wipeth out, and then he savoureth our prayers, and incenseth them by putting with them the costly mixture of his own precious righteousness. See! In his golden censer yonder smokes the incense of your prayer, accepted for the incense sake, and for the sake of him who swings it to and fro as it smokes before the Most High. "The messenger of the covenant;" this name is peculiar to our Lord. Let not

any man arrogate this office to himself, for it is Christ's alone. God never did hear a message from man that he accepted, except through this messenger. I cannot get to God directly, I must have a mediator. Well said Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God; for our God is a consuming fire." No sigh ever reached the Most High, except through Christ—I mean so as to move his heart to pour out his grace. Prayers, groans, tears, all these are like arrows without a bow, till Christ comes and fits them to the string, and shoots them home for you and me. All our prayers are like a victim, with the wood and altar; Christ must bring the fire, and then the sacrifice smokes to heaven. He is the messenger. Oh Christian, do you not rejoice in him then as the messenger of the covenant? He is doing thy errands before the throne to-night, pleading for me, pleading for you. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." You came to this house to-night, you offered prayer, Christ is offering it now, as an offering most divinely sweet. As you are sitting here, you are breathing a vow, or a desire to heaven. Christ presents it, for he stands at the golden altar, having a censer full of the prayer and vows of saints. Give him an errand now. Try him at this moment, entreat him to plead on your behalf. Thus view him; thus exercise your faith upon him as the plenipotentiary from God to man, as the revealer of God to man, and as spokesman from man to God.

"Look up, my soul, with cheerful eye,
See where the great Redeemer stands,—
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in his hands!

He sweetens every humble groan,
He recommends each broken prayer;
Recline thy hope on him alone,
Whose power and love forbid despair."

II. But briefly on the second point. WE DELIGHT IN THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST HAS CARRIED OUT THIS OFFICE AS MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

And here let us dwell on that part of the office which relates to the

revelation of God to man. Oh, what a full messenger has he been! He has not dropped half the message; he has not told us a part of God, but all that his heavenly Father bade him declare, he has revealed unto us as we could bear it; and he has given us this day the Holy Spirit who lead us into all truth, who shall take of the things of Christ which the Father gave him, and reveal them unto us. What a full messenger, and how faithful! Surely the Master could say, "I have kept back nothing that is profitable for you." With greater emphasis than ever Paul could say it, he might have declared, "I am clear from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." We poor messengers mar the Master's message in the telling of it, but "Never man spake like this man." So full and faithful is he who speaketh with Jehovah's bidding to his chosen people, that he can say, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Then, how willingly he does it! "I delight to do thy will, O God." How sweet it seemed to him to show God out to us! Even his tears, though bitterly they flowed, were cheerfully bestowed; and his very death, though it was an awful baptism, yet was one for which he longed. How was he straitened until it was accomplished! I hate a man to be a messenger who goes unwillingly, and who mumbles out the message as if he had no interest in it; but oh! our sweet Lord Jesus tells God's message to us as though he were more interested in it than we are; tells it so lovingly, so affectionately, so tenderly, with all his heart, turning his soul out that we may see it, writing his very nature out in streams of blood, that we might see in crimson lines what otherwise we might not have been able to perceive. Oh, how well—better than ministers, better than prophets, better than apostles, better than angels. Christ hath performed the office of messenger from God. Solomon's proverb is all outdone in our Redeemer's case. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters."

Beloved, let us delight equally as much in the way in which he has performed our message from ourselves to God. Ah, I have been to my advocate a thousand times, but I never found him a weary messenger. You have a servant, and you give him many things to do; but towards

nightfall it may be that you give him one thing too many, and the poor man's weary feet and languid looks chide you when you give him the errand. But I have been to my Master, and so have you, in the dead of night, and I never found him asleep. I have been to him in the heat of summer, but I never found him point to his bloody sweat, and say he could not go. I have been to him a thousand times, and yet I have never, never heard him say, "I have served thee enough, I will not be thy messenger again." But cheerfully, willingly hath he taken our request to God, again, and again, and again, and presented it there. And how full of sweet powers of memory and generous recollections he has been! We have often failed to tell him the message aright, and sometimes there was a part of it that we could not tell him—groanings that could not be uttered—but he read the message, and then told it perfectly out in the other place, within the veil, never forgetting one desire nor one faint wish; sometimes erasing one that was evil and putting in another that was right, but he hath never forgotten us. The blessed Master hath a thousand souls to plead for; nay, what if I say millions! but never hath he forgotten one. The meanest lamb in his flock he has tended; the poorest subject in his dominions has been the object of his advocacy. And then, brethren, with what passionate love hath he pleaded for us in heaven! Oh, you cannot conceive him, for he is high above us; but if we could see him to-night, standing before the throne, we should say, "I never thought I had such an advocate as this;"—not with sighs and tears, for they are over now, but with authority he pleads, points to his wounded hands and to his side, and urges the case of his people as though it were his own case, and so indeed, it is, for he may well say -

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me—my flesh and my bones."

Never such an advocate as this. Fathers might plead for sons, and a wife might throw herself on the ground to plead with a judge for her husband, but never such a pleader as this. Thou messenger of the covenant, none can plead as thou dost.

And then, dear friends, I think we ought to delight in him, when we think how unflaggingly he perseveres in his intercession, though we are

continually forgetful and ungrateful for his kindness. I am sure if we had a friend's cause to plead, and he were as unworthy and forgetful as we are, we should tell him to suit himself, and find some other advocate. But he, for Zion's sake, doth not hold his peace, for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest. Going to and fro from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, he speaketh messages of love from God to our souls, bearing messages of pleading and of intercession from our souls to God. Take thou, beloved, a sweet delight in Jesus, for he doth his errand wed. He is a choice messenger, one among a thousand, yea the chief among ten thousand.

III. But time flies, and therefore we hasten onward to carry out our third proposal. HOW ARE WE TO SHOW THAT WE DO REALLY DELIGHT IN CHRIST? Well, there is one way of doing it, and that is by again employing him to-night. Thou hast been upon my errands so many times, my sweet Lord, that thou shalt even go again. I ask thee, brother Christian, to let me speak to thee a moment. I know thou hast some very heavy matter on thy mind to-night, some very heavy trial awaiteth thee to-morrow, and thou hast been troubled about it all the week. Dost thou delight in the messenger of the covenant? Ah, then send thy Jesus with it as a message to the throne to-night. Say thou unto Jesus, "I pray thee tell the Father that one of his adopted who can say, 'Abba,' is in trouble deep and sore. Send thou from heaven and deliver me, and pluck me out of the deep waters." Thou wilt show thy delight in him by trusting him in thy great matters. Oh, but you mean to do it yourself; you have all your wits about you and mean to get through it yourself do you? You shall flounder in the mire. But give the matter up to Him and let him take it to thy God and see whether prayer does not more often prevail in trial than all the energies and wits of man. And sister over yonder, thou hast a secret, one thou wouldst not tell to me, no, nor to thy dearest friend, but it rankles and it makes thy heart bleed in secret till sometimes thou art weary of thy life. Dost thou love the messenger of the covenant? Whisper into his ear what thou canst tell to none beside, and ask him to speak for thee to the king, to the captain of the host. Say unto him, "Jesus, lover of my soul, I'll trust thee with this most secret grief That which no creature can intermeddle with, thou shalt know; behold I bare the wound before thy tender eye; go tell the Father that a child of his is weeping in secret, walking in darkness and seeing no light. "Thou wilt show thy delight in

him by trusting him now. Minister, send a messenger by him to-night for thy flock! Sunday school teacher, give him a missive from thy heart for thy class! Mother, the messenger waits for thee, ask him to plead for thy sons and daughters! Father, the messenger is ready to bear thy wish to heaven! Tell him thou wouldst have no greater joy than this, to see thy children walk in the truth! Jesus, say thou to thy Father that my prayer to-night is that I would have this congregation saved. Oh speak thou; bear the ponderous message; ask that not one within these walls may perish. Lift up thy hands, and plead for every man, and woman, and child, beneath this tabernacle's dome to-night, and ask that every one may be a partaker of the grace that saves. I know that thou wilt prevail if thou wilt ask, for if thou shouldst ask anything of thy Father he will do it for thee. Thou hast but to will it and 'tis done. Behold, by faith I would lay hold upon the skirt of thy garment thou great High Priest, the sweetly sounding bells of thy ephod I hear to-night; upon thy glittering breast-plate the eyes of my faith are fixed. Take that request, and plead it solemnly before the awful throne of heaven, and let the answer come to all this multitude—an answer of grace and peace! Thus, my beloved, we must show our delight in him—by bidding him plead for us.

Leaving for a moment the thought of messenger, I want to add some other things, not quite, perhaps, in keeping with our text, but quite in harmony with our delight in Jesus. You are coming round the table, brothers and sisters, and you delight in Christ. Shall I tell you how it is that we show that we delight in him?

One way is by waiting for him. There is the wife at evening. It is past the proper hour for her husband to return. She goes to the window and looks out into the cold dark night, and then she goes back to the chair, and to the little one, and takes her needle and whiles away the time, but soon she is up again looking out of the window once more, and listening to every foot-fall in the street, or looking out from the open door. Why is not her spouse at home? How is it that he is away? She sits down again, she tries to ease her mind with household business, but every ticking of the clock, and every striking of the hour suggests to her, "Why is he so long in coming?" See she is again drawing back the curtains and looking out into the black night for the hundredth time, longing for her husband, and

why? because she takes delight in him, and wants to see his face. So when Christians look out into the dark world and say, "When will he come?" and when they go to their labor, and say, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long in coming?" and when they can cry with John, "Come quickly, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," and are waiting for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of man, then they prove that they have intense delight in him. Do you show this, Christian? Are you waiting for him? Are you getting ready for the time when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God?

"Come, my beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of thy delay:
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow."

We prove our delight in him in another way, by working for him. There is a woman there; she is working hard at her embroidery needle; she is making a little coat; it is a linen ephod. I wonder why that woman smiles so, while she works with her needle? There, she must put it away, for there is other work to do. I wonder why next day she goes to the drawer, so pleased to get that work out and continue it? I will tell you her name; her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, and she is making a little coat for her son Samuel, whom she has left with Eli at the Tabernacle; now you perceive wherefore is she so pleased in making this ephod? Because she delighteth in Samuel. So I see the Sunday school teacher pleased to meet his children; I see the minister go to the pulpit with beaming eye, and I see the missionary leaving house and home, kindred and cherished associations, joyfully giving up everything for Christ, and I ask why? Because he delights in Christ, and therefore he can work for him. Is it so with you, friends, are you working for Christ? Yes, methinks you are, or else I fear me you are not delighting in him.

And then another thing. I have seen the boy at school—I knew such a boy myself—and one day that child was at play, and merry was he at his games and well intent thereat, but some lad ran across the ground, and said, "Your father's come to see you," and he laid aside his playthings and

his games, and ran at once into his father's arms because he delighted in his parent. And I have seen the Christian when he is delighting in his God, when lecture or prayer-meeting night came, say, "Well, I will gladly lose a little of my business, that I may run into my Father's arms in the hour of worship." There has been a saint to be visited, or a sinner to be warned, and I have seen the lovers of Jesus leave their nets that they may follow Christ, and forsake the world, that they might serve him. Beloved, if he were to come tonight and bid us choose whether we would be in heaven or here, I think we would not long delay, but say to him, "Thou leavest me no choice." To be with thee is so much better than aught beside, that I embrace thee now. Oh take me up to thee!

Further, we may show our delight in Christ by searching after him when we lose his presence. There is the spouse in the Canticles; she is going about in the city in the dark night—"Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" The watchmen meet her and pluck away her veil rudely, and they smite her. Why is not that delicate woman at home at rest? See, she wanders on, cold and weary, with tears rolling down her cheeks, and hanging like pearls from her eyes. Wherefore is this woman weeping and searching thus? The answer is—"Tell me O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest?" She hath such a delight in him, that she will search a thousand nights; yea, a believing soul would search hell through to find Christ, if he were to be found nowhere else; and I know what Rutherford said was no great exaggeration, when he said, "If there were fifty hells between my soul and Christ, and he bade me wade through them and he would come and meet me, I fain would dash through them all to reach his fond embrace." Jesu, our thirst for thee is insatiable; we must have thee, and thus we prove our delight in thee.

Lastly, we may prove our delight in Christ by being very happy ourselves and trying to make others partakers of our joy. Do not go to the Lord's table to-night if you can help it burdened with your groans and moans. If you cannot come without bringing them, then come; come anyhow. But I would have you to-night, if you could, delight yourselves in the Lord. You are very poor.—Ah! but you are very rich in him. You are sick, you say.—Ay! but remember what he suffered for you. Oh! but you are a sinner. Ay! but remember his precious blood! Fix your eye on him to-night and on

nothing else, and oh be glad! Come to his table with delight. I often say I know the people that come here—our regular people that come here—because they have a way of walking, and a look on the Sabbath that is different from most people that go to other places of worship. Other folks are so solemn, as if they were going to an execution. They look so grave, as if it were an awful work to serve God, as bad as going to prison, to attend a service, and as disagreeable as the pillory to stand up and praise the Lord. But I notice that you come here with joy, looking upon the Sabbath as a joyous day, not a time to pull the blinds down and shut out the light, but a day to feast yourselves in God. Now I think ordinance days are especially times of rejoicing. You and I have been all the week up to our elbows in work. By-and-bye we shall have to go back to that dingy workroom among those persecuting worldlings. Never mind; Lord make this as a sanctuary to us to-night. Shut us in and shut the world out, and let us rejoice ourselves in our God.

"As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is dying a Christ to me;
And while he makes my soul his guest,
Thy bosom, Lord, shall be my rest.

No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with thy courts on earth compare;
And here we wait, until thy love
Raise us to nobler seats above."

Beloved brethren, if you have this delight tell it to others. Do not be tongue-tied and dumb any of you. Speak out what God has done for you. Tell! tell! -

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found."

If you should have any enjoyment to-night let others partake of the honey which you have discovered. God help you thus to live to his praise.

I am about to retire a few moments, while our friends get to their seats for

the communion. Before I retire, I have a message to tell from the Messenger of the Covenant. He is willing to take a message from any poor, troubled, sin-burdened, conscience-stricken sinner in this Tabernacle. Has any one of you a message for him? The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive and stamp with his own blood-marked hand any earnest, heart-written message you are willing to send to God to-night. Is there any one who has this to send—"God be merciful to me a sinner?" What! Not one of you? Is there not a heart here that would say, "Lord save or I perish?" Surely there are some! Breathe thy desire out now silently; Jesus hears it; trust him to carry it to God. Believe that his blood can cleanse thee. Trust him, trust his merits to clothe thee. Trust especially his intercession to prevail for thee as the messenger of the covenant. Do it soul. "Oh but," you say, "my hand is black." Never mind, he will touch it and make it white. "Oh but I cannot pray." He can pray for you. "Oh but I cannot plead." He can plead in your stead. Tell him your wants. As Rowland Hill once did, so would I do with you. It is said that Rowland once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern; and having a pair of horses to bait, and going into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, "Glad to see you Mr. Hill." "I am going," was the reply, "to stay with you tonight; will you let me have family prayer to-night in this house?" "I never had such a thing as family prayer here," said the landlord, "and I don't want to have it now." "Very well, then just fetch my horses out; I can't stop in a house where they won't pray to God. Take the horses out." Now being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it, and promises to have family prayer. "Ah but," said Hill, "I'm not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people's houses. You must conduct it yourself." The man said he could not pray. "But you must," said Rowland Hill. "Oh but I never did pray." "Then my dear man you will begin to-night," was the answer. So when the time came, and the family were on their knees, "Now," said Rowland Hill, "every man prays in his own house; you must offer prayer to-night." "I can't pray, I can't," said the landlord. "What, man, you have had all these mercies to-day, and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been. Can't you tell God what a sinner you've been and ask for pardon?" The man began to cry, "I can't pray, Mr. Hill, I can't, indeed I can't." "Then tell the Lord, man, you

can't; tell him you can't pray," said Mr. Hill, "and ask him to help you." Down went the poor landlord on his knees. "O Lord I can't pray; I wish I could," "Ah! you have begun to pray," said Rowland Hill, "you have begun to pray, and you will never leave off. As soon as God has once set you to pray, faint though it be, you will never leave off. Now I'll pray for you." And so he did, and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord's hard heart and to bring him to Christ. Now I say, if any of you can't pray, tell the Lord you can't. Ask him to help you to pray; ask him to show you your need to be saved; and if you can't pray, ask him to give you everything that you need. Christ will make as well as take the message. He will put his own blood upon your prayer; and the Father will send down the Holy Ghost to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ.

May the Lord send you away with his blessing to-night. Amen.

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Micah's Message For Today

Walk humbly with thy God.- Micah 6:8

This is the essence of the law, the spiritual side of it; its ten commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The law is spiritual, and touches the thoughts, the intents, the emotions, the words, the actions; but specially God demands the heart. Now it is our great joy that what the law requires the gospel gives. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." In him we meet the requirements of the law, first, by what he has done for us; and next, by what he works in us. He conforms us to the law of God. He makes us, by his Spirit, not for our righteousness, but for his glory, to render to the law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfil these three divine requirements. These we fulfil perfectly in our desire; we would be holy as God is holy, if we could live as our heart aspires to live, we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy; and we would always walk humbly with God. This the Holy Spirit daily aids us to do by working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure; and the day will come, and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve him day and night in his temple, and shall render to him an absolutely perfect obedience, for "they are without fault before the throne of God."

To-night I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, "Walk humbly with thy God," asking first, What is the nature of this humility? and secondly, Wherein does this humility show itself?

I. First, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS HUMILITY? The text is very full of teaching in that respect.

And, first, this humility belongs to the highest form of character. Observe what precedes our text, "to do justly, and to love mercy." Suppose a man has done that, suppose that in both these things he has come up to the divine standard, what then? Why, then he must walk humbly with God. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, still we shall need to walk before God very humbly, ever looking to the blood, for even then the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth and continues to cleanse us from all sin. If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants, and we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly, and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ's gracious help; but if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us, and every act was right towards man, and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbour as strong as our love to ourselves, even then there would come in this precept, "Walk humbly

with thy God."

Dear friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian grace,—I almost hope that you never will think so,—but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments; but walk humbly with your God. I do believe that the more grace a man has the more he feels his deficiency of grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort; they have always disclaimed anything like perfection, they have always lain low before God, and if one has been constrained to admire them, they have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were at all the objects of reverence among their fellow-Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them; and therein I do admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them returns to them with interest. Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners, for whom there is still a fountain open, but not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but the fountain is opened for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash therein, and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character, nay, it is the very clothing of such a character, as Peter puts it, "Be clothed with humility," as if, after we had put on the whole armour of God, we put this over all to cover it all up. We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the greaves of brass upon the knees to shine before men; but clothing ourselves like officers in mufti, we conceal the beauties which will eventually the more reveal themselves.

The second remark is this, the humility here prescribed involves constant communion with God. Observe that we are told to walk humbly with THY God. It is of no use walking humbly away from God. I have seen some people very proudly humble, very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God. They could

not accept the mercy of Christ, they said; they were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This humility makes us walk with God; and, beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God, and pleaded with him for Sodom, said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes;" "dust"—that set forth the frailty of his nature, "ashes"—as if he was like the refuse of the altar, which could not be burnt up, which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatsoever; and that was not because he was away from God, but because he was near to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get away from God; but coming near to the Lord you rightly sing,—

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie."

Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather-gauge as to your communion, whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. "He must increase," said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus; "but I must decrease." The two things go together; if this scale rises, that scale must go down. "Walk humbly with thy God." Dare to keep with God, dare to have him as your daily Friend, be bold enough to come to him who is within the veil, talk with him, walk with him, as a man walks; with his familiar friend; but walk humbly with him. You will do so if you walk truly; I cannot conceive such a thing,—it is impossible,—as a man walking proudly with God. He takes his fellow by the arm, and feels that he is as good as his neighbour, perhaps superior to him; but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that. The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility; but the sinful with the Thrice-holy! This throws us down into the dust.

But, next, this humility implies constant activity. "Walk humbly with thy God." Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow

before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" But the answer is not, "Bow humbly before God," but "Walk humbly with God." Now, beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern,—large, of course, only to us,—if we have work after work, we are too apt to forget that we are only servants, we are doing all the business for our Master, we are only commission agents for him. We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm; we should not think so if we did think steadily for a moment, for we should know our right position; but in the midst of activity we get cumbered with much serving, and we are too apt to get off our proper level. We have, perhaps, to rule others; and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk; but it must not be so. You must learn, not only to be humble in the closet of communion, and to be humble with your Bible before you, but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do, when you have as much as ever you can do. When from morning to night you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know; not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was Mrs. Martha, and the housewife is a queen; but Mary sat in the servant's place at Jesus' feet. If Martha's heart could have been where Mary's body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us Martha-Maries, or Mary-Marthas, whenever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God!

Next, I do not think that it is far-fetched if I say that this humility denotes progress. The man is to walk, and that is progress, advancing. "Walk humbly:" I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better; they call that humility. It begins with an S in English, and the full word is SLOTH. "I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is." Thou art not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God. Go forward, advance, not with a proud desire to excel your fellow-Christians, not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more grace; but still walk, go on, advance, grow. Be enriched with all the precious things of God; be filled with all the fulness of God; walk on, walk ever. Lie not

down in despair; roll not in the dust with desperation because thou thinkest high things impossible to thee; walk, but walk humbly. Thou wilt soon find out, if thou dost make any progress, that thou hast need to be humble. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud, and I am persuaded that when a man advances he gets humbler, and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us, for this he visits us in the night, and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more grace, and get to higher attainments, by being more humble, "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." If thou wilt climb the mountain-side, thou shalt be thirsty among the barren crags; but if thou wilt descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander, and the brooks flow among the meadows, thou shalt drink to thy full. Doth not the hart pant for the water-brooks? Do thou pant for them; they flow in the valley of humiliation. The Lord bring us all there!

Next, the humility here prescribed implies constancy: "Walk humbly with thy God." Not sometimes be humble; but ever walk humbly with thy God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we should be! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same myself, "I felt very broken down, and lay very low at my Master's feet." Were you so the next day? And the day after did you continue so? Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because of our great debt to our Master, begging that he would not be hard with us, and is it not possible tomorrow to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God's people would do that; but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to think of doing it, one day acknowledging your Father's authority, and doing his will, and another day standing outside the door, and refusing to go in because the prodigal son has come home. "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; I have been a consistent believer, yet I never have any high joys; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved, and he is in an ecstasy of delight. How can this be right?" O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with thy Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers, and then to come out, and to be "My lord," and

some very great one in the midst of the church and in the world. This will never do. It is not said, "Bow humbly before God now and then; "but as a regular, constant thing, "Walk humbly with thy God." It is not, "Bow thy head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which thou canst not deny," but, in the brightness of thy purity, and the clearness of thy holiness, still keep thy heart in lowly reverence bowing before the throne.

Once more only, and then we will quit this part of the subject, the humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence. Do let me read the text to you, "Walk humbly with God." No, no, we must not maul the passage that way, "Walk humbly with thy God." Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ; that is unbelief. Do not think that it is humility to think that he is another man's God, and not yours; "Walk humbly with thy God." Know that he is your God, be sure of it, come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved's, and that he is yours. Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives himself to you; take him to be yours by a covenant of salt that never shall be broken; and give yourself to him, saying, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." "Walk humbly with thy God." Let not anything draw you away from that confidence; but then, in comes the humility. This is all of grace; this is all the result of divine election; therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen you. This is all the effect of redeeming love; therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price; so you can have no room to glory. This is all the work of the Spirit.

"Then give all the glory to his holy name,
To him all the glory belongs."

"Walk humbly with thy God." I lie at his feet as one unworthy, and cry, "Whence is this to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that thou hast made to pass before me." I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

II. And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I have to answer the question, WHEREIN DOES THIS HUMILITY SHOW

ITSELF? I have what might be a long task; a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hour-glass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, "Let us have another glass," and they turned it over again, and went on for another hour. But I am not going to do that, I do not wish to weary you, and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Wherein, then, does this humility show itself? It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to try to be humble, but to be humble. As to acting humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility, when he is very humble to everybody, he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the heart, and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, specially, walk humbly with God when your graces are strong and vigorous, when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word, and especially when the Lord gives you success in his service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among his people, and has laid his hand upon you, and said, "Go in this thy might." Then, "Walk humbly with thy God." The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon; perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar; but you may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is not pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the evil one tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, "Walk humbly with thy God."

Next, when you have a great deal of work to do, and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with God. Do you ask, How? By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself; and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any. When you are weak, by owning your weakness you will grow strong. Lean

hard upon your God, cry to him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall speak forth thy praise." Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God, yield yourself up to be worked upon by him, that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my brother, your people will soon find it out.

"Oh, to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at his feet!"

Then it is, when walking humbly with God in service, that he will fill us, and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God in all your aims. When you are seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it be the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man, or any woman either, tries to work in the Sunday-school, or if anyone preaches in the open air, or in the house of God, with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous brother or sister, then let this word come into your ear, "Walk humbly with thy God." There is a word which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." You young men of the College, do not be always hunting up big places; be willing to go to small places to preach the gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum; but go, and let your aim always be this, "I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God." "Walk humbly with thy God." You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs; sink yourself into the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising; think only of your Lord's glory. "Walk humbly with thy God."

Walk humbly with God, also, in studying his Word, and in believing his truth. We have a number of men, nowadays, who are critics of the Bible; the Bible stands bound at their bar, nay, worse than that, it lies on their

table to be dissected, and they have no feeling of decency towards it; they will cut out its very heart, they will rend asunder its tenderest parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the beloved apostle's Gospel, or the Book of the Apocalypse, is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing, their scalpel, their knife, cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be, and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire ever to sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is any mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever. I am prepared to believe what ever it says, and to take it believing it to be the Word of God; for if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false; but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not have a guide here that is infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so after all; I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide perpetually, but I am not qualified to do that, and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all. Sit thou down, Reason, and let Faith rise up. If the Lord hath said it, let God be true, and every man a liar. If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science; the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of men may be. "Ah ! "you say, "you are an old-fashioned fogy." Yes, I am; I will not disclaim any compliment which you choose to pass upon me; and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book. This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation; it smote the Papacy, and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand thou still, my brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and "walk humbly with thy God" as to his truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, as to mercies received. You were ill a little while ago; and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business; you wear a much better coat than you used to come here in; but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman. Now you get into very good society, you say; but do not be ashamed to come to the prayer-meeting along with the Lord's poor, and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. "Walk humbly with thy God," or else it may be that he will take thee down a notch or two, and bring thee back to thy old poverty; and then what wilt thou say to thyself for thy folly?

Next, walk humbly with God under great trials. When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride; murmur not, but bow low. Say, "Lord, if thou smite me, I deserve more than thou dost lay upon me. Thou hast not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement." Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no; say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

And next, walk humbly with God in thy devotions, as between thyself and God in thy chamber. Dost thou read? Read humbly. Dost thou pray? Pray humbly. Dost thou sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Do take care, when thy God and thyself are together, and none besides, that there thou showest to him thy humble heart, with deep humility that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly as between thyself and thy brethren. Ask not to be head choir-master; desire not to be the principal man in the church. Be lowly. The best man in the church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on, the brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard brethren say, "Well, but you must stand up for your dignity." I lost mine a long time ago, and I never thought it was worth while to look for it. As to the dignity of the pastor, the dignity of the minister, if we have no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest room; and if we will do so, our brethren will take care that before long they will say to us, "Go up higher." In thy dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that, if thou art strong now, thou mayest very soon be as weak as thy brethren are.

And in dealing with sinners, "walk humbly with thy God." Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view. Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there was a pair of tongs handy; but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers

would be smutted by the brands? Ah, beloved, we must come down from all lofty places, and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all this subject as to your circumstances. If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after a higher place; walk humbly with your God, take what he gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all his mercy; and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbles. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. "Walk humbly with thy God." In all thy thoughts of holy things, be humble; thoughts of God should lay thee low, thoughts of Christ should bring thee to his feet, thoughts of the Holy Ghost should make thee grieve for having vexed him. Thoughts of every covenant blessing should make thee wonder that such privileges ever came to thee. Thoughts of heaven should make thee marvel that thou shouldst ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of hell should make thee humble,—

"For were it not for grace divine,
That fate so dreadful had been thine."

Oh, brethren, the Lord help us to walk humbly with God! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking rightly of thyself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble here will make you wake up in the likeness of your Master by-and-by. The Lord bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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A Mighty Saviour

Mighty to save. - Isaiah 63:1

This, of course, refers to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who is described as "coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah," and who, when it is questioned who he is, replies, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." It will be well, then, at the commencement of our discourse to make one or two remarks concerning the mysteriously complex person of the man and God whom we call our Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Saviour. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian religion, that we are taught to believe that Christ is God, and yet a man. According to Scripture, we hold that he is "very *God*," equal and co-eternal with the Father, possessing, as his Father doth, all divine attributes in an infinite degree. He participated with his Father in all the acts of his divine might; he was concerned in the decree of election, in the fashioning of the covenant; in the creation of the angels, in the making of the world, when it was wheeled from nothing into space, and in the ordering of this fair frame of nature. Before any of these acts the divine Redeemer was the eternal Son of God. "From everlasting to everlasting he is God." Nor did he cease to be God when he became man. He was equally "God over all, blessed for evermore," when he was "the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief," as before his incarnation. We have abundant proof of that in the constant affirmations of Scripture, and, indeed, also in the miracles which he wrought. The raising of the dead, the treading of the billows of the ocean, the hushing of the winds and the rending of the rocks, with all those marvellous acts of his, which we have not time here to mention, were strong and potent proofs that he was God, most truly God, even when he condescended to be man. And Scripture, most certainly teaches us, that he is God now, that he shares the throne of his Father—that he sits "high above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named," and is the true and proper object of the veneration, the worship, and the homage of all worlds. We are equally taught to believe that he is *man*. Scripture informs us that, on a day appointed, he came from heaven and did become man as well as God, taking upon himself the nature of a babe in the manger in Bethlehem. From that babe, we are told, he did grow to the stature of manhood, and became "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," in everything except our sin. His sufferings, his hunger, above all, his death and burial, are strong proofs that he was man, most truly man; and yet it is demanded of us by the Christians religion, to believe, that while he was

man he was most truly God. We are taught that he was a "child born, a son given," and yet, at the same time, the "Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father." Whosoever would have clear and right view of Jesus, must not mingle his natures. We must not consider him as a God diluted into deified manhood, or as a mere man officially exalted to the Godhead, but as being two distinct natures in one person; not God melted into man, nor man made into God, but man and God taken into union together. Therefore, do we trust in him, as the Daysman, the Mediator, Son of God, and Son of Man. This is the person who is our Saviour. It is this glorious, yet mysterious being, of whom the text speaks, when it says, he is mighty—"mighty to save."

That he is mighty we need not inform you; for as readers of the Scriptures you all believe in the might and majesty of the Incarnate Son of God. You believe him to be the Regent of providence, the King of death, the Conqueror of hell, the Lord of angels, the Master of storms, and the God of battles, and, therefore, you can need no proof that he is mighty. The subject of this morning is one part of his mightiness. He is "mighty to save." May God the Holy Spirit help us in briefly entering upon this subject, and make use of it to the salvation of our souls!

First, we shall consider *what is meant by the words "to save;"* secondly, *how we prove the fact that he is "mighty to save;"*, thirdly, *the reason why he is "mighty to save;"* and then, fourthly, *the inferences which are to be deduced from the doctrine that Jesus Christ is "mighty to save."*

I. First, then, WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE WORDS "TO SAVE?"

Commonly, most men, when they read these words, consider them to mean salvation from hell. They are partially correct, but the notion is highly defective. It is true Christ does save men from the penalty of their guilt; he does take those to heaven who deserve the eternal wrath and displeasure of the Most High; it is true that he does blot out "iniquity, transgression, and sin," and that the iniquities of the remnant of his people are passed over for the sake of his blood and atonement. But that is not the whole meaning of the words "to save." This deficient

explanation lies at the root of mistakes which many theologians have made, and by which they have surrounded their system of divinity with mist. They have said that to save is to pluck men as brands from the burning—to save them from destruction if they repent. Now, it means vastly, I had almost said, infinitely more than this. "To save" means something more than just delivering penitents from going down to hell. By the words "to save," I understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy desire, the first spiritual conviction, onward to complete sanctification. All this done of God through Jesus Christ. Christ is not only mighty to save those who do repent, but he is able to make men repent; he is engaged not merely to carry those to heaven who believe, but he is mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them; he is mighty not merely to give heaven to one who wishes for it, but he is mighty to make the man who hates holiness love it, to constrain the despiser of his name to bend his knee before him, and to make the most abandoned reprobate turn from the error of his ways.

By the words "to save," I do not understand what some men say they mean. They tell us in their divinity that Christ came into the world to put all men into a salvable state—to make the salvation of all men possible by their own exertions. I believe that Christ came for no such thing—that he came into the world not to put men into a *salvable* state, but into a *saved* state; not to put them where they could save themselves, but to do the work in them and for them, from the first even to the last. If I believe that Christ came only to put you, my hearers, and myself into a state where we might save ourselves, I should give up preaching henceforth and for ever; for knowing a little of the wickedness of men's hearts, because I know something of my own—knowing how much men naturally hate the religion of Christ—I should despair of any success in preaching a gospel which I had only to offer, its effects depending upon the voluntary acceptance of it by unrenewed and unregenerate men. If I did not believe that there was a might power, and which turns them from the error of their ways by the mighty, overwhelming, constraining force of a divine and mysterious influence, I should cease to glory in the cross of Christ. Christ, we repeat, is mighty, not merely to put men into a salvable condition, but mighty absolutely and entirely to save them. This fact I regard as one of the grandest proofs of the divine character of the Bible

revelation. I have many a time had doubts and fears, as most of you have had; and where is the strong believer that he not sometimes wavered? I have said, within myself, "Is this religion true, which, day after day, I incessantly preach to the people? Is it the correct one? Is it true that this religion has an influence upon mankind?" And I will tell you how I have reassured myself. I have looked upon the hundreds, nay, upon the thousands whom I have around me, who were once the vilest of the vile—drunkards, swearers, and such like—and I now see them "clothed and in their right mind, "This must be the truth, then, because I see its marvellous effects. It is true, because it is efficient for purposes which error never could accomplish. It exerts an influence among the lowest order of mortals, and over the most abominable of our race. It is a power, an irresistible agent of good; who then shall deny its truth. I take it that the highest proof of Christ's power is not that he offers salvation, not that he bids you take it if you will, but that when you reject it, when you hate it, when you despise it, he has a power whereby he can change your mind, make you think differently from your former thoughts, and turn you from the error of your ways. This I conceive to be the meaning of the text: "mighty to save."

But it is not all the meaning. Our Lord is not only mighty to make men repent, to quicken the dead in sin, to turn them from their follies and their iniquities. But he is exalted to do more than that: he is mighty to keep them Christians after he has made them so, and mighty to preserve them in his fear and love, until he consummates their spiritual existence in heaven. Christ's might doth not lie in making a believer, and then leaving him to shift for himself afterwards; but he who begins the good work carries it on; he who imparts the first germ of life which quickens the dead soul, gives afterwards the life which prolongs the divine existence, and bestows that mighty power which at last bursts asunder every bond of sin, and lands the soul perfected in glory. We hold and teach, and we believe upon Scriptural authority, that all men unto whom Christ has given repentance must infallibly hold on their way. We do believe that God never begins a good work in a man without finishing it; that he never makes a man truly alive to spiritual things without carrying on that work in his soul even to the end, by giving him a place amongst the choirs of the sanctified. We do not think that Christ's power dwells in

merely bringing me one day into grace, and then telling me to keep myself there, but in so putting me into a gracious state, and giving me such an inward life and such a power within myself that I can no more turn back than the very sun in the heavens can stay itself in its course, or cease to shine. Beloved, we regard this as signified by the terms "mighty to save." This is commonly called Calvinistic doctrine; it is none other than Christian doctrine, the doctrine of the holy Bible; for despite that it is now called Calvinism, it could not be so called in Augustine's days; and yet in Augustine's works you find the very same things. And it is not to be called Augustinism; it is to be found in the writings of the apostle Paul. And yet it was not called Paulism, simple for this reason, that it is the expansion, the fulness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To repeat what we have before said, we hold and boldly teach that Jesus Christ is not merely able to save men who put themselves in his way and who are willing to be saved, but that he is able to make men willing—that he is able to make the drunkard renounce his drunkenness and come to him—that he is able to make the despiser bend his knee, and make hard hearts melt before his love. Now, it is ours to show that he is able to do so.

II. HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT CHRIST IS "MIGHTY TO SAVE?"

We will give you the strongest argument first; and we shall need but one. The argument is, that he *has* done it. We need no other; it were superfluous to add another. He *has* saved them, in the full extent and meaning of the word which we have endeavoured to explain. But in order to set this truth in a clear light, we will suppose the worst of cases. It is very easy to imagine, say some, that when Christ's gospel is preached to some here who are amiable and lovely, and have always been trained up in the fear of God, they will receive the gospel in the love of it. Very well, we will not take such a case. You see this South Sea Islander. He has just been eating a diabolical meal of human flesh; he is a cannibal; at his belt are slung the scalps of men whom he has murdered, and in whose blood he glories. If you land on the coast he will eat you, too, unless you mind what you are after. That man bows himself before a block of wood. He is a poor ignorant debased creature, but very little removed from the brute. Now, has Christ's gospel power to tame that man, to take the scalps from his girdle, to make him give up his bloody practices, renounce his gods,

and become a civilised and Christian man? You know, my dear friends, you talk about the power of education in England; there may be a great deal in it; education may do very much for some who are here, not in a spiritual, but in a natural way; but what would education do with this savage: go and try. Send the best schoolmaster in England over to him: he will eat him before the day is up. That will be all the good of it. But if the missionary goes with Christ's gospel, what will become of him? Why, in multitudes of cases, he has been the pioneer of civilisation, and under the providence of God has escaped a cruel death. He goes with love in his hands and in his eyes; he speaks to the savage. And mark ye, we are telling facts now, not dreams. The savage drops his tomahawk. Says he, "It is marvellous; the things that this man tells me are wonderful, I will sit down and listen." He listens, and the tears roll down his cheeks; a feeling of humanity which never burned within his soul before is kindled in him. He says, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and soon he is clothed and in his right mind, and becomes in every respect a man—such a man as we could desire all men to be. Now, we say, that this is proof that Christ's gospel does not come to the mind that is prepared for it, but prepares the mind for itself; that Christ does not merely put the seed into the ground that has been prepared beforehand, but ploughs the ground too—ay, and harrows it, and does the whole of the work. He is so able to do all this. Ask our missionaries who are in Africa, in the midst of the greatest barbarians in the world—ask them whether Christ's gospel is able to save, and they will point to the kraal of the Hottentot, and then they will point to the houses of the Kuraman, and they will say, "What has made this difference, but the word of the gospel of Christ Jesus?" Yes, dear brethren, we have had proofs enough in heathen countries; and why need we say more, but merely to add this—we have had proofs enough at home. There are some who preach a gospel which is very well fitted to train man in morals, but utterly unfitted to save him, a gospel which does well enough to keep men sober when they have become drunkards. It is a good thing enough to supply them with a kind of life, when they have it already, but not to quicken the dead and save the soul, and it can give up to despair the very characters whom Christ's gospel was most of all intended to affect. I could a tale unfold, of some who have plunged head-first into the blackest gulfs of sin, which would horrify you and me, if we could allow them to recount their guilt. I could tell you how they have

come into God's house with their teeth set against the minister, determined that say what he would they might listen, but it would be to scoff. They stayed a moment; some word arrested their attention; they thought within themselves, "I will hear that sentence." It was some pointed, terse saying, that entered into their souls. They knew not how it was, but they were spell-bound, and stood to listen a little longer; and by-and-bye, unconsciously to themselves, the tears began to fall, and when they went away, they had a strange, mysterious feeling about them that led them to their chambers. Down they fell on their knees; the story of their life was all told before God; he gave them peace through the blood of the Lamb, and they went to God's house, many of them to say, "Come and hear what God hath done for my soul," and to

"Tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour they had found."

Remember the case of John Newton, the great and mighty preacher of St. Mary, Woolnoth,—an instance of the power of God to change the heart, as well as to give peace when the heart is changed. Ah! dear hearers, I often think within myself, "This is the greatest proof of the Saviour's power." Let another doctrine be preached: will it do the same? If it will, why not let every man gather a crowd round him and preach it. Will it really do it? If it will, then the blood of men's souls must rest upon the man who does not boldly proclaim it. If he believes his gospel does save souls, how does the account for it that he stands in his pulpit from the first of January till the last of December, and never hears of a harlot made honest, nor of a drunkard reclaimed? Why? For this reason, that it is a poor dilution of Christianity. It is something like it, but it is not the bold, broad Christianity of the Bible; it is not the full gospel of the blessed God, for that *has* power to save. But if they do believe that theirs is the gospel, let them come out to preach it, and let them strive with all their might to win souls from sin, which is rife enough, God knows. We say again, that we have proof positive in cases even here before us, that Christ is mighty to save even the worst of men—to turn them from follies in which they have too long indulged, and we believe that the same gospel preached elsewhere would produce the same results.

The best proof you can ever have of God's being mighty to save, dear hearers, is that he saved *you*. Ah! my dear hearer, it were a miracle if he should save thy fellow that stands by thy side; but it were more a miracle if he should save thee. What art thou this morning? Answer! "I am an infidel," says one; "I hate and despise Christ's religion." But suppose, sir, there should be such a power in that religion that one day thou shouldst be brought to believe it! What wouldst thou say then? Ah! I know thou wouldst be in love with that gospel for ever; for thou wouldst say, "I above all men was the last to receive it; and yet here am I, I know now how, brought to love it." Oh! such a man when constrained to believe makes the most eloquent preacher in the world. "Ah! but," says another, "I have been a Sabbath-breaker upon principle, I despise the Sabbath, I hate utterly and entirely everything religious." Well, I can never prove religion to you to be true, unless it should ever lay hold of you, and make you a new man. Then you will say there is something in it. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." When we have felt the change it works in ourselves, then we speak of facts, and not of fancies, and we speak very boldly too. We say again, then, he is "mighty to save."

III. But now it is asked, WHY IS CHRIST "MIGHTY TO SAVE?" To this there are sundry answers.

First, if we understand the word "save," in the popular acceptance of the word, which is not, after all, the full one, though a true one—if we understand salvation to mean the pardon of sin and salvation from hell, Christ is mighty to save, *because of the infinite efficacy of his atoning blood*. Sinner! black as thou art with sin, Christ this morning is able to make thee whiter than the driven snow. Thou askest why. I will tell thee. He is able to forgive, because he has been punished for thy sin. If thou dost know and feel thyself to be a sinner, if thou hast no hope or refuge before God but in Christ, then be it known that Christ is able to forgive, because he was once punished for the very sin which thou hast committed, and therefore he can freely remit, because the punishment has been entirely paid by himself. Whenever I get on this subject I am tempted to tell a story; and though I have told it times enough in the hearing of many of you, others of you have never heard it, and it is the simplest way I know of setting out the belief I have in the atonement of

Christ. Once a poor Irishman came to me in my vestry. He announced himself something in this way: "Your reverence, I'm come to ax you a question." "In the first place," said I, "I am not a reverend, nor do I claim the title; and in the next place, why don't you go and ask your priest that question?" Said he "Well, your riv—sir, I meant—I did go to him but he did not answer me to my satisfaction, exactly; so I have come to ask you, and if you will answer this you will set my mind at peace, for I am much disturbed about it." "What is the question?" said I. "Why this. You say, and others say too, that God is able to forgive sin. Now, I can't see how he can be just, and yet forgive sin: for," said this poor man, "I have been so greatly guilty that if God Almighty does not punish me he *ought*; I feel that he would not be just if he were to suffer me to go without punishment. How, then, sir, can it be true that he can forgive, and still retain the title of just?" "Well," said I, "it is through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ." "Ah!" said he, "but then I do not understand what you mean by that. It is the kind of answer I got from the priest, but I wanted him to explain it to me more fully, how it was that the blood of Christ could make God just. You say it does, but I want to know how." "Well, then," said I, "I will tell you what I think to be the whole system of atonement, which I think is the sum and substance, the root, the marrow, and the essence of the gospel. This is the way Christ is able to forgive. Suppose," said I, "you had killed some one. You were a murderer; you were condemned to die, and you deserved it." "Faith," said he, "Yes I should deserve it." "Well, her Majesty is very desirous of saving your life, and yet at the same time universal justice demands that some one should die on account of the deed that is done. Now, how is she to manage?" Said he, "That is the question. I cannot see how she can be inflexibly just, and yet suffer me to escape." "Well," said I, "suppose, Pat, I should go to her and say, 'Here is this poor Irishman, he deserved to be hanged, your Majesty; I don't want to quarrel with the sentence, because I think it just; but, if you please, I so love him that if you were to hang me instead of him I should be very willing.' Pat, suppose she should agree to it, and hang me instead of you; what then? would she be just in letting you go?" "Ay," said he, "I should think she would. Would she hang two for one thing? I should say not. I'd walk way, and there isn't a policeman that would touch me for it." "Ah!" said I, "that is how Jesus saves. 'Father,' he said, 'I love these poor sinners; let me suffer instead of them!' 'Yes,' said God, 'thou

shalt;' and on the tree he died, and suffered the punishment which all his elect people ought to have suffered; so that now all who believe on him, thus proving themselves to be his chosen, may conclude that he was punished for them, and that therefore they never can be punished." "Well," said he, looking me in the face once more, "I understand what you mean; but how is it, if Christ died for all men, that notwithstanding, some men are punished again? For that is unjust." "Ah!" said I, "I never told you that. I say to you that he has died for all that believe on him, and all who repent, and that was punished for their sins so absolutely and so really, that none of them shall ever be punished again." "Faith," said the man, clapping his hands, "that's the gospel; if it isn't, then I don't know anything, for no man could have made that up; it is so wonderful. Ah!" he said, as he went down the stairs, "Pat's safe now; with all his sins about him he'll trust in the man that died for him, and so he shall be saved." Dear hearer, Christ is mighty to save, because God did not turn away the sword, but he sheathed it in his own Son's heart; he did not remit the debt, for it was paid in drops of precious blood; and now the great receipt is nailed to the cross, and our sins with it, so that we may go free if we are believers in him. For this reason he is "mighty to save," in the true sense of the word.

But in the large sense of the word, understanding it to mean all that I have said it does mean, He is "mighty to save." How is it that Christ is able to make men repent, to make men believe, and to make them turn to God? One answers, "Why by the eloquence of preachers." God forbid we should ever say that! It is "not by might nor by power." Other replying, "It is by the force of moral suasion." God forbid we should say "ay" to that; for moral suasion has been tried long enough on man, and yet it has failed of success. How does he do it? We answer, by something which some of you despise, but which, nevertheless, is a fact. he does it by the Omnipotent influence of his Divine Spirit. Whilst men are hearing the word (in those whom God will save) the Holy Spirit works repentance; he changes the heart and renews the soul. True, the preaching is the instrument, but the Holy Spirit is the great agent. It is certain that the truth is the means of saving, but it is the Holy Ghost applying the truth which saves souls. Ah! and with this power of the Holy Ghost e may go to the most debased and degraded of men, and we need not be afraid but

that God can save them. If God should be please, the Holy Spirit could at this moment make every one of you fall on your knees, confess your sins, and turn to God. He is an Almighty Spirit, able to do wonders. In the life of Whitfield, we read that sometimes under one of his sermons two thousand persons would at once profess to be saved, and were really so, many of them. We ask why it was. At other times he preached just as powerfully, and not one soul was saved. Why? Because in the one case the Holy Spirit went with the Word, and in the other case it did not. All the heavenly result of preaching is owing to the Divine Spirit sent from above. I am nothing; my brethren in the ministry around are all nothing; it is God that doeth everything. "Who is Paul, who is Apollos, and who is Cephas, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as God gave to every man." It must be "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Go forth, poor minister! Thou has no power to preach with polished diction and elegant refinement; go and preach as thou canst. The Spirit can make thy feeble words more mighty than the most ravishing eloquence. Alas! alas! for oratory! Alas! for eloquence! It hath long enough been tried. We have had polished periods, and finely turned sentences; but in what place have the people been saved by them? We have had grand and gaudy language; but where have hearts been renewed! But now, "by the foolishness of preaching," by the simple utterance by a child of God's Word, he is pleased to save them that believe and to save sinners from the error of their ways. May God prove his Word again this morning!

IV. The fourth point was, WHAT ARE THE INFERENCES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE?

Why, first, there is a fact for ministers to learn—that they should endeavour to preach in faith, nothing wavering. "O God," cries the minister at times, when he is on his knees, "I am weak; I have preached to my hearers, and have wept over them; I have groaned for them; but they will not turn to thee. Their hearts are like the nether mill-stone; they will not weep for sin, nor will they love the Saviour." Then I think I see the angel standing at his elbow, and whispering in his ear, "Thou art weak, but he is strong; thou canst do nothing, but he is 'mighty to save.'"

Bethink thyself of this. It is not the instrument, but the God. It is not the pen wherewith the author writes which is to have the praise of his wisdom or the making of the volume, but it is the brain that thinks it, and the hand that moves the pen. So in salvation. It is not the minister, it is not the preacher, but the God who first designs the salvation, and afterwards uses the preacher to work it out. Ah! poor disconsolate preacher, if thou hast had but little fruit of thy ministry, go on still in faith, remembering it is written, "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Go on; be of good courage; God shall help thee; he shall help thee, and that right early.

Again, here is another encouragement for praying men and women, who are praying to God for their friends. Mother, you have been groaning for your son for many a year; he is now grown up and has left your roof, but your prayers have not been heard. So you think. He is as gay as ever; not yet has he made your breast rejoice. Sometimes you think he will bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. It was but yesterday you said, "I will give him up, I will never pray for him again." Stop, mother, stop! By all that is holy and that is heavenly, stop! Utter not that resolution again; begin once more! Thou hast prayed over him; thou didst weep over his infant forehead, when he lay in his cradle; thou didst teach him when he came to years of understanding and thou hast often warned him since; but all of no avail. Oh! give not up thy prayers; for remember, Christ is "mighty to save." It may be that he waits to be gracious, and he keeps thee waiting, that thou mayest know more of his graciousness when the mercy comes. But pray on. I have heard of mothers who have prayed for their children twenty years; ay, and some who have died without seeing them converted, and then their very death has been the means of saving their children, by leading them to think. A father once had been a pious man for many years, yet never had he the happiness of seeing one of his sons converted. He had his children round his bed, and he said to them when dying, "My sons, I could die in peace, if I could but believe you would follow me to heaven; but this is the most sorrowful thing of all—not that I am dying, but that I am leaving you to meet you no more." They looked at him, but they would not think on their ways. They went away. Their father was suddenly overtaken with great clouds and darkness of mind;

instead of dying peacefully and happily, he died in great misery of soul, but still trusting in Christ. He said, when he died, "Oh! that I had died a happy death, for that would have been a testimony to my sons; but now, O God, this darkness and these clouds have in some degree taken away my power to witness to the truth of thy religion." Well, he died, and was buried. The sons came to the funeral. The day after, one of them said to his brother, "Brother, I have been thinking, father was always a pious man, and if his death was yet such a gloomy one, how gloomy must ours be, without God and without Christ!" "Ah!" said the other, "that thought struck me too." They went up to God's house, heard God's Word, they came home and bent their knee in prayer, and to their surprise they found that the rest of the family had done the same, and that the God who had never answered their father's prayer in his life had answered it after his death, and by his death too, and by such a death as would appear to be most unlikely to have wrought the conversion of any. Pray on, then, my sister; pray on, my brother! God shall yet bring thy sons and daughters to his love and fear, and thou shalt rejoice over them in heaven, if thou never dost on earth.

And finally, my dear hearers, there are many of you here this morning who have no love to God, no love to Christ; but you have a desire in your hearts to love him. You are saying, "Oh! can he save me? Can such a wretch as I be saved?" In the thick of the crowd there you are standing, and you are now saying within yourself, "May I one day sing among the saints above? May I have all my sins blotted out by blood divine?" "Yes, sinner, he is 'mighty to save;' and this is comfort for thee." Dost thou think thyself the worst of men? Does conscience smite thee as with a mailed fist, and does he say it is all over with thee; thou wilt be lost; thy repentance will be of no avail; thy prayers never will be heard; thou art lost to all intents and purposes? My hearer, think not so. He is "mighty to save." If thou canst not pray, he can help thee to do it; if thou canst not repent, he can give thee repentance; if thou feelest it hard to believe, he can help thee to believe, for he is exalted on high to give repentance, as well as to give remission of sins. O poor sinner, trust in Jesus; cast thyself on him. Cry, and may God help thee to do it now, the first Sabbath of the year; may he help thee this very day to cast thy soul on Jesus; and this will be one of the best years of all thy life. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye

die, O house of Israel?" Turn unto Jesus, ye wearied souls; come unto him, for lo, he bids you come. "The Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life," and have Christ's grace freely. It is preached to you, and to all of you who are willing to receive it, it has been already given.

May God of his grace make you willing, and so save your souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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The Minister's Farewell

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. - Acts 20:26-27

When Paul was parting from his Ephesian friends, who had come to bid him farewell at Miletus, he did not request of them a commendation of his ability; he did not request of them a recommendation for his fervid eloquence, his profound learning, his comprehensive thought, or his penetrating judgment. He knew right well that he might have credit for all these, and yet be found a castaway at last. He required a witness which would be valid in the court of heaven, and of value in a dying hour. His one most solemn adjuration is: "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." In the apostle this utterance was no egotism; it was a fact that he had, without courting the smiles or fearing the frowns of any, preached the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it had been taught to him by the Holy Spirit, and as he had received it in his own heart. O that all ministers of Christ could honestly challenge the like witness!

Now, this morning I propose, by the help of God's Spirit, to do two things. The first will be to say a little upon *the apostle's solemn declaration at parting*; and then, afterwards, in a few solemn words, to *take my own personal farewell*.

1. In the first place, THE APOSTLE'S WORD AT PARTING: "I call you to record I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The first thing that strikes us is the declaration of the apostle concerning *the doctrines he had preached*. He had preached ALL the counsel of God. By which I think we are to understand that he had given to his people the entire gospel. He had not dwelt upon some one doctrine of it, to the exclusion of the rest; but it had been his honest endeavour to bring out

every truth according to the analogy of faith. He had not magnified one doctrine into a mountain, and then diminished another into a molehill; but he had endeavoured to present all blended together, like the colours in the rainbow, as one harmonious and glorious whole. Of course, he did not claim for himself any infallibility as a man, although as an inspired man he was without error in his writings. He had, doubtless, sins to confess in private, and faults to bemoan God. He had, doubtless, sometimes failed to put a truth as clearly as he could have wished, when preaching the Word; he had not always been earnest as he could desire; but at least he could claim this, that he had not wilfully kept back a single part of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, I must bring down the apostle's saying to these modern times; and I take it, if any one of us would clear our conscience by delivering the whole counsel of God, we must take care that we preach in the first place the *doctrines of the gospel*. We ought to declare the grand doctrine of the Father's love towards his people from before all worlds. His sovereign choice of them, his covenant purposes concerning them, and his immutable promises to them, must all be uttered with trumpet tongue. Coupled with this the true evangelist must never fail to set forth the beauties of the person of Christ, the glory of his offices, the completeness of his work, and above all, the efficacy of his blood. Whatever we omit, this must be in the most forcible manner proclaimed again and again. That is no gospel which has not Christ in it, and the modern idea of preaching THE TRUTH instead of Christ, is a wicked device of Satan. Nor is this all, for as there are Three Persons in the Godhead, we must be careful that they all have due honour in our ministry. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, in sanctification and in perseverance, must be always magnified from our pulpit. Without his power our ministry is a dead letter, and we cannot expect his arm to be made bare unless we honour him day-by-day.

Upon all these matters we are agreed, and I therefore turn to points upon which there is more dispute, and consequently more need of honest avowal, because more temptation to concealment. To proceed then: - I question whether we have preached the whole counsel of God, unless predestination with all its solemnity and sureness be continually declared

- unless election be boldly and nakedly taught as being one of the truths revealed of God. It is the minister's duty, beginning from this fountain head, to trace all the other streams; dwelling on effectual calling, maintaining justification by faith, insisting upon the certain perseverance of the believer, and delighting to proclaim that gracious covenant in which all these things are contained, and which is sure to all the chosen, blood-bought seed. There is a tendency in this age to throw doctrinal truth into the shade. Too many preachers are offended with that stern truth which the Covenanters held, and to which the Puritans testified in the midst of a licentious age. We are told that the times have changed: that we are to modify these old (so-called) Calvinistic doctrines, and bring them down to the tone of the times; that, in fact, they need dilution, that men have become so intelligent that we must pare off the angles of our religion, and make the square into a circle by rounding off the most prominent edges. Any man who doth this, so far as my judgment goes, does not declare the whole counsel of God. The faithful minister must be plain, simple, pointed, with regard to these doctrines. There must be no dispute about whether he believes them or not. He must so preach them that his hearers will know whether he preaches a scheme of freewill, or a covenant of grace - whether he teaches salvation by works, or salvation by the power and grace of God.

But beloved, a man might preach all these doctrines to the full, and yet not declare the whole counsel of God. For here comes the labour and the battle; here it is that he who is faithful in these modern days will have to bare the full brunt of war. It is not enough to preach doctrine; we must preach *duty*, we must faithfully and firmly insist upon practice. So long as you will preach nothing but bare doctrine, there is a certain class of men of perverted intellect who will admire you, but once begin to preach responsibility - say outright, once for all, that if the sinner perish it is his own fault, that if any man sinks to hell, his damnation will lie at his own door, and at once there is a cry of "Inconsistency! How can these two things stand together?" Even good Christian men are found who cannot endure the whole truth, and who will oppose the servant of the Lord who will not be content with a fragment, but will honestly present the whole gospel of Christ. This is one of the troubles that the faithful minister has to endure. But he is not faithful to God - I say it solemnly, I do not believe

that any man is even faithful to his own conscience, who can preach simply the doctrine of responsibility. I do assuredly believe that every man who sinks into hell shall have himself alone to curse for it. It shall be said of them as they pass the fiery portal: "Ye would not." "Ye would have none of my rebukes. Ye were bidden to the supper and ye would not come. I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded. And now, behold, I will mock at your calamities. I will laugh when your fear cometh." The apostle Paul knew how to dare public opinion, and on one hand to preach the duty of man, and on the other the sovereignty of God. I would borrow the wings of an eagle and fly to the utmost height of high doctrine when I am preaching divine sovereignty. God hath absolute and unlimited power over men to do with them as he pleases, even as the potter doeth with the clay. Let not the creature question the Creator, for he giveth no account of his matters. But when I preach concerning man, and look at the other aspect of truth, I dive to the utmost depth. I am, if you will so call me, a low-doctrine man in that, for as an honest messenger of Christ I must use his own language, and cry: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God." I do not see that the whole counsel of God is declared, unless those two apparently contradictory points are brought out and plainly taught. To preach the whole counsel of God it is necessary to declare the promise in all its freeness, sureness and richness. When the promise makes the subject of the text the minister should never be afraid of it. If it is an unconditional promise, he should make its unconditionality one of the most prominent features of his discourse; he should go the whole way with whatever God has promised to his people. Should the command be the subject, the minister must not flinch; he must utter the precept as fully and confidently as he would the promise. He must exhort, rebuke, command with all long-suffering. He must ever maintain the fact that the perceptive part of the gospel is as valuable - nay, as invaluable - as the promissory part. He must stand to it, that "By their fruits ye shall know them;" that "Unless the tree bring forth good fruit it is hewn down and cast into the fire." Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living. Holiness of life must be constantly insisted on, as well as that simple faith which depends for all on Christ. To declare the whole counsel of God - to gather up ten thousand things into one - I think it is needful that when a minister gets his text, he should say what that

text means honestly and uprightly. Too many preachers get a text and kill it. They wring its neck, then stuff it with some empty notions and present it upon the table for an unthinking people to feed upon. That man does not preach the whole counsel of God who does not let God's Word speak for itself in its own pure, simple language. If he finds one day a text like this: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," the faithful minister will go all the lengths of that text. And if on the morrow the Spirit of God lays home to his conscience this: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," or this other: "Whosoever will, let him come," he will be just as honest with his text on that side as he was on the other. He will not shirk the truth. He will dare to look at it straight in the face himself and then he will bring it up into the pulpit, and there say to it: "O Word, speak for thyself, and be thou heard alone. Suffer me not, O Lord, to pervert or ministerpret thine own heaven-sent truth." Simple honesty to the pure Word of God is I think requisite to the man who would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God.

Moreover, this is not all, If a man would declare the whole counsel of God, and not shun to do so, he must be very particular upon the crying sins of the times. The honest minister does not condemn sin in the mass; he singles out separate sins in his hearers, and without drawing the bow at a venture he puts an arrow on the string and the Holy Spirit sends it right home to the individuals conscience. He who is true to his God does not look to his congregation as a great mass, but as separate individuals, and he endeavours to adapt his discourse to men's conscience, so that they will perceive he speaks of them. It is said of Rowland Hill, that he was so personal a preacher, that if a man were far away sitting in a window, or in some secret corner, he would nevertheless feel - "That man is speaking to me." And the true preacher who declares the whole counsel of God, so speaks, that his hearers feel that there is something for them; a reproof for their sins, an exhortation which they ought to obey, a something which comes pointedly, pertinently and personally home. Nor do I think any man has declared the whole counsel of God, who does not do this. If there be a vice that you should shun, if there be an error that you should avoid, if there be a duty that you ought to fulfil, if all these things be not mentioned in the discourses from the pulpit, the minister

has shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If there be one sin that is rife in the neighbourhood, and especially in the congregation, should the minister avoid that particular vice in order to avoid offending you, he has been untrue to his calling, dishonest to his God. I do not know how I can describe the man who declares the whole counsel of God better than by referring you to the epistles of St. Paul. There you have the doctrine and the precept, experience and practice. He tells of corruption within and temptation without. The whole divine life is portrayed, and the needed directions given. There you have the solemn rebuke, and the gentle comfort. There you have the words that "drop as the rain, and distil as the dew," and there you have the sentences that roll like thunders, and flash like lightning. There you see him at one time with his crook in his hand, gently leading his sheep into the pastures; and, anon, you see him with his sword drawn, doing valiant battle against the enemies of Israel. He who would be faithful, and preach the whole counsel of God, must imitate the apostle Paul, and preach as *he* wrote.

The question, however, is suggested, is there any temptation which arises to the man who endeavours to do this? Is there anything which would tempt him from the straight path and induce him not to preach the whole counsel of God? Ah, my brother, little do you understand the minister's position, if you have not sometimes trembled for him. Espouse but one phase of the truth, and you shall be cried up to the very heavens. Become such a Calvinist that you shut your eyes to one half the Bible, and cannot see the responsibility of the sinner, and men will clap their hands, and cry Hallelujah! and on the backs of many you shall be hoisted to a throne, and become a very prince in their Israel. On the other hand, begin to preach mere morality, practice without doctrine, and you shall be elevated on other men's shoulders; you shall, if I may use such a figure, ride upon these asses into Jerusalem; and you shall hear them cry, Hosanna! and see them wave their palm branches before you. But once preach the whole counsel of God, and you shall have both parties down upon you; one crying, "The man is too high," the other saying, "No, he is too low;" the one will say, "He's a rank Arminian," the other, "He's a vile hyper-Calvinist." Now, a man does not like to stand between two fires. There is an inclination to please one or other of the two parties, and so, if not to increase one's adherents, at least to get a more ferociously attached

people. Ay, but if we once begin to think of that, if we suffer the cry of either party on either hand to lead us from that narrow path - the path of right and truth and rectitude, it is all over with us then. How many ministers feel the influence of persons of wealth. The minister in his pulpit, perhaps, is inclined to think of the squire in his green pew. Or else he thinks: "What will deacon so-and-so say?" or, "What will the other deacon say, who thinks the very reverse?" or, "What will Mr. A, the editor of such a newspaper, write next Monday?" or, "What will Mrs. B. say next time I meet her?" Yes, all these things cast their little weight into the scale; and they have a tendency, if a man be not kept right by God the Holy Spirit, to make him diverge a little from that narrow path, in which alone he can stand if he would declare the whole counsel of God. Ah, friends, there are honours to be had by the man who will espouse the opinion of a clique; but while there are honours, there are far more dishonours to be gained by him who will stand firm to the unstained banner of truth, singly and alone, and do battle against mischief of every shape, as well in the church as in the world. Therefore, it was no mean testimony that the apostle asked for himself, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

But, then, let me remark further, while there is this temptation not to declare all the counsel of God, the true minister of Christ feels impelled to preach the whole truth, because it and it alone can meet the wants of man. What evils has this world seen through a distorted, mangled, man-moulded gospel. What mischiefs have been done to the souls of men by men who have preached only one part and not all the counsel of God. My heart bleeds for many a family where Antinomian doctrine has gained the sway. I could tell many a sad story of families dead in sin, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, by the fatal preaching to which they listen. I have known convictions stifled and desires quenched by the soul-destroying system which takes manhood from man and makes him no more responsible than an ox. I cannot imagine a more ready instrument in the hands of Satan for the ruin of souls than a minister who tells sinners that it is not their duty to repent of their sins or to believe in Christ, and who has the arrogance to call himself a gospel minister, while he teaches that God hates some men infinitely and unchangeably for no reason whatever but simply because he chooses to do so. O my brethren!

may the Lord save you from the voice of the charmer, and keep you ever deaf to the voice of error.

Even in Christian families, what evil will a distorted gospel produce! I have seen the young believer, just saved from sin, happy in his early Christian career, and walking humbly with his God. But evil has crept in, disguised in the mantle of truth. The finger of partial blindness was laid upon their eyes, and but one doctrine could be seen. Sovereignty was seen, but not responsibility. The minister once beloved was hated; he who had been honest to preach God's Word, was accounted as the off-scouring of all things. And what became the effect? The very reverse of good and gracious. Bigotry usurped the place of love; bitterness lived where once there had been a loveliness of character. I could point you to innumerable instances where harping upon any one peculiar doctrine has driven men to excess of bigotry and bitterness. And when a man has once come there, he is ready enough for sin of any kind to which the devil may please to tempt him. There is a necessity that the whole gospel should be preached, or else the spirits, even of Christians, will become marred and maimed. I have known men diligent for Christ, labouring to win souls with both hands; and on a sudden they have espoused one particular doctrine and not the whole truth, and they have subsided into lethargy. On the other hand, where men have only taken the practical side of truth, and left out the doctrinal, too many professors have run over into legality; have talked as if they were to be saved by works, and have almost forgotten that grace by which they were called. They are like the Galatians; they have been bewitched by what they have heard. The believer in Christ, if he is to be kept pure, simple, holy, charitable, Christ-like, is only to be kept so by a preaching of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. And as for the salvation of sinners, ah, my hearers, we can never expect God to bless our ministry for the conversion of sinners unless we preach the gospel as a whole. Let me get but one part of the truth, and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing. If I preach as he would have me preach, he will certainly own the word; he will never leave it without his own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the gospel, that I can make it consistant, that I can dress it up and make it look finer, I shall find that my Master is departed, and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the sanctuary. How many there are kept in

bondage through neglect of gospel invitations. They are longing to be saved. They go up to the house of God, crying to be saved; and there is nothing but predestination for them. On the other hand, what multitudes are kept in darkness through practical preaching. It is do! do! do! and nothing but do! and the poor souls come away and say: "Of what use is that to me? I can do nothing. Oh, that I had a way shown to me available for salvation." Of the apostle Paul we think it may be truly said, that no sinner missed a comfort from his keeping back Christ's cross; that no saint was bewildered in spirit from his denying the bread of heaven and withholding precious truth; that no practical Christian became so practical as to become legal, and no doctrinal Christian became so doctrinal as to become unpractical. His preaching was of so savoury and consistent a kind, that they who heard him, being blessed of the Spirit, became Christians indeed, both in life and spirit, reflecting the image of their Master.

I feel I cannot dwell very long upon this text. I have been so extremely unwell for the last two days, that the thoughts which I hoped to present to you in better form, have only come tumbling out of my mouth in far from an orderly manner.

II. I must now turn away from the apostle Paul to address you A VERY FEW EARNEST, SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE WORDS BY WAY OF FAREWELL. "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I wish not to say anything in self-commendation and praise; I will not be my own witness as to my faithfulness; but I appeal unto you, I take you to witness this day, that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Often have I come into this pulpit in great weakness, and I have far more often gone away in great sorrow, because I have not preached to you as earnestly as I desired. I confess to many errors and failings, and more especially to a want of earnestness when engaged in prayer for your souls. But there is one charge which my conscience acquits me of this morning, and I think you will acquit me too, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If in anything I have erred, it has been an error of judgment; I may have been mistaken, but so far as I have learned the truth, I can say that no fear of public

opinion, nor of private opinion, has ever turned me aside from that which I hold to be the truth of my Lord and Master. I have preached to you the precious things of the gospel. I have endeavoured to the utmost of my ability to preach grace in all its fulness. I know the preciousness of that doctrine in my own experience; God forbid that I should preach any other. If we are not saved by grace, we can never be saved at all. If from first to last the work of salvation be not in God's hands, none of us can ever see God's face with acceptance. I preach this doctrine, not from choice, but from absolute necessity, for if this doctrine be not true, then are we lost souls; your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins, and there we must continue until the end. But, on the other hand, I can say also, I have not shunned to exhort, to invite, to entreat. I have bidden the sinner come to Christ. I have been urged not to do so, but I could not resist it. With bowels yearning over perishing sinners, I could not conclude without crying: "Come to Jesus, sinner, come." With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus. It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this: - bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness, that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God. Have I known a single sin which I have not rebuked? Has there been a doctrine that I have believed which I have kept back? Has there been a part of the Word, doctrinal or experimental, which I have wilfully concealed? I am very far from perfect, again with weeping I confess my unworthiness; I have not served God as I ought to do; I have not been so earnest with you as I could desire. Now that my three years' ministry here is over, I could have wished that I might begin again, that I might fall on my knees before you and beseech you to regard the things that make for your peace. But here, again, I do repeat it, that while as to earnestness I plead guilty, yet as to truth and honesty I can challenge the bar of God, I can challenge the elect angels, I can call you all to witness, that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

It is easy enough, if one wills to do it, to avoid preaching an objectionable doctrine, by simply passing over the texts which teach it. If an unpleasant

truth thrusts itself on you, it is not hard to put it aside, imagining that it would disturb your previous teaching. Such concealment may, for a while succeed, and possibly your people will not find it out for years. But if I have studied after anything, I have sought always to bring out that truth which I have neglected beforehand; and if there has been any one truth that I have kept back hitherto, it shall be my earnest prayer that from this day forth it may be made more prominent, that so it may be the better understood and seen. Well, I simply ask you this question, and if I indulge in some little egotism, if on this parting day "I am become a fool in glorying;" it is not for the sake of glorying, it is with a better motive - my hearer, I put this question to you. There may come sad disasters to many of you. In a little time some of you may be frequenting places where the gospel is not preached. You may embrace another and a false gospel. I only ask this thing of you: Bear me witness that it was not my fault, - that I have been faithful and have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. In a little time some here who have been restrained by the fact of having attended a place of worship, seeing the chosen minister has gone, may not go anywhere else afterwards. You may become careless. Perhaps next Sabbath day you may be sitting at home, lolling about and wasting the day. But there is one thing I should like to say before you make up your mind not to attend the house of God again: - Bear me witness that I have been faithful with you. It may be that some here who have professedly run well for a time while they have been hearing the Word, may go back; some of you may go right into the world again; you may become drunkards, swearers and the like. God forbid that it be so! But I charge you, if you plunge into sin, do at least say this one thing for him who desires nothing so much as to see you saved - say, I have been honest with you; that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Oh, my hearers, some of you in a little time will be on your dying-beds. When your pulse is feeble, when the terrors of grim death are round about you, if you are still unconverted to Christ, there is one thing I shall want you to add to your last will and testament; it is this - the exclusion of the poor minister who stands before you this day from any share in that desperate folly of yours which has led you to neglect your own soul. Oh, have I not cried to you to repent? Have I not bidden you look to it ere death surprised you? Have I not exhorted you, my hearers, to flee for a refuge to the hope set before you? Oh, sinner, when

thou art wading through the black river, cast back no taunt on me as though I was thy murderer, for in this thing I can say: "I wash my hands in innocency; I am clear of your blood." But the day is coming when we shall all meet again. This great assembly shall be submerged into a greater, as the drop loses itself in the ocean. And I shall stand on that day to take my trial at God's bar. If I have not warned you, I have been an unfaithful watchman, and your blood will be required at my hands; if I have not preached Christ to you, and bidden you flee for refuge, then, though you perish, yet shall your soul be required of me. I beseech you, if you laugh at me, if you reject my message, if you despise Christ, if you hate his gospel, if you will be damned, yet at least give me an acquittal of your blood. I see some before me who do not often hear me; and yet I can say concerning them, they have been the subject of my private prayers; and often, too, of my tears, when I see them going on in their iniquities. Well, I do ask this one thing, and as honest men you cannot deny it me. If you will have your sins, if you will be lost, if you will not come to Christ, at least, amid the thunders of the great day, when I stand for trial at God's bar, acquit me of having destroyed your souls.

What can I say more? How shall I plead with you? Had I an angel's tongue, and the heart of the Saviour, then would I plead; but I cannot say more than I have often done. In God's name I beseech you flee to Christ for refuge. If all hath not sufficed before, let this suffice thee now. Come, guilty soul, and flee away to him whose wide open arms are willing to receive every soul that fleeth to him with penitence and faith. In a little time the preacher himself will lie stretched upon his bed. A few more days of solemn meeting, a few more sermons, a few more prayers, and I think I see myself in yon upper chamber, with friends watching around me. He who has preached to thousands now needs consolation for himself. He who has cheered many in the article of death is now passing through the river himself. My hearers, shall there be any of you whom I shall see upon my death bed who shall curse me with being unfaithful? Shall these eyes be haunted with the visions of men whom I have amused, and interested, but into whose hearts I have never sought to plunge the truth? Shall I lie there, and shall these mighty congregations pass in dreary panorama before me, and as they subside before my eyes, one after the other, shall each one curse me as being unfaithful? God forbid. I trust you will do me

this favour: that when I lie a-dying you will allow that I am clear of the blood of all men, and have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I see myself standing at the last great day a prisoner at the bar. What if this shall be read against me: - "Thou hast had many to listen to thee; thousands have crowded to hear the words which fell from my lips; but thou hast misled, thou hast deceived, thou hast wilfully mistaught this people." Thunders such as have been never heard before must roll over this poor head, and lightnings more terrific than have ever scathed the fiend shall blast this heart, if I have been unfaithful to you. My position - if I had but one preached the Word to these crowds, not to speak of many thousands of times - my position were the most awful in the whole universe if I were unfaithful. Oh may God avert that worst of ills - unfaithfulness - from my head. Now, as here I stand, I make this my last appeal: "I pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." But if ye will not be, I ask you this single favour - and I think you will not deny it me - take the blame of your own ruin, for I am pure from the blood of all men, since I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

This much by way of calling you to witness. Now, I come to put up a request. I have a favour to ask of all here present. If in aught you have been profited, if in anything you have ever had comfort, if you have found Christ in any way during the preaching of the gospel here, I beg you, even though you should not listen to my words again, I beg you to carry me up in your heart before the throne of God in prayer. It is by the prayers of our people that we live. God's ministers owe more to the prayers of their people than they ever know. I love my people for their prayerfulness for me. Never minister was so much prayed for as I have been. But will those of you who will be compelled to separate from us by reason of distance, and the like, will you still carry me in your thoughts before God, and let my name be ungraven on your bosoms as often as you present yourselves before the mercy seat. It is a little thing I ask. It is simply that you say: "Lord, help thy servant to win souls to Christ." Ask that he may be made more useful than he has ever been; that if he is in aught mistaken he may be set right. If he has not comforted you, ask that he may do so in the future; but if he has been honest with you, then pray that your Master may have him in his holy keeping. And while I ask you to put up this request for me, it is for all those that preach the truth in Jesus. Brethren,

pray for us. We would labour for you as those that must give account. Ah, it is no little thing to be a minister if we are true to our calling. As Baxter once said, when someone told him the ministry was easy work: "Sir, I wish you would take my place, if you think so, and try it." If to agonize with God in prayer, if to wrestle for the souls of men, if to be abused and not to reply, if to suffer all manner of rebukes and slanders, if this be rest, take it, sir, for I shall be glad to get rid of it. I do ask that you would pray for all ministers of Christ, that they may be helped and upheld, maintained and supported, that their strength may be equal to their day.

And, then, having put up this request for myself, and therefore a selfish one, I have an entreaty to put up for others. My hearers, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that there are still many of you who have long listened to the Word here, but who have still not given your hearts to Christ. I am glad to see you here, even though it should be for the last time. If you should never tread the hallowed courts of God's house again, never hear his Word, never listen to hearty invitation or honest warning, I have one entreaty to put up for you. Mark, not a request, but an entreaty; and such a one, that if I were begging for my life I could not be more honest and intensely earnest about it. Poor sinner, stop awhile, and think. If thou hast heard the gospel and been profited by it, what wilt thou think of all thy lost opportunities when thou art on thy dying bed? What wilt thou think when thou art cast into hell, when this thought shall come ringing in thy ears: "Thou didst hear the gospel, but thou didst reject it;" when the devils in hell shall laugh in thy face, and say: "We never rejected Christ, we never despised the Word," and they shall thrust thee into a deeper hell than ever they themselves experienced. I entreat thee, stop, and think of this. Are the joys that thou hast in this world worth living for? Is not this world a dull and dreary place? Man, turn over a fresh leaf. I tell thee, there is no joy for thee here, and there is none hereafter whilst thou art what thou art. Oh, may God teach thee that the mischief lies in thy sin. Thou hast unforgiven sin about thee. As long as thy sin is unforgiven, thou canst neither be happy here, nor in the world to come. My entreaty is, go to thy chamber; if thou knowest thy self to be guilty, make a full confession there before God; ask him to have mercy upon thee, for Jesus' sake. And he will not deny thee. Man, he will not dent thee; he will answer thee; he will put all thy sins away; he will accept thee;

he will make thee his child. And as thou shalt be more happy here, so shalt thou be blessed in the world to come. Oh, Christian men and women, I entreat you, implore the Spirit of God to lead many in this crowd to full confession, to real prayer, and humble faith; and if they have never repented before, may they now turn to Christ. Oh, sinner, thy life is short, and death is hastening. Thy sins are many, and if judgment has leaden feet, yet has it a sure and heavy hand. Turn, turn, turn, I beseech thee. May the Holy Spirit turn thee. Lo, Jesus is lifted up before thee now. By his five wounds, I beseech thee, turn. Look thou to him and live. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved, for whosoever believeth on the Son of Man hath everlasting life, and he shall never perish, neither shall the wrath of God rest upon him.

May the Spirit of God now command his own abiding blessing, even life for evermore, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

At the commencement of the Service, Mr. SPURGEON said: - "The service of this morning will partake very much of the character of a farewell discourse and a farewell meeting. However sorrowful it is to me to part with many of you, whose faces I have so long seen in the throng of my hearers, yet for Christ's sake, for the sake of consistency and truth, we are compelled to withdraw from this place, and on next Sabbath morning hope to worship God in Exeter Hall. On two occasions before, as our friends are aware, it was proposed to open this place in the evening, and I was then able to prevent it by the simple declaration, that if so I should withdraw. That declaration suffices not at this time; and you can therefore perceive that I should be a craven to the truth, that I should be inconsistent with my own declarations, that in fact, my name would cease to be SPURGEON, if I yielded. I neither can nor will give way in anything in which I know I am right; and in the defence of God's holy Sabbath, the cry of this day is, 'Arise, let us go hence!'"

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The Minstrel

The text is a somewhat singular one, but I hope it will suggest a profitable idea.

But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. - 2 Kings 3:15

Elisha needed that the Holy Spirit should come upon him to inspire him with prophetic utterances. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We need that the hand of the Lord should be laid upon us, for we can never open our mouths in wisdom except we are under the divine touch. Now, the Spirit of God works according to his own will. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and the Spirit of God operates as he chooseth. Elisha could not prophesy just when he liked; he must wait until the Spirit of God came upon him, and the Spirit of God could come or not even as he pleased. Elisha had noticed that the Spirit of God acted upon him most freely when his mind was restful and subdued. He found himself best prepared for the heavenly voice when the noise within his soul was hushed, and every disturbing emotion was quieted. Having ascertained this fact by observation he acted upon it. He could not create the wind of the Spirit, but he could set his sail to receive it, and he did so.

At the particular time alluded to in the text Elisha had been greatly irritated by the sight of Jehoram, the king of Israel, the son of Ahab and Jezebel. In the true spirit of his old master, Elijah, the prophet let Jehoram know what he thought of him; and having delivered his soul, he very naturally felt agitated and distressed, and unfit to be the mouthpiece for the Spirit of God. He knew that the hand of the Lord would not rest upon him while he was in that state, and therefore he said, "Bring me a minstrel." The original Hebrew conveys the idea of a man accustomed to play upon the harp. Listening to the dulcet tones which were produced by a skilful harper, who very likely sang one of David's psalms to the music, the prophet waited awhile, and then the hand of the Lord came upon him.

Under the influence of minstrelsy his mind grew quiet, his agitation subsided, his thoughts were collected, and the Spirit of God spake through him. It was a most commendable thing for him to use the means which he had found at other times helpful, though still his sole reliance was upon the hand of the Lord. It would seem from a passage in the First Book of Samuel that Elisha was not the only prophet who had found music helpful, for we read, "Thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy." Elisha, like his predecessors, only used a natural means for putting himself into readiness for receiving supernatural help.

Let us see if we can bring forth the practical lesson which this incident may teach us.

I. First: here is a lesson to those who wish to serve God, and to speak in his name. **LET US STRIVE TO BE IN A FIT STATE FOR THE LORD'S WORK.** If we know of anything that will put our mind into such a condition that the Spirit of God is likely to work upon us and speak through us, let us make use of it. Elisha cried, "Bring me a minstrel"; let us also say—"bring me that which will be helpful to me." The harper could be of no service to Elisha for bringing him inspiration; but by putting him into a calm, equable state of mind he prepared him for the heavenly communication, and removed from his soul that which would have hindered the divine working.

It is very evident that we, too, like the prophet, have our hindrances. We are at times unfit for the Master's use. Our minds are disarranged, the machinery is out of order, the sail is furled, the pipe is blocked up, the whole soul is out of gear. The hindrance in Elisha's case came from his surroundings. He was in a camp; a camp where three nations mixed their discordant voices; a noisy, ill-disciplined camp, and a camp ready to perish for thirst. There was no water, and the men-at-arms were perishing; the confusion and clamour must have been great. Prophetic thought could scarcely command itself amid the uproar, the discontent, the threatening from thousands of thirsty men. Three kings had waited on the prophet; but this would not have disconcerted him had not one of

them been Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and Jezebel. What memories were awakened in the mind of Elijah's servant by the sight of the man in whom the proud dame of Sidon and her base-minded consort lived again. Naboth's vine-yard must have come to his mind, and the stern threat of Elijah—"The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." "For there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

Elisha acted rightly, and bravely. When he saw Jehoram coming, to him for help, he challenged him thus—"What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the Prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother." When the king, humbly and with bated breath confessed that he saw the hand of Jehovah in bringing the three kings together, the prophet scarcely moderated his tone, but exclaimed, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." It was fit that he should be in that temper; the occasion demanded it. Still it was not a fit preface to the inward whisper of the Spirit of God, and the prophet did not feel ready for his work: the circumstances were not soothing or elevating, and so he said, "Bring me a minstrel." Do you not occasionally find yourself in an unhappy position? You have to preach, or to teach a class in school, or to carry an edifying word to a sick person; but everything distracts you. What with noise, or domestic trouble, or sinful neighbors, or the railing words of some wicked man, you cannot get into a fit frame of mind. You have had a duty to do which has caused you much pain and disquietude, and you cannot get over it, for everything conspires to worry you. Little things grieve great minds. The very sight of some individuals will throw a preacher off the rails. I know that the height of the pulpit, the thinness of the audience, the sleepiness of a hearer, or the heaviness of the atmosphere, may put the preacher's heart out of tune, and incapacitate him for the blessing. Yes, we have our hindrances even as Elisha had.

Elisha's hindrances lay mainly in his inward feelings: he could not feel the hand of the Lord upon him until the inner warfare had been pacified. He burned with indignation at the sight of the son of Jezebel, and flashed words of flame into his face, and, as I have already said, he was justified

in so doing; but still the excitement marred the holy peace in which he usually lived, and he did not feel in a right condition to speak in the name of the Lord. Anger, even if it be of the purest kind, is a great disturber of the heart; it ruffles all our garments, and makes us unfit to minister before the Lord. I know of nothing that is more likely to put a man out of order for the communications of the Spirit of God than indignation. Even though we may be able to say, "I do well to be angry," yet it is a very trying emotion. The unruffled lake reflects the skies, but if it be tossed with tempest even the purest water becomes a broken mirror; even thus in the quiet of the soul the thoughts of God's Spirit are reflected, while in the rush of indignation they are broken and confused.

Doubtless, also, the prophet's spirits were depressed. He saw before him the king of Edom, an idolater; the king of Israel, a votary of the calves of Jeroboam; and Jehoshaphat, the man of God, in confederacy with them. This last must have pained him as much as anything. What hope was there for the cause of truth and holiness when even a godly prince was in alliance with Jezebel's son? This burdened the heart of the man of God. Everything was wrong, and going worse and worse. The warnings of Elijah and his own teachings seemed to go for nothing; the honour of God was forgotten, and the cause of evil triumphed.

Moreover, the servant of God must have been the subject of a fierce internal conflict between two sets of thoughts. Indignation and pity strove within his heart. His justice and his piety made him feel that he could have nothing to do with two idolatrous kings; but pity and humanity made him wish to deliver the army from perishing by thirst. Like a patriot, he sympathised with his people; but, like a prophet, he was jealous for his God. The men of Judah and Israel, whatever they might be in character, were the Lord's people by covenant; he could not let them die: yet they had broken that covenant, and how could he help them? The prophet was perplexed, and his heart grew heavy. How can we do the Lord's work when we are cast down in spirit? The joy of the Lord is our strength, and when we lose it our hands are feeble. When the heart is torn with inner conflict how can we speak words of comfort to those who are weary? We have need to escape from this inward strife before we can become sons of consolation to others. While rent with conflicting feeling,

there was no rest in the prophet's spirit; and the hand of the Lord did not come upon him. Most wisely he did not attempt to speak in the name of the Lord, but sought for a means by which his excitement could be allayed. In the face of many hindrances we shall be wise if we imitate him. When we feel ourselves cumbered with much serving we shall act discreetly if we pause in it, and take Mary's place, for awhile, at least, and sit at Jesus' feet; or, if the service must be done at once, it will be well to use the readiest means for preparing the mind for doing it. It may be that some simple natural means will be helpful, and if so, we must not be so ultra-spiritual as to disdain to cry, "Bring me a minstrel." It is often pride which makes us decline the use of natural means. David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord, but he took his sling and his stone with him; even our Lord, who could open men's eyes with a word, did not refuse to use clay, or to send his patient to the pool of Siloam to wash. If you and I are out of order we must do our best to get right. If I go to do the Lord's work with a vexed or distracted mind, I shall do it badly. Perhaps I shall do more harm than good. I shall spill the cup of consolation if I am all in a tremble myself. God's servants should serve their Master well: the best we can render falls short of his deservings; but it would be a pity to do less than our very best. Occasionally we are quite out of form, cannot think, or feel, or speak aright; we have to confess that we are all in confusion, and, what is worse, we dare not even expect God come and help us till we are in a less excited condition. I know what I mean better than I can tell you. Some of our brethren are always even and calm, but others of us go dangerously up and sadly down, and are at times unfit either to receive the heavenly word or to convey it to others. At such times let us remember our text. The prophet said "Bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

But what are our helps when we are pressed with hindrances? Is there anything which in our case may be as useful as a harp? "Bring me a minstrel," said the prophet, for his mind was easily moved by that charming art. Music and song soothed and calmed, and cheered him.

"Through every pulse the music stole,
And held high converse with his soul."

On the wings of melody his mind rose above the noisy camp, and floated far away from the loathed presence of Jehoram; the melting mystic strain laid all his passions asleep, and his soul was left in silence to hear the voice of the Lord. Well did Luther say, "Music is the art of the prophets, the only art that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us."

Among our own helps singing holds a chief place; as saith the apostle, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in Your heart to the Lord." Note how he connects it with peace in his epistle to the Colossians: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts . . . teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." "I cannot sing," says one. You need not sing as sweetly as Asaph and Heman, and other sweet birds of paradise whose names we read in Scripture; but we should all sing better if we sang more. Those with cracked voices would be kind if they would not sing quite so loudly in the congregation, for they grievously disturb other people; but they might get alone and have good times with themselves, where nobody could complain of their strong voices and lusty tones. It is good to sing praises unto the Lord, and a part of its goodness lies in the comfort which it brings. It is not without significance, that after supper, before our Lord went to his great sacrifice, he sang a hymn. Did not even he find refreshment in that holy exercise? My mind dwells sweetly on a season which I have often mentioned to you when a new lie had been forged against me, a lie of peculiar bitterness, and it vexed me. I was never particularly pleased at being slandered, though I have had my fair share of it. Well, I went alone awhile, and sung over to myself in my own poor way, -

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou remember me."

By that means the sting was removed, and I felt merry again. "Bring me a

minstrel:" the restoring means may be a little thing, but if you do not look to the linchpin of a cartwheel the wheel may come off, and down will go the cart, and what is the poor horse to do then? If you can get your mind right again by such a simple thing as singing, pray do not neglect it.

Suppose, however, that singing has no such power over you; let me recommend to you the quiet reading of a chapter of God's word. Go upstairs and open the Book, and think upon a few verses. If you are much perplexed, read that blessed chapter which begins, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Those verses act like a charm upon many minds: many and many a time a storm has subsided into a calm by the reading of those words. Some such passage read quietly will often operate as the harper acted upon Elisha. If time be pressing, see what is the text for the day in the almanac; or choose out some one precious promise which in other days was sweet to you. It is wonderful the effect of a single verse of Scripture when the Spirit of God applies it to the soul. There is music to a miser in the jingling of his money bag: but what music can equal this—"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"? If you are in poverty, what melody lies in this: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." What power would come upon the soul to calm and quiet it, and make it ready for the hand of God, if we would grasp a single line of Scripture and suck the honey out of it till our soul is filled with sweetness.

You will find it equal to bringing a minstrel, and perhaps even more efficient, if you will get alone to pray. That horrible Rabshakeh's letter—you read it, and then you wished you had never seen it. You put it behind the glass, but you fetch it out again, and read it again, and cry, "What a trial is this! who can bear it?" There is a kind of basilisk power in an abominable letter, so that you feel compelled to read it again and again. Can you not break the spell? What is the wisest course? Go upstairs, open it wide, spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, thou hast seen letters like this before; for thy servant Hezekiah showed thee one." I would say of every sorrow, "Pray over it." An old divine, after he had heard a young minister preach a poor discourse, said to him, "Sir, I beg you to try and pray that sermon over." He replied that he could not pray it over. Now, a

sermon that cannot be prayed over ought never to be preached at all, and a trouble that you cannot pray over is a trouble which you ought not to have. It must be a grief of your own making; it cannot be a trial of God's sending. Tell the Lord your affliction, and the bitterness of it will be past, and you will go back to your daily service calm and quiet, fitted for the hand of the Lord to be laid upon you. Men will wonder whence your joy has come, and what makes your face to shine. The secret is that you have waited upon the Lord, and renewed your strength.

It may be you will find fittest help in Christian association. I commend this to those believers who are seldom fit for God to use because they are morose and fault-finding. You ought to say, "Bring me a minstrel!"—find me some praying sister whom I may talk with, or find me some genial brother who rejoices in the Lord, and let me converse with such."It may be that the Master will join you and make a third, and then shall your heart be glad. Much misery is caused by Christians attempting to go to heaven alone. You remember how Mr. Bunyan describes Christian as journeying alone at first; he soon picked up with Hopeful, and then he was more cheery. As for Christiana and Mercy, and the family, they scarcely could have gone on pilgrimage at all if it had not been for Mr. Greatheart: but when they all went in company, with Mr. Greatheart to lead the band, they could sing all the way to the gates of the Celestial City. You, my friend, who are hindered in the service of Christ, might often be put right, so that God could use you, if you would become a companion of all them that fear God, and of them that keep his precepts. Holy converse acts as a minstrel to the spirit.

What is the duty that arises out of this? It is this: if you get into a bad state, don't stick there. "Ah," says one, "it is very close weather, and I feel depressed, so that the Spirit of God does not work upon my mind." Then cry at once, "Bring me a minstrel." Do not say "I cannot help being stupid." You need not be: at least, not more so than you are by nature. You may get out of your dullness by making an effort, and you ought to make it. Did I not hear you say "Everybody has gone away for a holiday, and I cannot leave my work. Trade is dull, and so am I"? But you need not be dull. Why should you always be heavy? You say, "I do not feel fit to go to my class," or, "I do not feel fit to preach." Should you, therefore, cease

from the work of the Lord? By no means. Rouse yourself. Think of the way in which God has aforetime helped you, and use the same means again. While you are helping yourselves God will help you, and the hand of the Lord will come upon you.

Do not give way to feelings which unhinge you. Fight against them and cry with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Still, do not rush into God's service in an unfit condition. Resort to such means as are within reach for calming the lower faculties, and the Spirit of God will move upon your higher powers. Act rationally. Use your best judgement and most prudent endeavours, or we shall suspect that you have no particular wish to do the Lord's work, or fancy that anything is good enough for your God. Say to yourself, "Being in an unsuitable condition, I cannot expect God to use me. I must therefore get right. Here is my harp, but every string is out of tune. I cannot expect the Holy Spirit to play upon it until it is put in order. What can I do to help myself in this matter, for that I will do, and thus prove the sincerity of my prayer when I ask God the Holy Spirit to help me."

This, then, is the first lesson, and I am sure there is real practical teaching in it, though some superior persons may despise it.

II. My second word is to those who have not yet found the Lord. WE SHOULD USE EVERY MEANS TO OBTAIN THE TOUCH OF THE DIVINE HAND. There are some here present who do not yet know whether they are believers in Christ or not: and I am sure I cannot tell them. I hope they are believers, for they are sincerely desirous of eternal salvation, but sometimes I am afraid they are not, for they do not appear to understand the meaning of the finished work of Christ. What are those, who are earnestly seeking the Lord, to do? There is but one answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith is the one and only course commanded. But some one replies, "Alas, I cannot get at that." But, my friend, you must get at it, or perish. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Still, to help you, let me urge you to do this which lies near at hand if you cannot feel that the Spirit of God will bless you as you are, call for some

minstrel, who may aid you in your search after the blessing. If there be any subordinate means which may be helpful, use it with a view to the higher and better thing. I would first say—If you feel that you have not the faith which you ought to have, use what faith you have. It is wonderful what an immense amount of possibility lie in a mustard seed of faith. It is a very small, tiny thing; but sow it and it will grow. You have not enough faith to believe that Christ will save you, but you have enough to feel sure that Christ can save you. That is something: hold to it and follow it out to its fair conclusions. If a man has not money enough to pay for a week's provisions, let him not starve; but let him spend what he has, hoping that more will come. Have you a small dust of faith? use that, and it will multiply.

If you want to feel the hand of the Lord, I would next say, Go and hear a sound, earnest, lively preacher. I am advising you to do as I acted myself. I was muddled, and could not exercise faith, and so resolved to obey that other precept, "Hear, and your soul shall live."

If you long for faith, listen to the preacher who preaches the gospel most simply and most forcibly. Perhaps you say, "I have been listening to a very clever minister, a very intellectual minister, and his word has never been blessed to my soul." Then shift your place, and say. "Bring me a minstrel;" for then it may be that the hand of the Lord may be upon you. It is better to go a hundred miles to hear a faithful minister than to listen to a man from whom you get no good because he happens to preach near you. Men go many miles to a skilful physician, or a healing fountain. When we are in earnest to find Christ we shall have the sense to go where he is most honoured and most spoken of.

"But suppose I have attended such a ministry, and have found no good; what shall I do?" Why, the Scripture says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ' and thou shalt be saved." Still, if you cannot get at this for the moment, attend earnest meetings where souls have been converted, and many have been brought to Jesus' feet. Trust not to preachers or meetings; but, still, go where the rain is falling, and there may be a drop for you. If a ministry is blessing others, resort to it, praying, "O Lord, bless me." Our immediate need is the hand of the Lord, and we may be

made ready to receive it by hearing the gospel; therefore let us diligently incline our ear to the heavenly word.

Let me also advise you to read gracious books. Ask Christian people what writings were blessed to their conversion, and carefully study the same. There is no book for saving souls like the Bible. Say, "Bring me a minstrel," and read the Scriptures again and again. The Lord Jesus feedeth among the lilies: get among the beds of lilies, and you will find him there. Oh, how many have found Christ when they have been searching the Scriptures to see "whether those things were so."

I would also strongly recommend you to get a good deal alone. You poor souls, who cannot find Christ, and do not seem to understand what it is to believe in him, should think much, and meditate much, upon Jesus and his cross. David said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." If you want a minstrel, think of your sin, your sin against your God, till it breaks your heart; then think of Christ, his nature, his work, his love, his deeds of mercy: think of the Holy Spirit, and his power to renew, regenerate, comfort, sanctify: think over those precious truths of the word of God, which are set there on purpose to be beacons to light souls to Christ, and while you are thinking of these it shall be to you as when the minstrel played, and the hand of the Lord came upon his prophet. Get much alone; but still recollect there is no hope for you if you trust in being alone, or trust in reading the Scriptures, or trust in hearing, or trust in anything but Christ. What you want is the hand of Jesus laid upon you: one touch from him, and you will be made whole. If you can but touch the hem of his garment, virtue shall come out of him to you. I am merely mentioning these things because sometimes they lead up to the one thing, and when a man is in earnest to obtain the one thing needful, he will be willing to attend to anything by which he will be likely to attain it, and to attend to any secondary means which God has blessed in the case of others. He will be willing to be taught by a child, if peradventure God will bless him in that manner. He will say, "Bring me a minstrel;" "Bring me a good book;" "Bring me a godly minister;" "Bring me a Christian man accustomed to speak to troubled hearts;" "Bring me an aged Christian whose testimony shall confirm my spirit, and be the means of working faith in me: for I must get to God; I must get salvation.

Tell me, tell me, where Christ is to be obtained, and I will find him if I ransack the globe to discover him." I do not believe any person who has desires to find Christ will seek in vain. I am certain that when people hunger and thirst after Christ they shall be filled, and when they say, "We will do anything by which we may be led to Jesus," they are not far from the kingdom of heaven, and the Holy Spirit is at work in them.

III. Thirdly, WE SHOULD MORE ABUNDANTLY USE HOLY MINSTRELSY. Saints and sinners, too, would find it greatly to their benefit if they said, "Bring me a minstrel." This is the world's cry whenever it is merry, and filled with wine. The art of music has been prostituted to the service of Satan. Charles Wesley well said, -

Listed into the cause of sin,
Why should a good be evil?
Music, alas! too long has been
Press'd to obey the devil.
Drunken, or lewd, or light, the lay
Flow'd to the soul's undoing;
Widen'd, and strew'd with flowers the way
Down to eternal ruin."

It is for us to use singing in the service of God, and to make a conquest of it for our Redeemer. Worldlings want the minstrel to excite them; we want him to calm our hearts and still our spirits. That is his use to us, and we shall do well to employ the harper to that end.

Let us give instances: I will suppose that this morning you were thinking about coming up to the assembly of God's people, and you felt hardly up to the mark. It would have been wise to do as I did this morning. I read at family prayer the eighty-fourth Psalm, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God."

What a sweet piece of Sabbath minstrelsy it is! How often have we been quieted and prepared for sanctuary worship by Psalm 84:-

"How did my heart rejoice to hear
My friends devoutly say,
'In Zion let us all appear
And keep thy holy day!'"

When the house is full of trouble, and your heart is bowed down, is it not well to say—"Bring me a minstrel, and let him sing to me the twenty-seventh Psalm. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." You need not confine the harper to that one strain; for David has written many psalms for burdened hearts. It is wonderful what provision God has made of sacred minstrels to play us up out of the depths into the heights if we will but make a right use of them.

I will suppose you are in a state of alarm; it may be there is a thunderstorm, or possibly a disease is stalking through the land. Did you ever sing in such times that forty-sixth Psalm: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." Such music is like the breath of heaven. How comforting are the words of the ninety-first Psalm when diseases are abroad, or when the thunder rolls through the sky: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." I remember being in a family one night when I was but a lad, when everybody in the house, strong men though some of them were, trembled and were afraid. A child

was upstairs and must be brought down, but no one dared pass by the window on the staircase. Well do I remember fetching the child, awed but not alarmed, and then I sat down and read aloud the ninety-first Psalm, and saw how it quieted both men and women. Ah, my brethren, David as a musician is one of a thousand; we need no other minstrel. The word of God hushes the tempest of the soul, and refreshes the heart with a celestial dew. "Bring me a minstrel," but let him sing us one of the songs of Zion.

Do you ever get depressed in spirit, beloved friends? I fear you do; and are you ever troubled because you seem to have more affliction than anybody else? Have you watched the wicked and seen them prosperously sailing while you have been tossed to and fro on a raging sea of troubles? Do you want to get peace to your mind by the power of the Holy Spirit? Then say, "Bring me a minstrel" and let him sing that thirty-seventh Psalm, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers." Or if you would have a change from the thirty-seventh, turn the figures round, and let him sing the seventy-third, and the notes will run thus: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." You will not be long before you will rise to the note—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Happily, you are not always depressed: there are times of great joy with you, and then you long to have communion with God. If you wish to have fellowship with Jesus, you will find it helpful to say, "Bring me a minstrel;" and when he asks, "What shall I sing?" say to him, "Sing the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." Then shall you find utterance for your heart in some such canticles as these: "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Possibly your tongue will take up notes like these: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the

lilies. Until the daybreak, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division." The whole book is full of utterances which may seem strange to worldly minds, but which exactly suit those who know the Well-beloved. Read that third verse of the eighth chapter of the Song. Did you ever sing it? "His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

When we come to die we will breathe our last breath to music. Then will we say, "Bring me a harper," and like Jacob and Moses we will sing ere we depart. Our song is ready. It is the twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

This is the kind of minstrel for me. Say you not so, my brethren? When you are in trouble or distress, will you not remember your son in the night? If such be the strain, I am of the same mind as Martin Luther, whose words I have copied out to read to you. His language is always strong. Luther speaks thunderbolts. "One of the finest and noblest gifts of God is music. This is very hateful to the devil, and with it we may drive off temptations and evil thoughts. After theology I give the next place and highest honour to music. It has often aroused and moved me so that I have won a desire to preach. We ought not to ordain young men to the office of preacher if they have not trained themselves and practised singing in the schools." That is pretty strong. I fear many would not have been preachers if they must first have been singers. Still, there is a power about song; and to sing the praises of God in psalms such as those I have read to you is most consoling.

Suppose you have done with the minstrelsy which I have now mentioned, there is next the music of gospel doctrine. I confess to you that, when depressed in spirit, I love a little of thorough Calvinistic doctrine. I turn to Coles on Divine Sovereignty, and relish his plain speaking upon

sovereign grace. The doctrine of election is noble music: predestination is a glorious hallelujah. Grace abounding, love victorious, truth unchanging, faithfulness invincible: these are melodies such as my ear delights in. The truth of God is fit music for angels. The harps of the redeemed never resound with more noble music than the doctrines of grace. Every truth has its melody, every doctrine is a psalm unto God. When my heart is faint, "Bring me a minstrel," and let him sing of free grace and dying love.

If these do not charm you, fetch a minstrel from experience. Think how God has dealt with you in times of sorrow and darkness long gone by, and then you will sing, "His mercy endureth for ever." That one hundred and third Psalm might last a man from now till he entered heaven, he need not change the strain,— "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." He may keep on chanting it until his song melts into the hymn of the angels, and he adds another voice to the chorus of the redeemed above.

If you want music, there is yet a sweeter store. Go fetch a minstrel from Calvary. Commend me for sweetness to the music of the cross. At Calvary I hear one piece of music set to the minor key which bred more joy beneath the skies than all else. Hear it: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus deserted is the comfort of deserted souls: Jesus crying, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" is the joy of the spirit that has lost the light of God's countenance. That grave and solemn note can lift despair into delight.

But if you want another hymn of the cross to be sung with the accompaniment of the high-sounding cymbals, or with trumpet and sound of cornet, let me commend you to this other song of the cross, "IT IS FINISHED." All music lies there. Condensed into those three words you have the harmonies of eternity, the melodies of the infinite. Angels themselves when on their loftiest key did never sing a canticle so sweet. "Consummatum est" is the consummation of song. "It is finished;" sin is blotted out, reconciliation is complete, everlasting righteousness is brought in, and believing souls are saved. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! "Till the day break, and the shadows flee away," "Bring me a minstrel," and let us sing unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own

blood, to him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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A Miracle Of Grace

So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people; but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. - 2 Chronicles 33:9-13

Manasseh was born three years after his father's memorable sickness. You will remember that Hezekiah was stricken with a mortal disease, and Isaiah, the prophet, come to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." He appears to have been startled and appalled at the tidings, and gave vent to his feelings with bitter tears. Evidently he was afraid at the time to face death. He had probably been indulging a worldly spirit; and besides this, it lay as a heavy burden upon his heart that he had no son whom he should leave as his successor in the kingdom. In deep distress of soul, accordingly, he turned to the wall and prayed to the Lord. With piteous weeping and earnest pleading he besought that his life might be spared. His prayer was heard, his tears were seen, and his petition was granted by God. His days were prolonged by fifteen years. In the third year of those fifteen years his son Manasseh was born to him. Had he known, methinks, what sort of a son would have risen up in his stead, he might have been content to die, rather than to be the father of such a persecutor of God's people, and such

a setter up of idolatry in the land. Alas! full often we know not what we, pray for. We may be covetous of an apparent boon which would prove to be a real curse both to ourselves and to thousands of others. You prayed, mother—yea, prayed fervently—for the life of that dear babe whom God was pleaded to take away from you. You cannot know what disposition the child would have shown, what temptations would have befallen it, or what consequences would have come of its life. Could some parents have read the history of their children from the day of their birth, they might rightly have wished that they had never been born. We had better leave such matters with God, and submit to his sovereign will. He knows better than we do, for he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Thank God, these affairs are not in our own hands. They are in far better and wiser keeping than ours.

Manasseh's mother was named Hephzi-bah, a beautiful name. I wonder whether Hezekiah gave her the name because she was his delight, or because his gratitude inspired it, as he was then himself delighting in his God. I can scarcely think that at such a time he would have chosen one who had not also chosen God; therefore, let us think of her as a godly woman. But in that case she could have had little enough delight in her son; and sometimes, I should think, when she saw him pursuing the people of God with the sword, and sinning with a high hand, she must have been ready to say, "Call me no more Hephzi-bah, but call me Marah, for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me." It is not always that the thing which makes us glad to-day will make us glad to-morrow likewise. Let children be accounted a heritage of the Lord. They are the joy of our hearts and the flowers of our homes. But what will they be to us when the gay, guileless, sportive days of their childhood have run out? Unless God sends his blessing with them, the increase of our families may be the sorrow of our lives. Evil passions and propensities develop themselves in our children with their growth, and if the grace of God does not subdue their sinful disposition, we may have to rue the day that they were born. Manasseh's name signified "forgetfulness." I hope his father did not forget his training, and leave him to those young courtiers who always hang about kings' palaces, and are pretty sure to instil into a young prince's mind more vanity than virtue, and bespeak his favour and patronage for the popular party. There was a superstitious section in

those days, cultivating idolatry and pouring contempt on the Evangelical brethren, whose cause his father, Hezekiah, had espoused so earnestly and defended all his days. That new religion, imported from among the heathen, had its meretricious attractions. Was there not a great deal to please the eye in its pageant, and much to charm the ear in its worship? The beautiful artistic work in the statuary of its idols, and the fine display of pomp in all the ceremonies—did not these appeal to a cultivated taste? The old-fashioned puritanical order of worshipping at one temple, where the service was bald, and where there was scarcely anything to be seen except by the priests themselves, was becoming effete. Would it not be better to go with the times, take up with Baalim and Ashtaroth, do homage to the sensuous proclivities of the common people, and make friendly alliances with nations holding other creeds? I should not wonder but they talked to the young man in that fashion, and he—oblivious of what God had done for his sire and forgetful that in the long history of the house of Judah the people had always been smitten when they turned aside to idols and that they only prospered when they clung to the living God fell into the snare, and sinned with a high hand.

I shall introduce him to you first as a loathsome monster of guilt; then, secondly, I shall show you how the hand of God followed him till he became a piteous spectacle of misery; after which—blessed be God!—we shall have to mount into a clearer atmosphere, when we point him out to you as he became afterwards, a miracle of grace; and in fine we shall have to admire him as a delightful picture of genuine repentance. We must begin by considering him as:

I. A LOATHSOME MONSTER OF GUILT.

I cannot imagine that any one of my hearers can have been so great a sinner as Manasseh. I shall not attempt to draw a parallel between him and anyone else. Still, I should not wonder if some of you may be led to draw some such parallel for yourselves. If you do so, I pray the Lord to give you such a sense of your own guilt as shall constrain you to seek pardon.

Deep was the crime, and daring was the impiety of Manasseh, in size that

he undid all the good work of his pious father. What Hezekiah had painfully wrought at the web he began to unravel as fast as he could. That which the father built up for God the son pulled down; and that which the father had cast down because it was evil the son at once began to reconstruct. I must confess I have known sons do the like. Because, they have hated their father's piety, as it has been a restraint upon their sin, they have vowed that if it ever came into their power to do as they liked, there should be a change in the household. As I passed a certain house this week a friend said to me, "Many a prayer-meeting has been held in that farmhouse. People used to come for miles round there to meet and pray." "Is that a thing of the past?" said I; "are no prayer meetings held there now?" "Oh! no," he replied; "the father died, and his reprobate son came into the property. A prayer meeting, indeed! No. He defied his mother to attempt such a thing; and after having stripped her, and stripped the little estate of all there was that was worth the having, he has gone away, and has not been heard of for many a year. As far as he could, he tore down everything that belonged to his father that reminded him of his God." Mr. Whitefield used to tell of a wicked son who said he would not live in the same house that his father had inhabited, for he said that every room in the house stunk of his father's religion, and he could not bear it. There are men who after such manner devise mischief. But ah! young man, you cannot sin in that atrocious way without incurring extraordinary guilt. It will be remembered that you sin against the light; it will be recollected at the last great day that you were prayed for—that you were instructed in the right way; nor will you sin so cheap as others—others, did I say? I means such as, when they transgress, only follow an evil example, and run in the path which their parents taught them. Oh! how I grieve over ungodly young men who treat their father's God with dishonour and despite.

Manasseh's sin was aggravated by the fact that he chose to follow the very worst examples. Though he had in his father one of the best patterns of purity, that would not do, but he must cast about him to see whom he could imitate. Upon whom think ye, did he light? Why, upon Ahab—the Ahab Of whom God had said that he would cut off every one of his house, and not leave one remaining; a threat which had been executed, for the blood of Ahab had been licked by dogs in the field of Naboth, and Jezebel,

his wife, had been devoured of dogs. Yet this young man must needs choose Ahab to be his pattern, so he set up Baalim, even as Ahab had done of old. The like folly I have known to be committed by young men in these days. It may be there are those here who have not found anybody that they could imitate, until at last they sought out some licentious individual, perhaps, of years gone by, whom they have elected to be their leader. Why, half the youth of England used, at one time, to be infatuated with Lord Byron. The glare of his genius blinded them as to the terrible hue of his character and the atrocity of his conduct, so they followed headlong in his track, because, forsooth, he was a great man and a poet. Affecting wit, they bid defiance to pure morals. Alas! for the men whose sentiments, whose language, and whose actions betray the hardihood and the daring of vicious characters they are prone to emulate! Though they know better, they deliberately choose the worst models that they can copy from. What extravagance man will perpetrate in sin!

But this Manasseh sought out for himself unusual and outlandish sins. Bad as Ahab was, he had not worshipped the host of heaven. That was an Assyrian worship, and this man must needs import from Assyria and Babylonia worship that was quite new. He set up the image Ashra, which you may, perhaps, have seen on the slabs that have been brought from Nineveh: a tree bearing souls, intended to represent all the host of heaven. He carved this in the house of God, and set it up for worship. We read in the prophets that the people used to stand in front of the temple and bow before the rising sun, worshipping the hosts of heaven. He was not satisfied with common sin. We have known sinners of this class; they are not content merely to sin as others do; they are ambitious to invent some fresh sin. Like Tiberius, who offered a prize if somebody would find him out a new pleasure, they want to discover a new species of impiety, which shall draw attention to themselves. They must be singular in whatever they attempt; even if it comes to being singularly wicked. Such was Manasseh. He could not be satisfied to run in the race with others, and mingle with the ill-fashion of his times; swiftly as they would fly, he must distance them all.

Beyond this, he insulted God to his face. Here, perhaps, his sin culminates. It was not enough to build idol temples for idol worship, but

he must needs set up the idols and their altars in the Temple of Jehovah. Such arrogance, as we think of it, makes our blood chill. And ah! one trembles to tell it, not a few men have thus invoked upon their bodies and their souls the curse of the Almighty. So desperately have they been set on transgression, that they have lifted their hand and defied their Maker. Had he not been God—the God of all patience—he would have resented their defiance, and have suddenly smitten them down to hell; but being God, and not man, he has borne with them. He is too great to be stirred by their insults. He has put it by, and let it lie still, winking alike at their ignorance and their assumption. for a while, until their iniquity shall be full; and then, in his justice, will he visit it upon their head. There are not a few in our great city who continually do all that they can to provoke God, and to show how little they reverence him how utterly they ignore his claims on their homage. They will go out of their way to introduce blasphemies into their common conversation, and to express their disgust and contempt for everything chaste and comely, sacred and godly. Such was Manasseh. He set up the altars of the false gods in the house of the living God.

Is not his character black enough? Nay, we have not laid on the thickest touches yet. We are told he made his children to pass through the fire; that is to say, he passed them between the red-hot arms of Moloch, that they might belong for ever as long as they lived, to that fiendish deity. If we do not aver that men do this now-a-days, they fall little short of the same cruelty and crime. Many a man teaches his child to drink arduous spirits; trains him to habits which he knows will lead him to drunkenness; does his utmost to pass the child through the red-hot arms of the spirit-fiend, Else Moloch of the present time. Many a man has taught his child to blaspheme. If he has not deliberately purposed it, he has actually effected it, fully conscious that he was so doing. What was his example but a deliberate lesson? Ay; there are people who seem to take delight in the sins of their children, Laughing at the iniquities they have instructed their own sons to perpetrate. Do I address a father who, for many years, has never attended a place of worship on the Sabbath—who has often gone home reeling drunk, and, though somewhat reformed himself, sees his own son plunging into every vice that he was himself once habituated to? Let me ask you, Do you wonder at it? Do you wonder

at it? You have passed your children through the flames; what marvel that they were singed, and that the smell of fire is upon them? Oh! it is a crying sin that men will not only go to hell themselves, but they must needs drag their children with them. Many a man has not been satisfied to be ruined but he must ruin some young woman who, perhaps, once had religious convictions. He becomes her husband, and forbids her to attend the house of God. As for his children, they may, perhaps, be sent to the Sunday School to get them out of the way in the afternoon, yet any good they might learn there is soon dissipated by the scenes and sounds they witness and hear under the roof of their home. Why, multitudes in this city—we know it, and they must know it themselves—are ruining their children, deliberately compassing their perdition. Is this a small sin, an insignificant mistake in their training? I trow not.

Moreover, Manasseh proceeded further, for he made a league with devils. There were, in his day, certain persons who professed to talk with departed spirits, supposing that the devil had the means of communicating with them about things to come. Now, whether this fellowship with familiar spirits is a delusion and a lie, as I suspect it is, or whether there may be a mystery of Satan involved in it, I do not know; but certain it was that Manasseh tried to get as near the devil as he could. If he could get him to be his friend he was well content to make a covenant with hell, so that it might answer his purposes. Let him have good luck; little did he care for God. He would consult a wizard. Superstition led him to that, but the good Word of God he utterly despised. And there are some that have done this—some here, perhaps. I will not suppose they have lent themselves to those silly superstitions, or resorted to those deceitful or deceived mediums who perform in the dark. I should think, in these modern times of popular education, anyone is fit to be confined in a lunatic asylum who is beguiled by that snare. Intelligence should protect you from imposture. But there be those who, if the devil would help them, would be glad enough to shake hands with him, and say, "Hail, fellow; well met!" If they do not entertain the devil, it is no fault of theirs. They have set the table for him, and furnished the house, and made themselves quite ready for any evil spirit that chooses to come to them. Oh! what iniquity this is! They will not have God; they will have Satan. They cast off the great Father in heaven, but the archenemy

of souls—with him they make a covenant, and contract a league. Could sin go much farther shall this? It could, and it did; for this man led the whole nation astray. Being a king, he had great power, and he used his authority and exerted his influence to induce his subjects to follow his pernicious course. I often wonder what will be the horror of a man that has lived in gross sin when, in the next world, he meets those that he betrayed and seduced into iniquity, when he begins to see, in the murky gloom of that intolerable pit, a pair of eyes which somehow or other seem to hold him fixed and fast. He recognises them; he has seen them somewhere before, and those eyes flash fire into the soul as though they would utterly consume him, and a voice says, "A thousand curses on thee! Thou art he that led me first into sin—enticed me from a virtuous home, and from godly associations, to become thy partner in iniquity. A blast be on thee evermore!" What company they have to keep in that place of torment! How they will gnash their teeth at one another in dreadful rage, each one charging the other with being his destroyer! Oh! there is remorse enough in store for a man who ruins himself, but who can tell the pangs that shall scourge his soul who betrays his fellow-creatures, and precipitates them into everlasting ruin? Verily, dear friends, we stand aghast at the picture of such a man as Manasseh, he set no bounds to his sin. He sinned with both hands greedily, and when the messengers came from God to tell him of it, he was angry with them. Tradition says that he sawed the prophet Isaiah in halves for daring to reprove him. But it is not from tradition, but from revelation, we learn that he made Jerusalem to swim with blood from one end to the other, putting to death all those that would not go in his ways and follow his devices. Persecution of the saints of God is a scarlet sin, that calls aloud to heaven for vengeance. Manasseh was guilty of this, among other crimes. I am sick at heart, and my tongue is weary of the story. Let me turn to another branch of the narrative. This terrible monster of iniquity presently became:—

II. A SINGULAR SPECTACLE OF MISERY.

A few words will suffice to describe it. The Assyrian king sent his captain, one Tartan, who besieged the city till it was devastated, and the king fled. It would appear that he hid himself in a thorn brake, and was dragged out from it, and fettered and manacled with heavy irons. There remains a

representation at the present time of some Jewish king—we cannot be sure it was Manasseh—who was dragged before the King of Babylon. At any rate, it represents what was done to Manasseh, whether the like treatment befell any other Jewish king or not. He has two rings—a ring on each ankle, and a heavy bolt between them, and his hands are fastened in the same manner. He is brought before the king at Babylon. There he seems to have been cast into prison, and kept in confinement. The cruelties of the Assyrian monarchs are attested by the memorials upon their own palace walls; therefore, I can fully credit the story told; by Jerome, that this Manasseh was himself put into a brazen vessel, and subjected to the most intense heat, the Assyrian king abusing him for having passed his own child through the fire in the same manner. That he was kept for many a long month in a dark and dreary dungeon, with only sufficient bread and vinegar given him to sustain his life, appears certain. He must have been wretched to the last degree: his crown gone, his kingdom devastated, his subjects put to unheard—of miseries, We are told that the judgment which God executed upon the land was such that it made the both ears of him that heard of it to tingle. The king must, therefore, have experienced some indescribable afflictions from the hands of the tyrant of Assyria. Ah! sinner, though thou harden thyself in thy transgressions, thou wilt not go unpunished. A bitter end awaits thee. Reckless as thou art, young man, thy father's God will not always be mocked. You have persecuted your wife and your friend, but their unhappiness will return ere long to your own bosom. There will come an end to your arrogance, and a beginning to your recompenses. Oh! I wish your iniquity would come to an end soon, and that it might end with your conversion. If it does not come to that end, your outlook is gloomy indeed, for your total destruction will complete the course you are running.

Perhaps I am addressing somebody who has been living in heartless sin until he has become entangled in helpless misery. In this crowd you seem as if you were pointed out, for your heart is ready to break with anguish. Your property is lost, your health is broken up, your character is blasted; you are a mere wreck, a waif, a stray upon the dark sea. There is none to have compassion upon you. You are a castaway. Even your old companions have forsaken you. The devil himself seems to have cast you

adrift. You are abandoned, and you might cry out and sound your own death knell. "Lost! lost! lost!" Well, now, I have a message from God to you. I am come to speak to you, in the name of the Lord, about this man Manasseh, in the hope that it may be also concerning yourself true—that after having been a prodigy of sin, and a spectacle of misery, you may now become as, in the third place, Manasseh became:—

III. A MONUMENT OF GRACE.

Oh! I do not wonder at Manasseh's sin one half so much as I wonder at God's mercy. There was the man in the prison. He had never thought of his God except to despise his prerogative, and offend against his laws, till he was immured in that dungeon. Then his pride began to break; his haughty spirit had to yield at last. "Who is Jehovah, that I should serve him?" he had often said. But now he is in Jehovah's hand. Lying there half-starved in the prison, a crushed man, he begins to cry, "Jehovah, what a fool I have been! I have stood out against thee until at length thy sovereign power has arrested me. and thy infinite justice has begun to avenge my crimes. What shall I do? Where shall I hide from thy wrath? How can I escape? Is it possible to obtain thy pardon?" He began to humble himself; God's Spirit came and humbled him more and more; he saw how foolish he had been, how wicked his character, how cruel his conduct, how abominable. Thus he spent his days and nights, in weeping and in lamentation. It was not the prison he cared so much about. His soul had gone into iron bondage. Then it suddenly flashed across his mind that perhaps God might have mercy on him, so he began to pray. Oh! what a trembling prayer that first prayer was. Methinks Satan said to him, "It is no use your praying, Manasseh. Why, you have defied the living God to his face. He will tell you to go to the idol gods you have served, repair to the images you have set up, and bow before the hosts of heaven you have been wont to worship, and see what they can for you." Nay; but in this awful despair he felt he must pray; and surely the first prayer he breathed must have been, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And in his deep abasement, he continued still to pray and plead with God. And that dear Father of ours who is in heaven heard him. If ever you can bring him a praying heart, he will bring you a forgiving message. As soon as he saw his poor child broken down, and confessing his wrong, he took

pity on him, heard, and answered him, and blotted out his sins like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. I think I see Manasseh, with his morsel to eat, never enough to stay his hunger, and his little drops of vinegar, saying to himself, "Ah! I don't deserve this!" He would thank God even for that starving allowance in the depths of his cell, feeling that it was mercy that let him live. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" And so it came to pass that he was delivered.

The King of Assyria, for State reasons which I need not mention, determined to put this king on his throne again. He thought that he had broken him down, and humbled him enough; that he would make a good viceroy and a faithful lieutenant, and that he would be afraid to rebel again, so one bright day he opened wide Manasseh's dungeon, and told him he was going to send him back to Jerusalem. And when he told him that, then Manasseh knew that Jehovah, he was God. This conclusion was forced upon him by the mercy he obtained. "Who," he would say, "but the Most High God could have brought me out of this horrible pit, have released me from the power of this tyrant king, or moved his heart to relent, and have compassion on me?" As he rode back to Jerusalem, how his heart would be breaking with gratitude! I think I see him when he first got within sight of the walls of that temple which he had so recklessly profaned. Surely he threw himself upon his face, and wept sore, and then arose and blessed the name of the Lord that had forgiven all his trespasses. And when he entered Jerusalem, and the people gathered round him, what must the greetings have been? Where are those courtiers that had been his companions, that led him into sin? Do they come whining round him? What a rebuff they will get! How will he exclaim, "Get you gone. I am another man. I do not want your company or your counsel." Are there any of those poor people standing in the background—the people that used to meet to pray and worship Jehovah, faithful among the faithless found—such as had been wont to hide away their Bibles because they were hunted and harried from one retreat to another—a small remnant, that had escaped the fangs of the persecutors—did they come forward? How he could look at them, and say, "Ah! you servants of Jehovah, you are my brethren. Give me your hands; for I, too, have found from heaven, and I am, like you, a child of God." I warrant

you there was singing in Jerusalem that night amongst the feeble band of the steadfast believers; and there must have been music in heaven too, for the fiery angels must have rejoiced in a conversion that seemed so unlikely, so incredible.

"What, Manasseh saved? Manasseh—that bloodhound—is he transformed, by the renewing of his mind, into a lamb of God's flock? What he, the red-handed persecutor—has he become a professor of the faith he once destroyed?" Ah! yes. Well might Bishop Hall say, "Who can complain that the way of heaven is blocked against him, when he sees such a sinner enter? Say the worst against thyself, O clamorous soul! Here is one that murdered men, defied God, and worshipped devils, yet he finds the way to repentance. If thou be vile as he, know that it is not thy sin, but thy impenitence, that bars heaven against thee. Who can now despair of thy mercy, O God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted?" I remember an old lady who would not travel by railway because she thought that some of the bridges were in bad repair, especially the Saltash bridge, near her own house. Over that bridge she could not be persuaded to pass, for fear her weight should break it down, although hundreds of tons weight were carried over it every day. At such folly everybody can smile. But when I hear any man say, "I have committed so much sin, that God cannot pardon it," I think his folly is far greater. Look at this huge train that went over that bridge. Behold Manasseh laden with ponderous crimes! Mark what a train of sin there was behind him! Then look at the bridge, and see whether it starts by reason of the loaded team of wills which is rolling over it. Ah! no, it bears up, and so would it bear the weight if all the, Sins that men have done should roll across its arches. Christ is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." I do not know where to cast my eyes for the person to whom this message is directed. That he is somewhere in this assembly I entertain no doubt. So I speak to some sister who, in an unguarded hour, left the path of virtue, and since then has pursued a course of shame? I pray you accept the message. I deliver it to you. The greatest sin, the utmost guilt, the most incredible iniquity, the most abominable transgressions, can be forgiven, and shall be blotted out. The Redeemer lives; the sacrifice has been offered; the covenant is sealed. Turn now to the Lord with purpose of heart. Confess the sins. Abjure thyself. Trust in the infinite mercy of

God, through Jesus Christ, his Son. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Our closing reflection is that Manasseh became:—

IV. A PICTURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

At once he ceased to do evil. He went straightway to the temple and pulled down the idols. How I would like to have been with him, and have had a hand in demolishing them. Down went the images; then over went the altars; every stone was dragged right out of the city, and flung away. God grant that every image in England may yet be pulled down, battered to pieces, and the small dust thereof flung into the common sewers. May that which is an utter abomination before heaven stir a righteous indignation on earth. Oh! that our land may be so godly that no respect for fine arts may suffer her to tolerate foul impieties! Manasseh made haste to undo the mischief he had done. This is what every converted man tries to do. All the evil he has ever caused he tries to stay; he takes vengeance on his former devices; against them he lifts both his hands, raises his voice, and exerts his influence.

Nor did this suffice; Manasseh began forthwith to do good. Right speedily he began to repair the altar of the Lord, and to restore the services of God and the ordinances of the Temple to their original purity, according to the divine statutes. So when a man is truly converted, he will be anxious to join himself to the Lord's people, and support the institutions of his house. Nor did Manasseh smother his gratitude, but he presented thank-offerings to God. He was not unmindful of the devout acknowledgments that were due for the great mercy he had received. Like that other great sinner, whose gratitude is recorded in the gospel—the woman who brought an alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and brake it—like her, methinks, he loved much because he had had much forgiven.

And, then, being established in his kingdom, he proceeded to use his high influence for holy purposes. He ruled his subjects in the fear of the Lord; and made the law of his God to be the law of the land, renouncing all strange gods, and adhering rigidly to the book by inspiration given. Oh!

that God would incline the heart of some penitent sinner here at once to bring forth this fruit of conversion! What a change there would be in his house! What a difference his family would see! What an altered man he would appear in his daily avocation, whether he be employer or employed! He would be seeking the conversion of those whom he formerly led astray. Those he once scoffed at, and called by evil names, would become his choicest companions. "Can God do this?", says one. Oh! my dear hearers, the God that can forgive great sin can also change hard hearts. Cry to him. If you are unsaved, may his Spirit lead you to seek salvation now. Stay not for to-morrow's sun. If you are saved yourself, may that blessed Spirit lead you to pray for others, and seek their present and eternal welfare. Watch unto prayer. Let your own faith in God stimulate you to believe that all things are possible. Never give them up, never give them up. Are you a mother—you do not know how prevalent your intercessions may prove. I wonder whether poor Hephzibah was alive when Manasseh was converted? She had grieved over him, doubtless, in his young days. Well, if she did not live to see the fruit of her prayers, yet her prayers lived, and her tears were repaid with rich interest. There is many a mother's son whose heart will be turned to God long after his mother's bones have been laid in the churchyard. The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it. Thy son will yet be brought to glory through thy prayers. Pray on, brethren and sisters, pray on for those whose sins and sorrows lay heavily on your heart. Pray on, and God will hear you. O poor sinners, the mercy of God is the antidote for man's despair. Believe in his mercy. Look for his mercy. Cast yourselves upon his mercy, and you shall find his mercy unto everlasting life. God grant it for Christ's sake. Amen.

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The Mission Of The Son Of Man

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. - Luke 19:10

How fond our master was of the sweet title, the "Son of Man!" If he had chosen, he might always have spoken of himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. He hath a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of heaven, but he careth not to use them: to express his humility and let us see the lowliness of him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. He calls not himself the Son of God, but he speaks of himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from heaven. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Saviour; let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that hath the most of them is a worm still, and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called himself the Son of Man, when he had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbleth himself shall in due time be exalted. Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much, that he always desired to honor it; and since it is a high honor, and indeed the greatest dignity of manhood, that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, he is wont to display this name, that he may as it were put rich stars upon the breast of manhood, and put a crown upon its head. *Son of Man*—whenever he said that word he seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam's children. Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called himself the Son of Man, because he loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for him to come from heaven and to be incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when he left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubims to mingle with the vulgar herd of his own creatures. But condescension though it was, he loved it. You will remember that when he became incarnate he did not become so in the dark. When he bringeth forth the only begotten into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It was told in heaven; it was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it; but all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Saviour a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin's breast, and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards, and even now, he never blushed to confess that he was man; never looked back upon his incarnation with the slightest regret; but always regarded it with a joyous recollection,

thinking himself thrice happy that he had ever become the Son of Man. All hail, thou blessed Jesus! we know how much thou lovest our race; we can well understand the greatness of thy mercy towards thy chosen ones, inasmuch as thou art evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, and thou art one of them, a brother and a near kinsman.

Our text announces as a declaration of our Saviour, that he, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning, I shall simply divide my discourse thus:—First, I shall lay it down as a selfevident truth, that *whatever was the intention of Christ in his coming into the world that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated*. We shall then in the second place, look into *the intention of Christ*, as announced in the text, viz., "to seek and to save that which was lost." Then, in concluding, we shall derive *a word of comfort*, and perhaps one of *warning*, from the intention of our Saviour in coming into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost."

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion amongst all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called *general redemption*, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ hath shed his blood for every man, and that the intention of Christ in his death was the salvation of men considered as a whole; they have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ's intention would be frustrated in a measure. There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of *particular redemption*. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of all men; for if Christ had designed the salvation of all men, we hold that all men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects, and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident truth, that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself

to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be *inconsistent with the very idea of God that he should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished*. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power, that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish, I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he hath not counted the cost: I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control, that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition. I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere ephemera upon the bay-leaf of existence; and when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the wheels of providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I am that I am," the self-existent one, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God; when I think of him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom, I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of his ever failing in any of his intentions. It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in his intention would be no God, but be a thing like ourselves perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot anyhow think of God of a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a being who wills and it is accomplished, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, for ever, settled in heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in his atonement and redemption, his real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could of course imagine, that the result of his redemption would be uncertain; but believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of his death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that *hitherto, all the works of God*

have accomplished their purpose. Whenever God has uttered, by the lips of his servants, a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men: they had no intention whatever of serving God; they have run contrary to his laws; but you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, his bit has been still in their mouth and his bridle in their jaws. A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea; he hath moved himself wherever he pleased; he hath seemed mighty among the sons of men; all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan: but we discover that God has been overruling his thought, that he has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees. Look ye abroad through all the nations of the earth, and tell me, is there one prophecy of God that hath failed? May he not still say, "Not one of them hath lost her mate?" Every word of God hath certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us. But he that sitteth in the heavens did laugh at them; the Lord did have them in derision. Still he worked his own sovereign will; let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God's purpose in providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void? If there be any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves, with you I could not argue, I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, hath in all things done according to his own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when he stoops himself from the highest heaven, to give his own heart's blood for our redemption, he shall in that be foiled. No though earth and hell be against him, every purpose of Jesus on the cross shall be consummated, and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be; as the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at *the foot of the cross*, and take a view of

Jesus Christ, and then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, believer, place thyself in the garden of Gethsemane, hide thyself among those dark olives, and listen to yonder man who is in agony. Dost hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Dost hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man. God over all, blessed for ever. Hearest thou those strong cries, and dost thou see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of him who is equal with his Father, but who condescended to be a man. Rise, for he has risen, Judas has betrayed him and taken him away. Look on that ground. Seest thou those goutts of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the man Christ Jesus. I conjure thee, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood goutts staining the white frost of that cold midnight, canst thou believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purposed I challenge thee, O Christian, whatever thy doctrinal opinions, to say me "Yes" to such a question as that. Canst thou imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, beloved, the *word* of God which cometh forth out of his mouth shall not return unto him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases; how much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loin; of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God hath sent him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain him!

But now come with me to *the hall of judgment*. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiery. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck his hair, how they buffet him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, "Crucify him, crucify him?" And will you now stand there and look at this man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame, and spitting and mockery, and as this "*Ecce Homo*" is presented to you, will you believe that this, the incarnate Son of God, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels, and to devils, and yet fail of his design? Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting, and yet endure what were far worse—a disappointment in the fulfillment of his intentions? No, God forbid! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are

pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by his death, must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him *hanging on his cross*. The nails have pierced his hands and feet, and there in the broiling sun he hangs,—he hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased; still they put out the tongue and wag the head at him; still they taunt him with "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." And now his bodily pains increase, while his soul's anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian canst thou believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Canst thou look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from his head or his hands or his feet, and canst thou imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Saviour's death must certainly be fulfilled, be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that his purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish his design of saving the lost, for he has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of his own design, for "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of power, for where we have omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength. Nor again, can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die, and yet it should be said afterwards, "This man died for a purpose which he never lived to see accomplished: the object of his death was only partially fulfilled; he saw of the travail of his soul, but he was not satisfied, for he did not redeem all whom he intended to redeem."

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is; but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on his cross intended to save every man, then he intended to save those who were damned before he died; because if the doctrine be true, that he died for all men, he died for some that were in hell before he came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away. Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has he been disappointed! for we have his own evidence that there is a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons, who according to that theory, were bought with his blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors, which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of particular redemption. To think that my Saviour died for men in hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine: that he was the substitute for the sons of men, and that God having first punished the substitute punished men again, seems to me to conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men, and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvellous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, ay, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus started the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks every one will anxiously listen, and every ear will be attentive, and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THING WAS THE INTENTION OF THE Saviour'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE: THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Saviour die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which

he has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us of two things—first, the subjects of the Saviour's atonement, the lost; and, secondly, the objects of it, he came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Saviour's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Some of you may turn your heads away at once, and conclude that hitherto you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people; you never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then; but nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors, and if you are not saved, God help other people! for if you do not go to heaven, who will? You are trusting in your own good works, and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost; for Christ himself tells us, that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and inasmuch as you belong to the righteous, and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent you may turn upon your heel and go, for in the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the law of God in future, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform, and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances, and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my friend, hitherto thou givest me no hope that thou had any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can save themselves without him. If thou thinkest thou canst save thyself remember the door of mercy is shut in thy face. Christ came to bring robes from heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but he will give none of it to you who can sow and reap, and make

bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to heaven, may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from him. Whom then did Christ die to save? It is said, he came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost; and then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense, when we may affirm that Christ died for such. We know that all men are lost in Adam; as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost, when the tiny bark of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost; unless Sovereign grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy, and carry it to heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. "Behold," saith David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me." "In Adam all die." The fall of Adam was the fall of the human race; then, you and I, and all of us fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong, than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out, like weeds immediately after the shower of rain; speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by practice. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam, and lost by practice, and yet not be saved by Christ; but Christ is able to save you; though you be twice lost, his salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there be some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller some become lost to the church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside; they give up all outward regard to the worship of God, the ministry of the gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken, and the church tolls its bell and says of such an one, "He is lost to the church." Some go further still; they are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away, lest the contagion should spread; and those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from

them, lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock. Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save, and whom he will save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly; it is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost, while at the same time it is no proof that he will not save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further, and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile, that even after society has shut them out, a parent has been obliged to shut them out too. That must be a hell of sin indeed which can make a father say to his son, "My son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society; I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them." Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family, and yet sovereign grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved; yea, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are *lost to themselves*. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm: the ship leaks, and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore, and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining; they seek to keep down the devouring element; they still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved; they give it up for lost, and leap into the boats. The boats are beating for many a-day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so; they still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon; they strain their eyes to look at her; they lift each other up; they wave a flag; they rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention; but she passes away; black night comes, and they are forgotten. At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed; strength fails them, and they lay down their oars in the boat, and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine then how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—"lost." As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost;

as long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope; while there was yet a mouldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone, and the water is gone; now strength has departed, and the oar lies still: they lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons; things that should have been dead days ago, if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost, and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their deathknell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! lost! lost! Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, thou too art condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock, and she is filling even to her bulwarks now; and pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking. Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it hath taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavour, and in her you are striving to row with all your might, to reach the shore; but your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's law. The more I strive to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb; but the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps,—there it is, higher than the clouds, and I cannot discern the summit." However, you gather up your strength, you try again, you row once more, and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of mouldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved, and you munch your dry biscuit; but at last that fails you, and you find that neither baptism, nor the Lord's supper, nor any other outward rites, can make you clean, for the leprosy lies deep within. That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming, and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone, and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you, with the deep waters of a bottomless hell beneath you, fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing, and you cry—"Lord save me, or I perish!" Is that your condition this morning, my

friend, or *has* that *ever* been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you; and you he will save, and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title,—“Lost;” who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance, and all self-hope. I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance; for I said unto the Lord. “Hast thou set me as the target of all thine arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that thou hast set a mark upon me? Hast thou sewed up mine iniquities in a bag, and sealed my transgressions with a seal. Wilt thou never be gracious? Hast thou made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of heaven to be cursed for ever?” Ah! fool that I was! I little knew then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions, and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you, and see no helper; and do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the deathbird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water-bottle dry, and doth the bread fail you? Have you consumed the last of your dry dates, and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle. and are you now without hope, without trust in yourself; ready to lie down in despair? Hark thee! The Lord thy God loveth thee; Jesus Christ has bought thee with his blood; thou art, thou shalt be his. He has been seeking thee all this time, and he has found thee at last, in the vast howling wilderness and now he will take thee upon his shoulders, and carry thee to his house rejoicing, and the angels shall be glad over thy salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved. and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom he came to save he will save; you, ye lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform his vow, and accomplish his design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse; but we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—he came "to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that seek him. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true; but it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek him, but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ, unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although heaven be offered, and though hell thunder in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man who, unconstrained by sovereign grace, will run in the way of salvation, and so escape from hell and flee to heaven. It is all in vain for me to preach to you, and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you, unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up; for man is so infatuated, his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain, that he refuses the remedy, and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Let man alone, and with the cross of Christ before him and all hell behind him, he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord. Hence Christ came first to seek men, and then to save them. Ah! what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you to-day on the tops of the mountains of pride, and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Saviour coming forth to seek you; he finds you to-day in the green pastures of the sanctuary, he comes near to you, and by these hands of mine he seeks to lay hold of you, but no sooner do you discern his approach then you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God's day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over, and most probably will go home very late. If Christ intends to save you, he will go to you there; and while you are in that wild waste of sin, he will send some providence after you, and save you there. Away you fly then to the marshes of reformation, and you say, "The shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond his reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing." But he will come to you there, and wade for you ankle deep in your own

self-righteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair, and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here." But I see him coming with that crook of his: he enters the pit, takes you by the feet, and casts you round his neck, and carries you home rejoicing, saying, "I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him, and now I have found him." It is strange what queer places Christ finds some of his people in! I knew one of Christ's sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ, while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her. Many have been found by Jesus Christ, even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung, and he said, "Here's to the prosperity to the British Nation, and the salvation of my immortal soul.", and down went the curtain; and down went my friend too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, "The salvation of my immortal soul;" had struck him to the quick; and he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a-day he sought him, and at last he found him to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds his people in his own house; but he finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions; and he softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride, and takes them to himself; but never would they come to him unless he came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back, and he will tell you, "No, sir; they will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No; it must be sovereign grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him he SAVES him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, he does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects, but he takes him by the hand of mercy, and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, ye lost sinners, the Christ who seeks you to-day in the ministry, and who has sought you many a-day by his providence, will save you. He will first find you when you are

emptied of self, and then he will save you. When you are stripped he will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying he will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned he will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, ye hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you to-day, and seeking, he will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity, and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not stop to say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you, that the time is coming when that word "lost" will have a more frightful meaning to you, than it has to-day. In a few more months, some of you, my hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchres of hell will toll out your doom—lost, lost, lost! and through the shades of eternal misery this shall for ever assail your ear, that you are lost for ever. But if that bell is ringing in your ear to-day, that you are lost oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost, it is a happy thing to be lost to self, and lost to pride, and lost to carnal hope. Christ will save you. Believe that. Look to him as he hangs upon his cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to him as he bleeds there in misery. He can, he will save you. Believe on him, for he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believeth not must be damned, but whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, shall find everlasting life through his death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in his lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Moab Is My Washpot

Moab is my washpot. - Psalm 60:8

Moab, which had threatened Israel, was to be so completely subdued, and become so utterly contemptible as to be likened to a washpot or basin in which men wash their feet. More than this, however, may have been intended—nay, we feel sure was intended by the expression. Let us explain exactly what the language literally means. In the East the general mode of washing the hands and the feet is with a basin and ewer; water is poured upon the hands or feet from the ewer, and it falls into the basin. No Oriental, if he can help it, will wash in standing water; he prefers to have it clear and running. He puts his feet into the washpot, into the bath, into the basin, and then the clear, cool liquid is poured upon his feet; the washpot answering the sole purpose of holding the dirty water which has already passed over the man's flesh. Wearing no completely covering shoes, as we do, but only sandals, the feet of an eastern traveler in a long journey become very much defiled; the water, therefore, when it runs off from them, is far from clean, and the washpot is thus put to a very contemptible use by being only the receptacle of dirty water. When Moab thus became a washpot, it was far other than when it was said, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." "We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceeding proud), his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart."

What does Moab represent to you and to me? We are the children of Israel by faith in Christ, and in him we have obtained by covenant a promised land. Our faith may cry, "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valleys of Succoth." All things are ours in Christ Jesus; "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine." Now Moab was outside of Canaan. It was not given to Israel as a possession, but in course of time it was subdued in

warfare, and became tributary to the Jewish king. Even thus our faith overcometh the world, and enables us to say, "this world is ours"—ours for a useful, needful purpose. We set but small store by it; it is nothing but our washpot, but we are content to use it as far as we may make it subserve a holy end. The best possessions we have outside of the spiritual heritage we put under our feet, desiring to keep them in their proper inferior position; they are not the crown of our head, nor the comfort of our heart, nor the girdle of our loins, nor the staff of our support; they are put to baser uses far. They yield us some comfort, for which we are grateful to God, but it is only for our feet or lower nature; our head and heart find nobler joys. The whole world put together, with all its wealth, is but a mess of potage for Esau, and nothing more. God's Jacob has a better portion, for he has the birthright. Our worst is better than the world's best, for the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

"We tread the world beneath our feet,
With all that earth calls good or great."

"Moab is my washpot," nothing more—a thing contemptible and despicable as compared with the eternal realities of covenant blessings; yet, for all that, there was a use for Moab, a use to be rightly understood. A washpot has its necessary function; and even this base world may be made by faith, in the hands of God, to be the means of aiding the purity of the saints; its afflictions and troubles may work our present and lasting good. The world and its trials can never be compared to the water which cleanses our feet; for that purifying stream we look to a far higher source; but it may be likened to the basin in which our feet are placed while they are being washed.

If we regard Moab as representative of the unregenerate people among whom we dwell, we do well, like the children of Israel, on their march to Canaan, to let them alone, for their heritage is not our heritage, neither are their joys our joys. The less communion we have with them the better. If we ask of them, as Israel did of Moab, simply to be allowed to go on our way in peace, it is all we need. Moses sent his messenger, who said, "Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will neither

turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet; until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the Lord our God giveth us." Like the pilgrims in Vanity Fair, we only ask a clear passage through the place, for we have no inheritance in it, no, not so much as we can set our foot upon. Yet, inasmuch as we cannot altogether separate ourselves from the sinful, for then must we needs go out of the world, we are compelled to feel the influence of their conduct, and it will become our wisdom to watch that this become not injurious to us, but be made under God rather to be of service to us than a hindrance.

My object will be to show that, contrary to the ordinary course of nature, but not contrary to faith, even this ungodly world may be made to assist our advance in holiness. As of old the men of Israel went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his axe and his courter, so may we derive some sharpening from our enemies. We may gather honey from the lion, take a jewel from the toad's head, and borrow a star from the brow of night. Moab may become our washpot.

While this is contrary to nature, it is also unusual in history. In the Book of Numbers we read that Balak, son of Zippor, desired to vanquish Israel, and therefore he sent for Balaam, the son of Beor, saying, "Curse me Israel, and peradventure I shall prevail against them." Balaam was not able to curse Israel by word of mouth, but he cursed them in very deed when he counselled the king to make them unclean in God's sight by sending the daughters of Moab among them, who not only led them into lasciviousness, but invited them to the sacrifices of their gods. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and the plague would have devoured them, had not the holy zeal of Phinehas turned away the divine anger. Thus it is clear that Moab of old was foremost in polluting and defiling Israel. It is a great feat of faith when the thing which naturally defiles is turned into a washpot. Behold the transformations of grace! This ungodly world outside the church, the world of wicked men, would naturally pollute us, but faith turns them into a washpot, and finds in them motives for watchfulness and holiness. We sigh, in the words of the old psalm -

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong."

As we cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land, so neither can we very readily keep our garments unspotted in a land deluged with uncleannes. With difficulty do we save ourselves from this untoward generation. And yet faith learns the secret of overcoming the ordinary tendency of things, and of making that which might injure us subsidiary to our advantage; fulfilling that ancient promise, "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers."

The defiling world may be made helpful to us in the following ways.

I. First of all, ungodly men, if we are in a gracious spirit, may be of solemn service to us, because WE SEE IN THEM WHAT SIN IS. They are beacons upon the rocks to keep us from danger. The lives of many men are recorded in Scripture, not as excuses for our sins, much less as examples, but the very reverse. Like murderers in the olden times hung in chains, they are meant to be warnings. Their lives and deaths are danger-signals, bidding those who are pursuing a career of sin, to come to a pause, and reverse the engine forthwith. They are our washpot in that respect, that they warn us of pollution, and so help to prevent our falling into it. When we learn that pride turned angels into devils, we have a lesson in humility read to us from heaven and hell. When we read of profane Esau, obstinate Pharaoh, disobedient Saul, apostate Judas, or vacillating Pilate, we are taught thereby to shun the rocks upon which they made eternal shipwreck. Transgressors of our own race are peculiarly suitable to act as warnings to us, for we ought ever to remember when we see the sins of ungodly men, that "such were some of us." Whenever thou seest a drunkard, if thou wast once such, it will bring the tears to thine eyes to remember when thou too wast a slave to the ensnaring cup, and thou wilt thank God that his grace has changed thee. Not as the Pharisee wilt thou pretend to thank God, whilst thou art flattering thine own self,

but with deep humiliation thou wilt confess what grace has done. When we read in the newspaper a sad case of lasciviousness, or any other breach of the laws of God and man, if we were aforetime guilty of the like and have now been renewed in heart, it will make us blush; it will humble us, and cause us to admire the power and sovereignty of divine grace. Now the blush of repentance, the shamefacedness of humility, and the tear of gratitude, are three helpful things, and all tend under God's grace to set us purging out the old leaven. Remember, O believer, that there is no wretch upon earth so bad, but what thou wast once his equal in alienation from God and death in sin. In untoward acts there may have been much difference, but in the inner man how little! The seed of all the sin which thou seest in him lies in thy corrupt nature, and needs only a fit season to bring forth and bud. Thou wast once in that fire of sin, in which he is consumed by his passions; thou hast been plucked as a brand from the burning, else hadst thou been there still. Yonder is a prodigal, all bespattered from head to foot, but we also once were plunged into the ditch, until our own clothes abhorred us, and we should be sinking in the mire even now, if the mighty hand of grace had not lifted us up from the horrible pit, and washed us in the Savior's blood. We were "heirs of wrath even as others." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Our sins are different, but we were all without exception shapen in iniquity, and as in water, face answereth unto face, so the heart of man to man.

When you see the wickedness of an ungodly man, make him your washpot, by remembering that you also, though you are regenerate, are encompassed with "the body of this death." Remember the words of the Apostle: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." The old nature so remains in us, that, if we were to be deserted by God, we should even yet become such as the ungodly are. Need I quote to you the speech of John Bradford, one of the godliest of men? When he saw a wretch taken out to Tyburn to be hanged, the tears were in his eyes, and

when they asked him why, he said, "There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God." Ah, and when we see a prodigal plunging into excess of riot, there goes the best among us, if we are not preserved in Christ Jesus. Ay, and when the damned go down to hell, there must I go, unless the same grace which restrains me now from sin, shall uphold me to my last day; and keep me from falling. Brother Christian, you carry much combustible matter in your nature, be warned when you see your neighbour's house on fire. When one man falls, the next should look to his steps. You are a man of like passions, remember yourself, lest you also be tempted. In these days of epidemics, if we knew that a certain house was tainted with disease, and if we saw a person who had come from it with the marks of the disease in his face; what should we feel? Should we not take it as a warning to keep clear, both of the house and of him; because we ourselves are as likely to take the disease as He was? So when we see a sinner transgressing we should say to ourselves, "I also am a man, and a fallen man, let me abhor every evil way, and guard myself jealously, lest I also fall into sin." In this way Moab may be a washpot. By remembering what we are, and what we were, we may, by taking warning from the evil courses of others, avoid the like condemnation.

There are certain sins which we readily detect in others, which should serve as loud calls to us to us to correct the same things in ourselves. When a man sees the faults of others, and congratulates himself that he is far superior to such, he evidently knows not how to extract good from evil; he is proud, and knows nothing. But when we perceive errors in others, and immediately set a diligent watch against falling into the like, then Moab is rightly used, and becomes our washpot. For instance, as to the matter of bodily indulgence? The sinner is a man who puts his body before his soul, and his head where his feet should be; he is therefore a monster in nature. Instead of the world being under his feet, as it is with every good man, he inverts himself, and places his head and his heart in the dust. He lives for the body which is to die, and forgets the soul which lives for ever. When therefore you see a drunkard, or an unchaste person, say to yourself, "I must mortify my members, and give my Spiritual nature the predominance. For this I must cry mightily to God, the Eternal Spirit, lest the body of this death prevail over me. I must keep under my body, as the Apostle saith, and bring it into subjection, lest I too become a

prey to the same animal passions, which lead sinners captives."

I see the ungodly man putting this poor fleeting world before the eternal world to come; therein he is a fool; but let me take heed that I in no measure imitate him. Let me never in my business live as though to make money; to get a competence, to earn the wherewithal to eat and drink, were the first thing with me. Let me not fall into his error, but ever seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and believe that other things shall be added to me. The ungodly man disregards God. God is not in all his thoughts. He saith in his heart, "No God." Now when I know that the ungodly man does that, it should be a warning to me not to forget the Lord, or depart from him in any measure. Alas, we are all of us more or less atheistic. How little of our life is given to God! You who love and fear him are not always near to him, though he is always near to you. Do you never enter upon your enterprises without him? When you begin your business with him, are you not apt to forget him in the middle passage of it? Or when you have gone on to the very center of a work with him, are you not liable to leave him ere you close? Is not this to learn the way of the wicked and to be like them in wandering away from the living God? To have God always with us, to lean hourly upon him, and to feel each moment that he is all in all to us—this is the true condition in which our minds ought to be continually. The atheism of the outside world should warn us against the inward godlessness of our naturally atheistic hearts.

We select these sins as specimens of the general principle, but it is applicable to all forms of evil. Did you ever meet with a vain man, who boasted loudly, and evermore talked about his own beloved self? Was not that a lesson for you? Surely it will help to preserve you from acting so ridiculous a part. Did not I hear you, the other night, laughing at the boaster for his folly? Let us hope, then, you will never set others laughing at yourself. You know another person who is morose, he always speaks sharply, and makes enemies. Be you of another spirit; be courteous, cultivate the grace of cheerfulness and good temper as a Christian. The moroseness of the churl should enforce upon you the duty of godly gentleness. Moab will be your washpot. You know a certain person whose hands appear to be paralysed if they are required to bestow a

contribution. How unlovely his meanness makes him! Will not the miserable exhibition of stinginess, which he presents, lead you to avoid all covetousness? Another person of your acquaintance is very soon irritated. You can hardly say a word to displease him but he makes a crime of it immediately, and falls into the temporary insanity of anger. Well, then, learn yourself to be slow to wrath. Seek that charity which is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. May be your friend's blood is warmer than yours, and there is some excuse for him; but since you see how unwise and wicked it is in him, seek much grace wherewith to overcome the propensity in your own case. If a man should fall into a pit through walking unwarily along a dangerous path, his fall should be my safety, his experience should be my instruction; there can be no need for me to roll over the same precipice in order to know experimentally how dangerous it is. How sad a fact it is that very few of us ever do learn by the experience of other people! Dame Experience must take each one of us into her school, and make us personally smart under her rod—we will not learn else. Warnings are neglected by the foolish. The young slaggard sees the huge thorns and thistles in the older slaggard's garden and yet he follows the same lazy habits. One step follows another into the shambles. Flies see their brethren perishing, in the sugared trap, and yet rush into it themselves. The Lord make us wise and prudent, and from the errors of others may we learn to steer our own course aright; then may we truly say, "Moab is my washpot."

II. Another illustration of this practical principle lies in the fact, that **WE SEE IN THE UNGODLY THE PRESENT EVIL RESULTS OF SIN.** We frequently have the opportunity of beholding in them, not only sin, but some of its bitter fruits, and this should still further help us to shun it, by God's grace. Evil is now no longer an unknown seed of doubtful character; we have seen it planted, and have beheld sinners reaping the first sheaves of its awful harvest. This poison is no longer an uncertain drug, for its deadly effects are apparent in those around us. If we sin, it is no longer through the want of knowing what sin will lead to, for its mischief is daily before our eyes.

First, are you not very certain, those of you who watch unconverted and ungodly people, that they are not solidly happy? What roaring boys they

are sometimes! How vociferous are their songs! How merry their dances! How hilarious their laughter! You would think that there were no happier people to be found under the sun; but as, on many a face, beauty is produced by art rather than by nature, and a little paint creates a transient comeliness, so, often the mirth of this world is a painted thing, a base imitation, not so deep even as the skin. Ungodly men know nothing of heart-laughing; they are strangers to the deep, serene happiness which is the portion of believers. Their joy comes and goes with the hour. See them when the feast is over—"Who hath woe? Who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; the men of strength to mingle strong drink." Mark them when alone: they are ready to die with dulness. They want to kill time, as if they had an overplus of it and would be glad to dispose of the superfluity. A man's face must be very ugly when he never cares to look at it, and a man's state must be very bad indeed in when he is ashamed to know what it is; and yet in the case of tens of thousands of people, who say they are very happy, there is a worm inside the apple; the very foundation-stone has been removed from the edifice; and you may be sure it is so, for they dare not examine into matters. Ungodly men at bottom are unhappy men. "The way of transgressors is hard." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Their Marah is never dry, but flows with perennial waters of bitterness. What says their great poet Byron: -

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o'er the days from anguish free;
And know whatever thou hast been,
Tis something better not to be."

Now then, if things be so—if sin brings after all an unsatisfactory result to the mind, if a man is not rendered happy by an evil course—then let me choose another path, and, by God's grace, keep to wisdom's ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, into which my Lord by his love has drawn me and by his grace has led me. I am happy in his bosom, I drink living waters out of his fountain. Why should I go to those broken cisterns, which I clearly see can hold no water? Why should I wish to wander over the dreary waste of waters? Noah's hand is warm, and the peaceful ark is near: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath

dealt bountifully with thee." When I read of aching hearts, and hear that great worldling, who had all the world could give him, sum it all up with this sentence, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," does not my heart say at once, "Oh, empty world, thou temptest me in vain, for I see through the cheat." Madam Bubble we have seen with her mask off, and are not to be fascinated by so ugly a witch. We follow not after yonder green meads and flowing brooks, because they are not real, and are only a mirage mocking the traveler. Wherefore should we pursue a bubble or chase the wind? We spend our money no more for that which is not bread. Moab is our washpot; if others have found earthly things to be unsatisfactory, we wash our hands of their disappointing pursuits. Dear Savior, we would follow thee whithersoever thou goest, till we come to dwell with thee for ever.

But it is not merely that ungodly men are not happy; there are times when they are positively wretched through their sins. Sometimes fear cometh upon them as a whirlwind, and they have no refuge or way of escape. I have been now and then called to witness the utter anguish of a man who has lost his gods. His great idols have been broken, and he has been in despair. His darling child is dead, or his wife is a corpse, and he knows not how to endure life. Did you ever see a godless man when he had lost all his money in a speculation which once promised fair? Did you mark his woe? Did you ever see the countenance of a gambler who had staked his last and lost his all? See him in an agony which can find no alleviation. He rises from the table, he rushes to imbrue his hands in his own blood. Poor soul, he has lost his all! That never happens to a Christian—never! If all he had on earth were gone, it would be only like losing a little of his spending-money, but his permanent capital would be safe in the Imperial exchequer, where Omnipotence itself stands guard.

Even when no very great calamity puts out the candle of the worldling, Yet, as years revolve, a gathering cloud darkens his day. Hear again the world's master songster. The confession will suit many: -

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief—

Are mine alone.

The fire that in my bosom plays
Alone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile."

This is the world's treatment of its old servants: it dishonors them in old age; but it is not so with aged believers: "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright." When all our wealth on earth is gone, our treasure is still safe in heaven, where moth corrupts not, and thieves break not through nor steal. When we think of the despair of men, of blasted hopes, Moab may become our washpot, and may keep us from setting our affection upon their fleeting joys.

Here and there, in the Moab of sin, you meet with men who are in their garments, their trembling limbs, their penury, and their shame, living monitors and standing proves that the way of transgressors is hard. There are sins whose judgment hastens as a whirlwind—sins of the flesh, which eat into the bones and poison the blood; sins of appetite, that degrade and destroy the frame. If young men knew the price of sin, even in this life, they would not be so but to purchase pleasurable moments at the price of painful years. Who would coin his life into iniquity to have it returned to him in this life, red-hot from the mint of torment! Mark well the spendthrift, void of understanding! I have seen him at my door. I knew his relatives; people of reputable character and good estate. I have seen him in rags which scarcely covered him, piteously weeping for a piece of bread. Yet a few short years ago he inherited a portion which most men would have thought wealth. In a mad riot, into which he could not crowd enough of debauchery, he spent all that he had. He was soon penniless, and then loathsome and sore sick. He was pitied by his friends, but pity has been lost on him, and now none of his kith or kin dare own him. I too fed him, clothed him, and found him a place of labor. The garments which charity had supplied him, within the next few hours, were sold for drink, and he was wallowing in drunkenness. The work was deserted almost as soon as attempted. He will die of starvation, if he be

not already dead, for he has abandoned himself to every vicious excess, and already trembles from head to foot, and looks to be on the borders of the grave. Nothing keeps him sober but want of another penny to buy drink; not even that can restrain him from uncleanness. Hunger, and cold, and nakedness he knows full well, and prefers to endure them rather than earn honest bread and abandon his licentiousness. Tears have been wept over him in vain, and many must have been his own tears of misery when he has been in want. The workhouse is his best shelter and its pauper clothing his noblest livery. Away from that retreat he is a mass of rags and indescribable filth. Young Christian professor, if you are tempted by the strange woman, or by the wine which moveth itself aright in the cup, look on the victims of these destroyers ere you dally with them. See the consequences of sin even in this life, and avoid it, pass not by it, look not on it, but flee youthful lusts which war against the soul. Thus make filthy Moab to become your washpot from this time forth.

The unconverted when they go not thus far may yet be beacons to us. Observe, for instance, the procrastinating hearer of the gospel, how certainly he becomes hardened to all rebukes. Early sensibility gives way to indifference. Let us also beware lest we, by trifling with convictions and holy impulses, lose tenderness of conscience. They advance in evil, and at last commit with impunity sins which, years ago, would have struck them with unaffected horror; let us be cautious lest a similarly blunting process should be carried on upon our hearts. But time would fail me to show you in detail how readily the evil results of sin in others may preserve us from falling into the like; how, in a word, Moab may be our washpot.

III. A third point suggests itself. Men of this world are made useful to us since they DISCOVER IN US OUR WEAK PLACES. Their opposition, slander, and persecution, are a rough pumice-stone, to remove some of our spots. When young men come to college, one of the chief benefits they obtain is the severe criticism to which they are subjected from their tutors and fellow students. Sharp ears hear their slips of speech, and they are made conscious of them. Now in a certain sense the outside world often becomes a college to the Christian. When we are with our dear Christian brethren, they do not look for our faults—at least, they should

not—neither do they irritate us and so bring our infirmities to the surface, but they treat us so lovingly and gently that we do not know our weak side. Young Christians would be like plants under glass cases in a conservatory, and become tender and feeble, but the rough world tries them, and is over-ruled by God to their strengthening and general benefit. Men's lynx eyes see our shortcomings, and their merciless tongues inform us of them; And, for my part, I see much advantage brought out of this maliciousness of theirs; they are our monitors, and help to keep us humble, and make us careful. If we cannot bear a little shake from men, how shall we bear the shaking of heaven and earth at the last day?

The world often tries us as with fire, and the things which we reckoned to be gold and silver perish in the ordeal if they are but counterfeit, but we are gainers by such a loss. In the world our temper is tried, and too often we become irritated. What then? Why just this; if sanctification has regulated our emotions, patience will have her perfect work, and charity will suffer long; but if we are soon angry and find it hard to forgive, let us not so much find fault with those who try us as with ourselves, because we cannot bear the ordeal. Our pride must go down, we must become slow to wrath, we must be content to be as our Lord, the meek and lowly Savior. These irritations show us how far we are from the model, and should excite in us a desire for progress towards his complete image. Perhaps you had fondly said in your heart, "I could bear a great deal. I could act the Christian under the worst abuse;" but now you sing another song, and find how great your weakness is. Moab thus again becomes your washpot, for now you will go to God in prayer, and ask to be subdued to his will.

Do not worldly men in some cases frighten professors out of their testimony for Christ? I mean, has it never happened that our cheek has blanched, and our tongue failed us in the presence of cavillers, and blasphemers, and sceptics, and have we not been silent when we ought to have avowed our Lord? That also shows how cowardly we are at heart, and how cold is our love. We are to blame for not having more courage; for if we were strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, as we ought to be, we should be ready to go with Christ to prison and to death,

and never think of shunning his service.

Do you not find that ungodly men, when you are obliged to be in their company in business, will occasionally utter remarks which shake your faith about truths which you imagined you firmly believed? Too many are content with a superficial creed. Their faith is not rooted deep in their hearts, and therefore a little wind rocks the tree to and fro, but ere long the very motion of the tree tends to root it, and it becomes all the more firm. God over-rules for good the evilness of men against the truth. Besides, do not ungodly men drive us from loving the world! We might think of finding our rest here below, but when we hear their tongues cruelly and unkindly slandering us, there we are sick of their company.

"My soul distracted mourn and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troubles vex no more."

An extreme case of the way in which evil treatment may tend to our sanctification, may be found in the life of one of the old ministers in the north of Scotland. "A cold, unfeeling, bold, unheeding, worldly woman was the wife of Mr. Fraser, one of the ministers of Ross-shire," writes my beloved friend, Mr. John Kennedy, in his interesting book, entitled, "The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire." "Never did her godly husband sit down to a comfortable meal in his own home, and often would he have fainted but for the considerate kindness of some of his parishioners. She was too insensate to try to hide her treatment of him, and well was it for him, on one account, that she was. His friends thus knew of his ill-treatment, and were moved to do what they could for his comfort. A godly acquaintance arranged with him to leave a supply of food in a certain place, beside his usual walk, of which he might avail himself when starved at home. Even light and fire in his study were denied to him on the long, cold winter evenings; and as his study was his only place of refuge from the cruel scourge of his wife's tongue and temper, there, shivering and in the dark, he used to spend his winter evenings at home. Compelled to walk in order to keep himself warm, and accustomed to do so when preparing for the pulpit, he always kept his hands before him as feelers in

the dark, to warn him of his approaching the wall at either side of the room. In this way he actually wore a hole through the plaster at each end of his accustomed beat, on which some eyes have looked that glistened with light from other fire than that of love, at the remembrance of his cruel wife. But the godly husband had learned to thank the Lord for the discipline of this trial. Being once at a Presbytery dinner, alone, amidst a group of moderates, one of them proposed, as a toast, the health of their wives, and turning to Mr. Fraser, said, as he winked at his companions, 'You, of course, will cordially join in drinking to this toast.'—'So I will, and so I ought,' Mr. Fraser said, 'for mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you.' 'How so?' they all exclaimed.—'She has sent me,' was his reply, 'seven times a day to my knees, when I would not otherwise have gone, and that is more than any of you can say of yours.'" Ah, this is the way to make Moab our washpot, that is to say, to make those who grieve us most, act but as rough waves to hurry us on to the rock, or as biting winds that drift as the faster into port. If the birds of paradise will keep to the nest, their ungodly relatives or neighbors shall be a thorn therein to make them mount into their native element—the heaven of God.

The attacks of the ungodly upon the church have been overruled by God to make his people leave the camp and foresake ungodly associations, so as to be separate. I know a beloved sister in Christ who was baptised; she had moved in high circles, but they told me that after her baptism she received the cold shoulder. When I heard it, I said, "Thank God for it," for half her temptations are gone. If the world has turned its back upon her, she will be all the more sure to turn her back on the world and live near to her Lord. The friendship of the world is enmity to God—why should we seek it? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If any man will follow Christ he must expect persecution, and one of the cardinal precepts of the Christian faith runs thus: "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach."

IV. Lastly, IN REFERENCE TO THE WORLD TO COME, the terrible doom of the ungodly is a most solemn warning to us. My heart fails me to

speak concerning the destiny of the ungodly in another world. Dying without hope, without a Savior, they go before the throne uncleaned, unforgiven, to hear that awful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Pursue them for a moment in your thoughts, down to the deeps of wrath, whither God's judgment shall pursue them. My Lord, I pray thee of thy grace, save me from the sin which brings such a result at the end of it. If the wages of sin be such a death as this, Lord save me from so accursed a service. Will not the sight of their destruction drive us to watchfulness, and cause us to make our calling and election sure? Will it not make us anxious lest we also come into this place of torment? O the wrath to come! The wrath to come whereof this Book speaks in so many terrible tones and dreadful images! Remember Lot's wife "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

In this way Moab becomes our washpot, by showing us what sin grows to when it has developed itself. This consideration will surely cause us more heartily to love the Savior, who can deliver us from it.

Dear friends, if you are not in Christ, much of what I have said bears upon you. Bethink yourself, and pray to escape from the wrath to come. I would not have you be made a mere washpot to be used and broken as a potter's vessel. Neither should you wish to be a vessel without honor, a thing of no esteem; but may you have faith in Jesus—life in him, and then you shall be a royal diadem, a crown of glory in the hand of our God. May you have a heritage among those who fear the Lord, and are reconciled to him by faith in the total sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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A Monument For The Dead, A Voice To The Living

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. - Romans 10:5-9

You see by this mourning that our church has been bereaved. I have lost a friend tender and true to me, and my heart is too full for utterance. I scarcely knew what to preach from this morning; but at last I settled in my mind that I would raise a memorial to my departed friend by preaching a sermon which should be connected with himself. Therefore I cast about me, and I considered what subject he would wish me to preach from if he were sitting behind me this morning as he was last Lord's-day. I had no difficulty in answering that question. His life and death pointed in one direction. He was a man of rare common sense, straightforward and downright in his aims, and most pithy in his speech, with such a mixture of mother-wit that he might have been taken for John Ploughman's brother, as indeed he was. He cared nothing for oratory, which I have heard him call "a flash in the pan"; he delighted in the plain, solid gospel of Jesus Christ. I know that he would have said to me,—Give them Christ crucified, and salvation by grace through faith, as plainly as ever you can; for when he was sore sick and in the very agony of death, he repeated as his dying creed—

"Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to thy cross I cling."

and in his own quaint way he added, "They may talk as much as ever they like, but the whole of it lies in Jack the Huckster's verse

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is my an in all.'"

You will find that story in the first volume of my sermons.*** In Park-street early in my ministry I told the story, and it did my friend good, and helped to rest his soul all those years ago, so that he remembered it and repeated it at the last. For his sake let me tell it again.

This Huckster Jack was a poor, wicked fellow, who had gone about from village to village, swearing, drinking, huckstering and perhaps pilfering. Some thought him half-witted, but the story would show his wind to be sound enough. He heard a poor woman sing somewhere—

I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

He remembered the words, and what was better, he felt their sense; and he kept on humming them to himself till God's good Spirit engraved them on his heart. There they were recorded, and Jack was a new man and a saved man. So he essayed to join himself unto the church, but the brethren looked suspiciously at him and enquired, "What is your experience?" He said he had no experience but this—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

The good elders very properly asked, "Are you converted? Have you been born again?" and Jack replied, "I do not know much about these things; but this I do know and am sure of—

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.'

They put him back for awhile, to try if he would grow in his knowledge, but he never went an inch beyond the first standard. He know what he did know, and to that he held fast—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Well, they must take him into the church; they could not well refuse a man with such a confession of faith; and when he was in the church, walking with the brethren, he was happier than the rest of them, at which they greatly marvelled, and one said to him, "Brother Jack, don't you sometimes feel doubts and fears?" "Doubts," he said, "what do you mean? I never doubt that

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;'

for I have daily proofs of it, and why should I doubt that

'Jesus Christ is my all in all'?

for he says he is, and I must believe him." "Ah, well," said one, "sometimes I enjoy good frames and feelings, and feel very happy, and then I lose them, and sink in spirit." Jack answered, "I never get lower than I am, for I am down at the bottom—

'A poor sinner, and nothing at all.'

I cannot get lower than that, can I? But I am also at the top,

'for Jesus Christ is my all in all,'

and I cannot get higher than that, can I?" They tried him many ways with their blessed experience, of which you and I have got cart-loads, perhaps waggon-loads; but he could not be drawn out of his one firm position.

They tried him with their various attainments, depressions, anxieties, quibbles, and questions; but still the huckster would not budge. He had bought the truth and would not sell it, and so he stuck to—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

The conies are a feeble folk, yet have they their habitations among the rocks: they are safe, but they keep to their hiding place.

Of course our new Perfection brethren, spick and span saints as they are, are not like Jack, they are not "poor sinners, and nothing at all," and I am afraid lest some of them should find out that Jesus Christ is not their all in all. But if you and I are as he was, "poor sinners, and nothing at all," we may, with firm and resolute grip, lay hold upon the other line, "But Jesus Christ is my all in all." Christ's fullness is meant for our emptiness; Christ's righteousness is meant for our sin, salvation is for the lost. When you and I are no longer sinners, Christ is no longer our Savior; when you and I no more need him, then we shall not have him. Our need is our warrant, and if that be gone, all is gone. Jesus did not bleed and die to be a superfluity to us: he came to meet a grim necessity. As long as we are nothing Christ is our all in all; we may be sure of that, and that is just the gospel in a nutshell. I want to preach that same gospel this morning, in the hope that in after days this word may be scattered far and wide, and some Jack the Huckster, or some other like him, may find himself to be utterly empty and undone, and may then know that Christ is ordained to be his salvation. Jesus came into the world to save real sinners, not sham sinners; for he is a real, and not a pretended Savior. He saves those who are always confessors of sin, always needy in themselves, and therefore always glad of him. Even in their best estate the saved ones need their Lord: even if we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, we still sin, and still the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

I now plunge into my text. Notice, first, what Moses said. Moses said, "That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." Next, what the gospel says: "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this

wise," and so on. Thirdly, we shall consider what the Scripture saith: "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Then, fourthly, we will hear what experience saith; for we may bring in the experience of believers to back up the declarations of God.

I. I invite your earnest attention to the first point—WHAT MOSES SAITH: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." This is a clear statement. There is no mystery or obscurity about it. You need not go to the universities and earn a degree of D.D. in order to understand this declaration: it is as plain as words can make it. If you wish to be saved by the law you must do its commands and you shall live. The law is written in the ten commandments; you know them; and if you desire to live by them you must keep them. It will not suffice for you to learn those commands by heart, or to write them up in your churches, or to read them over and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law": all that may be well enough, but it is not to the point. If you are to be saved by the commandments you must do them: that is clear. Moses does not allow any person to dream that under the law he can be saved in any other way than by perfect obedience thereto. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Whatever it is that God has commanded, you must do; whatever he forbids, you must avoid; for by such obedience alone can you live.

Mark you, Moses does not tone down the law to suit our fallen state, or talk of our doing our best and God's being satisfied with our imperfect obedience. No, he says only, "He that doeth those things shall live by them." He demands perfect and entire obedience, if life is to come of it. He does not say that if you have broken the law you may still live by some other means. No, if the law is once broken it is all over with you as to salvation thereby: one single fault takes away the possibility of your ever being justified by the law. "He that doeth those things," that is, always, without exception, with all his heart and soul and strength—"he shall live by them"; but nobody else. Be he Jew or be he Gentile, his only righteousness by law must come through the doing of the law. Moses says nothing about wearing phylacteries, or washing hands, or offering

incense, or performing ceremonies in order to righteousness. No; clear, straight, cutting like a sharp razor, he puts before us the single sentence, "He that doeth those things shall live by them."

Judge ye whether any one of us has fulfilled the whole law. To my mind this word of Moses is conclusive that none of us can possibly live by the works of the law. We cannot keep the law now, for we have already broken it: the vase is fractured, and to talk of keeping it entire is nonsense. But even if it were not already broken, should we get through to-morrow with its temptations, bearing such a heart as we have within us, without breaking that perfect and spotless law? I am sure we should not. You that hope to be saved by your works are indulging a forlorn hope; what never you may do or be in the future, the past has already ruined you. The way to heaven up the steep sides of Sinai is inaccessible to trembling feet like ours. If you were to be saved by the law you should have begun without sin, continued without sin, and then it would be needful to end without sin. There would not be a moment of your life in which you could be at peace, for there would always be the fear that in some unguarded instant you would transgress, and lose all. But why talk I so? It is no longer in our power to dream of a perfect, life-long obedience. We went astray from the womb, speaking lies; we were rebellious to our parents in our childhood, and wayward in our youth; in our early manhood we were carried about with this passion and with that, and since then all kinds of evils have led us astray. We are as full of evil as an egg is full of meat, and our heart is like a cage of unclean birds. I can say no less. The hope of salvation by works is black despair; yet we have a set of men on the face of the earth who are always wanting us to preach up this hopeless hope, and urging us to lay this heavy burden upon the shoulders of dying men. They would have us proclaim salvation by the works of the law. This, they say, would at least make men moral and keep them sober: whereas even in this they err against the light; for it has been proved by history that such preaching makes men worse and worse. The idea of salvation by works sits like an awful incubus upon the breast of humanity, and presses out of the soul all hope, thus robbing man of strength to attempt true holiness. When a man has lost all hope he throws the reins upon his neck and runs into all manner of iniquity, judging that he may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

Clear, then, as possible it must be to every man among us who will think, that if the only way of salvation by the works of the law is by the keeping of the law in its entirety, then that road is closed against us, and the sooner we have done with it the better; for then we shall turn our thoughts in the right direction, and travel on the way which the Lord in great mercy has prepared for us. This is what Moses saith: hear it and be humbled.

II. Now I ask you to listen to WHAT THE GOSPEL SAITH. "The righteousness which is of faith," or believing, "speaketh on this wise, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring, Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now observe, first, that the gospel claims to be like the law in its clearness. Moses claimed for the law which God had given to the people through him that it was clear, and within the range of their knowledge and understanding. I will read his exact words to you. Turn to Deuteronomy 30:11. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may bear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Now Paul here very adroitly takes these words out of the mouth of Moses, alters them somewhat, and as good as says, "It was the boast of the law that it was clear, known, and accessible to the people; but much more is this the glory of the gospel." Did not I show you just now that when Moses spoke he did not mystify the matter, but put it plainly, "The man that doeth those things shall live by them." So also the gospel by no means involves itself in obscurity, but says, Believe and live, quite as distinctly as Moses

said, "Do and live." Here you have it, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Moses' utterance was single and by itself. He did not say, "Do and thou shalt live, and yet there is another way." No; under the law it was nothing but "Do and live; leave undone and die." So the gospel does not propose a second way, and suggest "a larger hope," but it declares with solemn decision, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." It is just as clear as ever the law was, and quite as sharply distinct. Herein is no mystery: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Wrapping everything up into one, the gospel says, "Trust thou in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thy sins shall be forgiven thee, and thou shalt be saved." This believing, or trusting, is the whole of the matter, and neither heaven above nor the abyss beneath will ever reveal another salvation.

I want to call your special attention to the fact that Paul borrows the words of Moses; for his intent was the ending of all fears. No man among us doubts that if he had performed the law of God the Lord would give him life; but it is equally certain that if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we have eternal life. No trembling sinner doubts but that by the breaking of the law we are condemned: be you equally sure of it, that by not believing you are condemned. As no keeper of the law would have been lost on any ground whatever, so no believer in Christ shall be lost on any ground whatever; as no breaker of the law could escape punishment, so no unbeliever in Christ can be saved. The gospel states its message as clearly as the law. As positively as the law utters its promise and threat, so positively and unalterably doth the gospel deliver its decree. The believer in Jesus shall be saved because he is a believer; and Christ's veracity is staked thereon:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Oh, but this is a very blessed thing to have to say to you. I do not come to-day with a gospel veiled in mystery and shrouded in doubt; I do not bring a message which you cannot understand or receive; neither do I come with "ifs" and "buts" and "peradventures," but with this, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "He that believeth

and is baptized shall be saved." "Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." This is as certain and clear as the utterance of that dreadful roll of thunder which has just now left on your minds the thought, "He that doeth these things shall live by them."

Let us go a little further. What saith the gospel? Why, next, it forbids the questions of despair. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep?" When a man is at length awakened to a sense of sin he cries, "I long to be saved! All that I have and all that I am I would give to escape from the righteous wrath of God. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Surely it would need that I mount to heaven to own my sin, or dive to hell to bear its punishment. I want a righteousness which would need as much labor to produce as a climb to heaven would need; and I require an expiation for sin as great as though a man were plunged into the abyss itself, and there were made to suffer the divine anger. How is it possible that I can be saved? "This wail of despair takes many forms: one man puts it thus: "What doings can I perform by which I can be saved?"

'Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone.'

Another, despairing of deliverance by his doings, runs upon his feelings, and cries, "If I am to be saved, surely I shall need to experience joys like those which are felt by spirits before the throne. If I had a sense of sin as deep as that of lost souls in hell, I could hope that I should be saved." Thus the second man looks to excitements and feelings just as the first looked to works and self-denials. Now, the gospel forbids us to dream in this fashion. Talk not thus. Say not even in thy heart that by these doings or feelings thou canst be saved. Perhaps thou wouldst be ashamed to say it with thy lips; but do not say it at all; do not say that the way to heaven is hard, or mysterious, or in any degree apart from the simple act of believing. Do not suppose that anything is wanted as to doings or feelings in order to complete the righteousness which is wrought out by the Lord Jesus, and imputed by God to the believer.

Ah, then the heart foolishly cries, "I must know a great deal; as much as if I had been to heaven and seen for myself, or as if I had dived into the depths and made discoveries there." No, you must not: the gospel is simple; salvation is as plain as a pikestaff; familiar as homespun; easy as the A B C of your childhood. Say not in thine heart that thou must be educated, trained, and made into a scholar. No, confess yourself a sinner; trust in the sinner's Savior, and you are saved.

"Ah, well," says one, "I know I must undergo a singular experience-either I must be carried right away to heaven with delirious delight, or be plunged into the waves of hell in frightful despair." No, my dear friend, do not say that even in your thought. The righteousness of faith lies not in dreams and visions, delusions or depressions: it lies only in reliance upon the work of Jesus finished for you. Go not to the loom to weave a righteousness. The garment is woven already; put it on; Christ gives it to you. Dig not into the bowels of the earth to find the gold of salvation. Christ holds it out to you: take it freely, and be rich for ever. So one of the first works of the gospel is silencing the questions of our unbelief.

Next, this precious gospel translates these questions, and then answers them. Listen. A voice cries "Who shall ascend into heaven?" The gospel replies, if you did ascend to heaven what would you do there, without Christ, the anointed Savior? You say, "Who shall descend into the deep?" Listen, man. If you were to descend there, what would you do without him whom God has anointed to save? If you find him in it will not much matter where you find him, in heaven or in the deep, for he must be almighty everywhere. Now hearken. Thou sayest, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" the top and bottom of such an ascent must be, "to bring Christ down." Hear this! Jesus has come down: years ago he left the glories of his Father. Hast thou not heard the tale? Being Pure, blazing, glorious Godhead, "Light of lights, very God of very God," on a sudden they found him in a stable hanging on a woman's breast. Angels saw him and wondered. He came down, indeed, when he was born; and, being down so low as that, he descended to the carpenter's shop, to the weariness of the well's brink, and to a thirst which made him say, "Give me to drink." Lower than that, he descended to being "despised and rejected of men." he was Lord of heaven and earth, and yet they called him Beelzebub, and

talked of him as a drunken man and a wine-bibber. Having descended all that length he went lower still. Listen,—angels, you will not weary while I tell the story over again—he went into Gethsemane where he put on the crimson garment of his own bloody sweat; and then to Pilate's hall, where they did falsely accuse him, and spit on him, and scourge him, and make a jest of him; and then to that cross whereon they nailed him in his nakedness, so that he hung in agony, to die in fever and in thirst, till he cried, "It is finished." He descended into the grave, so that he dwelt among the dead! We know not how low he went, but we are told that "he descended into the lower parts of the earth." Oh, my bearer, our salvation lies in this! Not in our descending, but in Christ's descending our hope is to be found. Listen to it, lost ones; you need not climb to heaven: Christ has come down from heaven to you; and if you lie among the spiritually dead to-day, or think you do, he has come down to you, and you need not enquire how you can go up to him. No prayers, or tears, are wanted to bring him down: he has already come and is near at hand. You asked, "Who shall descend into the deep?" Now listen. Here is your answer. You need not "bring up Christ again from the dead," for the Lord has risen indeed. His soul scarce descended among the shades before it quitted them for ever; that day he died he was in Paradise, and the thief was with him there as a trophy. Up also his body rose on the light of the third day; and he sojourned for forty days among his disciples. At the close of that period he rose into the air, ascending high. As they watched him rising higher, and yet higher, at last a cloud received him: he has gone up to the Father's throne, as the sinner's Savior: at the throne he stands to-day to intercede for sinners, and from that throne he bends to comfort those who come to him. Now, your hope lies wholly in what this Son of God did in his descent and ascent. God has brought him again from the dead and exalted him at his own right hand, and this is not for himself, but for all those who trust in him. His death is instead of the death of our souls: his life is the life of our spirits. Now, soul, thou hast nothing to do with asking vain questions; thou hast to accept the result of the Savior's actual performances. The saving work is done, done by him who was anointed of the Lord to do it. Look to him and salvation is thine. Thy salvation rests in Jesus, rest thou in Jesus. Throw thyself upon him now; even as a babe casts itself upon its mother's breast. Have done with every other confidence. What canst thou need more than to rely upon the Anointed of

the Lord?

Now, Paul declares, or rather the gospel speaking for itself declares, this word of life by faith in the risen Christ to be near us, that is, to be accessible to us. As your next door neighbor's house is not hard to get at, so neither is salvation by the gospel. It is nigh you; it is nigh you now: it will never be nigher than it is at this moment. You may now believe in Christ and live eternally. Difficulty there is none: only believe and thou art saved. It is not a mystical, obscure thing; it is near and familiar. Believe in Christ as you would believe in your friend: believe that he died for sinners, and trust in him for salvation. If God has made you feel yourself a sinner, then Christ is such a Savior as you need and you may have him at once: the only difficulty lies in the way being so easy that you can hardly think it can be so. Have done with doings, and feelings, and trust yourself with Christ. "The word is nigh thee." It is simple; indeed, so simple that people try to obscure it in order to understand it. It is such milk for babes that I have known people refuse such plain truth because they were not willing to be treated like little children. Just as I lean all my weight upon this rail so do I lean my soul wholly upon Christ. If what Christ has done will not save a sinner I am damned; for I have nothing else to depend upon; but if it will save, and sure I am that it will, I am saved as surely as Christ has risen from the dead. This is the substance of the matter—Christ saves, and we trust. This is what that word of faith says, even the gospel which we preach. I am afraid we say a great deal at times which rather lumbers and cumpers the gospel than makes it clear. Perhaps I am doing the same this morning, but I do not mean to do it. I mean to let it stand out simply before you, that the incarnation, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ are the one foundation upon which we must depend for eternal salvation, and upon that alone; and if we do so depend we shall most assuredly be saved.

Yet note, that Paul opens this up into two things. He says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." So there must be confession with the mouth. Do not leave that out. Do not suppose that you can be a believer and conceal your faith. As I said the other day, Do not behave like a rat behind the wainscot, only daring to

come out in the dark. That is not Christ's way. If you trust in him with your heart, trust him openly, and confess him with your mouth, owning that he is your Lord, and your Savior. He has put the two things together, —"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The believing and the confession of that believing in God's own way are never to be separated, for "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." See ye well to this.

III. Thirdly, let us consider, WHAT THE SCRIPTURE SAITH; "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." "Whosoever." Whatever man in all the world, throughout all the ages, shall come and trust himself on Christ shall never be ashamed of having done so. You, dear friend, down the aisle there, if you trust in Christ you shall never be ashamed of your hope. You, up there in the gallery, however guilty you may have been, or however moral you may have been, it matters not, if your one hope is in what Christ has done, you shall never turn round on your dying bed, and cry, "I made a mistake in trusting Christ." You know what Cardinal Bellarmine said: he was a great antagonist of Luther, and thought that we might trust in our works; but, looking it all over, he admitted that inasmuch as no man could be quite sure that he had done enough good works, it was perhaps best on the whole and safest to trust altogether to the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. I have always felt obliged to the Cardinal for that admission; because the best is good enough for me, and since trusting in Jesus is the safest, I intend to stick to it even to the end. There is really no other hope, for if you get a little bit of your own works put into the building, of your hope, you have just so much rotten timber in the fabric, and that rot will plague the whole house, and turn it into dust at the last. No man that rested in Christ, and Christ alone, ever was ashamed of his hope; and none ever shall be. There is sure ground here. The Rock of Ages never fails.

What else does the Scripture say? It says that no man is forbidden to believe; "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." There never was a sinner yet to whom God said, "You must not trust my Son": on the contrary, it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." What about the doctrine of election? I need not speak about it this

morning: I believe it, and rejoice in it: but it is not at all contrary to this precious truth. Read this verse, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Whoever will in the whole world believe in Christ may do so; he is neither too old or too young, or too rich, or too poor, or too wicked, or too moral; if he will but trust Christ he shall be saved, and he is fully allowed and permitted, yea, commanded to believe and live.

Once, again, though your faith should only be strong enough to lead you to pray, yet it shall save you, for "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Suppose your faith cannot work miracles; never mind about miracles. Suppose you cannot walk on the sea, like Peter: never mind; you are not called to do it. Can your faith pray? Can it cry? Then call upon the Lord, and you shall be saved. Poor dear heart, if you can but trust Christ, even though the feeblest possible manifestation of it should be the only thing visible, namely, your calling upon God in prayer, it must and shall save you.

IV. Now, I hope I have put it plainly. I have tried my best; and so I close by bidding you hear WHAT EXPERIENCE SAITH. What does experience say about believing in Christ! Experience says, and we are some of us here to say it, that it is the grandest way of living in the world. I assure you that I daily find the value of living by faith. In hours of dire distress and great heaviness of spirit, of which I know enough, I prove the power of faith in Jesus. Ah, my Lord, what should I do then if I could not as "a poor sinner, and nothing at all" find Christ to be my "all in all." Fair-weather sailors, who go out in their little painted perfection boats, are people who have had small temptation and little soul-trouble. They are generally gentlemen in good health, with regular incomes and sweet tempers, and so they soon reach their imaginary sinlessness—vain creatures that they are; but you never get any of that among the poor, suffering, tried people of God. In stormy weather our beauty and glory soon turn pale; when the devil meets us face to face, he cracks up our tinsel perfection with a blow. He laughs at all our comeliness, he knows that it is a hollow cheat, a vile sham. In the moments when the soul is in the lowest depths, faith is the only way to live. That mode of living which will do for the depths is safe for the heights.

How blessed it is when a child of God has actually fallen into sin,—God keep us so that we never may,—but if guilt is on the soul, what is a poor creature to do? He can do nothing unless he has learned this precious truth, that he is nothing at all, and Jesus Christ is his all in all. Then he knows that Jesus will blot out his transgressions, and create in him a clean heart, and restore him to himself again, though now, like David, his sin is ever before him.

Yes, and I find a self-denying, Christ-exalting faith to be good in times of jubilation and success. The only way to keep right and humble is to be nothing, and let Jesus be all in all. If God has blessed your ministry or other holy work, the devil whispers, "You are a pretty fellow; you have done wonders"; and up you will go if you are not steadied by the firm conviction that you may not glory, since you are nothing at all in yourself, and your sole help is in Jesus your Lord. When God gives you growth in grace and fruitfulness in good works it will be your safety to be as little as ever you were, and to trust in nothing but the work of the Lord. This blessed faith keeps men down when they are apt to go up, and up when otherwise they would be apt to go down. It is a holy balancing pole: we can walk the narrowest line with this in our hands, and fear no fall. Ourselves nothing, Christ everything—that is it. Keep to it.

Now as to the test of death. Does this sort of faith enable men to face death with courage? I have had almost thirty years among you, and God has been very gracious to us, so that we have lost very few comparatively by death; but now many are going home, and, according to the course of nature, many of our honored brethren and sisters will soon follow. As to those who have been called home, how have they died? I have the deep satisfaction of saying that when our dear brethren and sisters fall asleep they reflect honor upon the gospel which we have preached. Ask those who have seen them die. These dear ones at this hour look back upon me and say, "Go on: preach the same gospel to others; for we found it blessed truth to die upon." Look at our dear, departed brother, Mr. Higgs, the last who has crossed the stream. His sons and daughters will tell you that his death was sad to them, but not to him. He suffered agonizing pain, but his peace was as deep as the sea. He had no uncertainty; he was as sure of

his safety as it had been a matter of calculation by the rules of arithmetic. He knew whom he had believed, and knew what the Lord had done for him, and he could not see a weak point in it all. He spent the whole night in trying to cheer and comfort others: he had no trembling thought about himself. He did not say, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." No; he knew that Christ was the resurrection and the life, and he was ready to depart. He wished his beloved ones to go to their beds; and since they would stop with him, he desired them to sing." "What shall we sing?" "Sing" said he,

"For ever with the Lord,
Amen, so let it be."

It is hard singing when your father is dying, but it was not hard to him. He bade them read that chapter, "Let not your hearts be troubled"; and, as they read it, he did not take the verses, and apply them to himself. No, he directed the comfort to his dear wife, for she had greater need of it than he had his faith was firm. It was for her he cared, and for those about him as for himself, all was rest. One said somewhat roughly to him a fortnight before, "Don't be downhearted; you may get better yet." "Stop a minute," said he. "What do you mean? I have never been down-hearted at anything my life; certainly not at the thought of dying. If it was the Lord's will that I should die in the street at this moment, I would cheerfully go." He never said a word more than he felt; yet that was the style of man. God send us more like him—men to whom religion is for home consumption. Not a pretty toy for Sundays, but food to live upon; a common-sense hope; a blunt man's religion that he can carry into business. One reported to me the other day a word which cheered me much. An Italian gentleman, who has known me since I have been at Mentone, was asked, "Are you a Catholic?" "No, I am not." "Are you a Protestant?" I am not sure, for I know little about it." "What are you?" "I am of Mr. Spurgeon's religion, which makes people happy themselves, and causes them to do good to others." I thank God he could say that of my religion: it did this for my dear friend—it made him a happy man, whose pleasure it was to please others: and now he has passed away in full sunlight into a still brighter noon. Amen, so let it be.

The top and bottom of the matter is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Be nothing; be nobody; and trust Him. Do not believe in yourself, but believe in Jesus. Have as many good works as you can cram into your life, but never tell anybody about them, or think anything of them. The best of them are but filthy rags: stow them all away in the coal-hole, and look to the merits of your Lord for salvation. Go to Jesus for everything. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou may be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Take his counsel. As he whom we sorrow for today could die peacefully, and even merrily, so shall you and I if we rely on the same Savior. When our time comes to depart, we shall just step aside and say, "Good-bye, dear friends, awhile: we will meet again in the home of the blessed." I hear him say so at this moment; and I answer him, "Dear brother, we will be with you speedily."

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Messrs. Moody And Sankey Defended; Or, A Vindication Of The Doctrine Of Justification By Faith

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Galatians 5:24

From several quarters we have heard lately intensely earnest objections to the matter and tenor of the preaching of the evangelists from America, who have been working among us. Of course, their teaching as well as our own is open to honest judgment, and they, we feel sure, would rather court than shun investigation of the most searching sort. Criticisms upon their style of speaking and singing, and so on, are so unimportant, that

nobody has any need to answer them, "Wisdom is justified of her children." It is a waste of time to discuss mere matters of taste, for no men however excellent can please all, or even become equally adapted to all constitutions and conditions: therefore we may let such remarks pass without further observation. But upon the matter of doctrine very much has been said, and said also with a good deal of temper not always of the best. What has been affirmed by a certain class of public writers comes to this, if you boil it down—that it cannot really do any good to tell men that simply by believing in Jesus Christ they will be saved, and that it may do people very serious injury if we lead them to imagine that they have undergone a process called conversion, and are now safe for life. We are told by these gentlemen, who ought to know, for they speak very positively, that the doctrine of immediate salvation through faith in Christ Jesus is a very dangerous one, that it will certainly lead to the deterioration of the public morality, since men will not be likely to set store by the practical virtues when faith is lifted up to so very lofty a position. If it were so it were a grievous fault, and woe to those who led men into it. That it is not the fact we are sure; but meanwhile let us survey the field of battle.

Will you please to notice that this is no quarrel between these gentlemen and our friends Messrs. Moody and Sankey alone. It is a quarrel between these objectors and the whole of us who preach the gospel; for, differing as we do in the style of preaching it, we are all ready to set our seal to the clearest possible statement that men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and saved the moment they believe. We all hold and teach that there is such a thing as conversion,—and that when men are converted they become other men than they were before, and a new life begins which will culminate in eternal glory. We are not so dastardly as to allow our friends to stand alone in the front of the battle, to be looked upon as peculiar persons, holding strange notions from which the rest of us dissent. So far as salvation through faith in the atoning blood is concerned, they preach nothing but what we have preached all our lives; they preach nothing but what has the general consent of Protestant Christendom. Let that be known to all, and let the archers shoot at us all alike.

Then, further, if this be the point of objection, we should like those who

raise it to know that they do not raise it against us merely, and these friends who are more prominent, but against the Protestant faith which these very same gentlemen most probably profess to glory in. The Protestant faith in a nutshell lies in this very same justification by faith which they hoot at. It was the discovery that men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ which first stirred up Luther. That was the ray of light which fell upon his dark heart, and by the power of which he came into the liberty of the gospels This is the hammer by which popery was broken in the old time, and this is the sword with which it still is to be smitten—the very "Sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior, and "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Luther used, in fact, to say—and we endorse it—that this matter of justification by faith is the article by which a church must stand or fall. That so-called church which does not hold this doctrine is not a church of Christ, and it is a church of Christ that does hold it, notwithstanding many mistakes into which it may have fallen. The contest lies really between the Popish doctrine of merit and the Protestant doctrine of grace, and no man who calls himself a Protestant can logically dispute the question with us and our friends.

We shall go somewhat further than this. The objection is not against Messrs. Moody and Sankey, but against all evangelical ministers; not against them only, but against our common protestantism; and yet more, it is against the inspired word of God; for if this book teaches anything under heaven, it certainly teaches that men are saved by faith in our Lord Jesus. Read the Epistle to the Galatians, and your judgment may be very perverse, but you cannot, by any common wresting of words, expel that doctrine from the Epistle. It was written on purpose to state that truth plainly, and defend it fully. Neither can you get rid of that doctrine from the whole New Testament. You shall find it not merely seasoning all the epistles, but positively saturating them, tin, as you take chapter by chapter, you may wring out of them, as out of Gideon's fleece, this one truth, that justification before God is by faith, and not by the works of the law. So that the objection is against the Bible; and let those who shoot their errors understand that they fight against the Eternal Spirit of God and the witness which he has borne by his prophets and apostles. Deny inspiration, and you have ground to stand on; but while you believe the Bible you must believe in justification by faith.

But now let us look this matter in the face. Is it true or not that persons who believe in Jesus Christ do become worse than they were before? We are not backward to answer the inquiry, and we stand in a point of observation which supplies us with abundant data to go upon. We solemnly affirm that men who believe in Jesus become purer, holier, and better. At the same time I confess that there has been a good deal of injudicious and misleading talk at times by uninstructed advocates of free grace. I fear, moreover, that many people think that they believe in Jesus Christ, but do nothing of the sort. We do not defend rash statements, or deny the existence of weak-minded followers; but we ask to be heard and considered. Some persons say, "You tell these people that they will be saved upon their believing in Christ." Exactly so. "But will you kindly tell me what you mean by being saved, sir?" I will, with great pleasure. We do not mean that these people will go to heaven when they die, irrespective of character: but, when we say that if they believe in Jesus they will be saved, we mean that they will be saved from living as they used to live—saved from being what they now are, saved from licentiousness, dishonesty, drunkenness, selfishness, and any other sin they may have lived in. The thing can readily be put to the test, if it can be shown that those who have believed in the Lord Jesus have been saved from living in sin, no rational man ought to entertain any objection to the preaching of such a salvation. Salvation from wrongdoing is the very thing which every moralist should commend and not censure, and that is the salvation which we preach. I am afraid that some imagine that they have only to believe something or other, and they will go to heaven when they die, and that they have only to feel a certain singular emotion, and it is all right within them. Now, if any of you have fallen into that error, may God in his mercy lead you out of it, for it is not every faith that saves, but only the faith of God's elect. It is not any sort of emotion that changes the heart, but the work of the Holy Ghost. It is a small matter to go into an inquiry-room and say, "I believe"; such an avowal as that proves nothing at all, it may even be false. It will be proved by this,—if you have rightly believed in Jesus Christ you will become from that time forward a different man from what you were. There will be a change in your heart and soul, in your conduct and your conversation; and, seeing you thus changed, those who have been honest objectors will right speedily leave

off their objections, for they will be in the condition of those who saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John; and therefore they could say nothing against them. The world demands facts, and these we must supply. It is of no use To cry up our medicine by words, we must point to cures. Your change of life will be the grandest argument for the gospel, if that life shall show the meaning of my text,—“They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Let us discuss this text in an apologetic manner, hoping to overcome prejudice, if God permit.

Notice, first of all, that THE RECEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST BY FAITH IS, IN ITSELF AN AVOWAL THAT WE HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH WITH THE AFFECTIONS AND LUSTS. If faith be such an avowal, why say that it is not connected with holy living?

Let me show that this is the case. Faith is the accepting of Jesus Christ. In what respects? Well, principally as a substitute. He is the Son of God, and I am a guilty sinner. I deserve to die: the Son of God stands in my stead and suffers for me, and when I believe in him I accept him as standing for me. To believe in Jesus was very beautifully set forth in the old ceremony of the law, when the person bringing a sacrifice laid his hands upon the head of the bullock or the lamb, and hereby accepted the victim as standing in his place, so that the victim's sufferings should be instead of his sufferings. Now, our faith accepts Jesus Christ as standing in our stead. The very pith and marrow of faith's confidence lies in this—

“He bore, that I might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire.”

Christ for me, Christ in my room and stead.

Now, try to catch the following thought.—When you believe, you accept Christ as standing instead of you, and profess that what he did he did for you, but what did Christ do upon the tree? He was crucified and died. Follow the thought, and note well that by faith you regard yourself as dead with him—crucified with him. You have not really grasped what

faith means unless you have grasped this. With him you suffered the wrath of God, for he suffered in your stead: you are now in him—crucified with him, dead with him, buried with him, risen with him, and gone into the glory with him—because he represents you, and your faith has accepted the representation. Do you see, then, that you did, in the moment when you believed in Christ, register a declaration that you were henceforth dead unto sin. Who shall say that our gospel teaches men to live in sin, when the faith which is essential to salvation involves an avowal of death to it? The convert begins with agreeing to be regarded as dead with Christ to sin: have we not here the foundation stone of holiness?

Observe also that, if he follows the command of Christ, the very first step which a Christian takes after he has accepted the position taken up by the Lord Jesus on his behalf is another avowal more public than the first, namely, his baptism.

By faith he has accepted Christ as dead, instead of him, and he regards himself as having died in Christ. Now, every dead man ought to be buried, sooner or later; and so, when we come forward and confess Christ, we are "buried with him in baptism unto death, that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life." Though baptism does not avail anything as a ceremony, having no power or efficacy in and of itself, yet as a sign and symbol it teaches us that true believers are dead and buried with Christ. So, you see, the two ways in which, according to the gospel, we actually and avowedly give ourselves to Christ, are by faith and baptism. "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved." Now, the essence of faith is to accept Christ as representing me in his death: and the essence of baptism is to be buried with Christ because I am dead with him. Thus at the very doorstep of the Christian religion, in its first inward act and its first outward symbol, you get the thought that believers are henceforth to be separated from sin and purified in life. He who truly believes, and knows what it is to be really buried with Christ, has begun—nay, he has, in a certain sense, effected completely—what the text describes as the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts. For, dear friends, let it never be forgotten that the grand object for which we lay hold on Christ

is the death of sin. Who among us has believed in Christ that he might escape the pangs of hell? Oh, brother, you have but a very poor idea of what Jesus Christ has come into the world to do: he is proclaimed to be a Savior who "shall save his people from their sins." This is the object of his mission. True, he comes to give pardon, but he never gives pardon without giving repentance with it; he comes to justify, but he does not justify without also sanctifying. He has come to deliver us, not from thee, O death, alone! nor from thee, O hell, alone! but from thee, O sin, the mother of death, the progenitor of hell! The Redeemer lays his axe at the root of all the mischief, by killing sin, and thus, as far as we are concerned, he puts an end to death and hell. Glory be to God for this! Now, it does seem to me that if the very commencement of the Christian faith be so manifestly connected with death to sin, they do us grievous injustice who suppose that in preaching faith in Jesus Christ we ignore the moralities or the virtues, or that we think little of sin and vice. We do not so, but we proclaim the only method by which moral evil can be put to death and swept away. The reception of Christ is an avowal of the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts, what more can the purest moralist propose? What more could he avow himself?

II. But secondly, AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE DECEPTION OF CHRIST IS ATTENDED WITH THE CRUCIFIXION OF SIN. I shall now state my own experience when I believed in Jesus; and while I am doing so I rejoice to remember that there are hundreds, if not thousands in this place who have experienced the same, and millions in this world, and millions more in heaven, who know the truth of what I declare. When I believed that Jesus was the Christ, and rested my soul in him, I felt in my heart from that moment an intense hatred to sin of every kind. I had loved sin before, some sins particularly, but those sins became from that moment the most obnoxious to me, and, though the propensity to them was still there, yet the love of them was clean gone; and when I at any time transgressed I felt an inward grief and horror at myself for doing the things which aforesaid I had allowed and even enjoyed. My relish for sin was gone. The things I once loved I abhorred, and blushed to think of.

Then I began to search out my sins. I see now a parallel between my experience in reference to sin, and the details of the crucifixion of Christ.

They sent Judas into the garden to search for our great substitute, and just in that way I began to search for sin, even for that which lay concealed amid the thick darkness of my soul I was ignorant, and did not know be sin, for it was night in any soul; but, being stirred up to destroy the evil, my repenting spirit borrowed lanterns, and torches, and went out as against a thief. I searched the garden of my heart through and through, with an intense ardor to find out every sin; and I brought God to help me, saying, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways;" nor did I cease till I had spied out my secret transgressions. This inward search is one of my most constant occupations; I patrol my nature through and through to try and arrest these felons, these abhorred sins, that they may be crucified with Christ. O ye in whom iniquity lurks under cover of your spiritual ignorance, arouse yourself to a strict scrutiny of your nature, and no longer endure that your hearts should be the lurking-places of evil. I remember when I found my sin. When I found it I seized it, and I dragged it off to the judgment-seat. Ah, my brethren, you know when that occurred to you, and how stern was the judgment which conscience gave forth. I sat in judgment on myself. I took my sin to one court, and to another. I looked at it as before men, and trembled to think that the badness of my example might have ruined other men's souls: I looked at my sin as before God, and I abhorred myself in dust and ashes. My sin was as red as crimson in his sight and in mine also. I judged my sin, and I condemned it—condemned it as a felon to a felon's death. I heard a voice within me which, Pilate-like, pleaded for it—"I will chastise him and let him go; let it be a little put to shame; let not the wrong deed be done quite so often; let the lust be curbed and kept under." But, ah, my soul said, "Let it be crucified! Let it be crucified!" and nothing could shake my heart from this intent, that I would slay all the murderers of Christ if possible, and let not one of them escape for my soul hated them with a deadly hatred, and would fain nail them all to the tree. I remember, too, how I began to see the shame of sin. As my Lord was spit upon, and mocked, and despitefully used, so did my soul begin to pour contempt upon all the pride of sin, to scorn its promises of pleasure, and to accuse it of a thousand crimes. It had deceived me, it had led me into ruin, it had well nigh destroyed me, and I despised it, and poured contempt upon its briberies, and all it offered of sweetness and of pleasure. O sin, how shameful a thing didst thou appear to be! I saw all that is base, mean, and

contemptible concentrated in thee. My heart scourged sin by repentance, smote it with rebukes, and buffeted it with self-denials. Then was it made a reproach and a scorn. But this sufficed not—sin must die. My heart mourned for what sin had done, and I was resolved to avenge my Lord's death upon myself.

Thus my soul sang out her resolve—
"Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God;
Those sins that pierced and nail'd his flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!

Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die;
My heart was so decreed:
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Savior bleed."

Then I led forth my sins to the place of crucifixion. They would fain have escaped, but the power of God prevented them, and like a guard of soldiery, conducted them to the gibbet of mortification. The hand of the Lord was present, and his all-revealing Spirit stripped my sin as Christ was stripped; setting it before mine eyes, even my secret sin in the light of his countenance. Oh, what a spectacle it was as I gazed upon it! I had looked before upon its dainty apparel, and the colors with which it had bedizened itself, to make it look as fair as Jezebel when she painted her face: but now I saw its nakedness and horror, and I was well nigh ready to despair; but my spirit bore me up, for I knew that I was forgiven, and I said "Christ Jesus has pardoned me, for I have believed in him; and I will put the flesh to death, by crucifying it on his cross." The driving of the nails I do remember, and how the flesh struggled to maintain its liberty. One, two, three, four, the nails went in, and fastened the accursed thing to the wood with Christ, so that it could neither run nor rule; and now, glory be to God, though my sin is not dead, it is crucified, and must eventually die. It hangs up there; I can see it bleeding out its life. Sometimes it struggles to get down, and tries to wrench away the nails, for it would fain go after vanity; but the sacred nails hold it too fast, it is in the grasp of death, and it cannot escape. Alas, it dies a lingering death,

attended with much pain and struggling: still it dies, and soon its heart shall be pierced through with the spear of the love of Christ, and it shall utterly expire. Then shall our immortal nature no more be burdened with the body of this death, but, pure and spotless, it shall rise to and behold the face of God for ever.

Now, I am not talking allegorically of things which ought to be realized, but as a matter of fact remain mere ideas. I am describing in figure what happens in reality; for every man who believes in Jesus immediately bestirs himself to get rid of sin; and you may know whether he has believed in Jesus Christ or not by seeing whether there is a change in his motives, feelings, life, and conduct. Do you say that you doubt this? You may doubt what you like, but facts speak for themselves. There will come before me, I dare say, before this week is over, as there have almost every week of my life, men who have been slaves to intoxication made sober at once by believing in Jesus Christ; women, once lost to virtue, who have become pure and chaste by believing in Jesus; men who were fond of all manner of evil pleasures, who have turned instantly from them, and have continued to resist all temptation, because they are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The phenomenon of conversion is singular, but the effect of conversion is more singular still; and it is not a thing done in a corner, it can be seen every day. If it were merely an excitement in which men felt a distress of mind, and then by-and-by thought they were at peace, and became happy because self-satisfied, I should not see any particular good in it; but if it be true that regeneration changes men's tastes and affections, that it, in fine, changes them radically, making them altogether new creatures; if it be so, I say, then may God send us thousands of conversions! And that this is so we are quite sure, for we see it perpetually.

III. Thirdly, we go a step farther, and say that THE RECEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST INTO THE HEART BY SIMPLE FAITH IS CALCULATED TO CRUCIFY THE FLESH.

When a man believes in Jesus the first point that helps him to crucify the flesh is that he has seen the evil of sin, inasmuch as he has seen Jesus, his Lord, die because of it. Men think that sin is nothing; but what will sin

do? What will it not do? The virus of sin, what wilt it poison? Ay, what will it not poison? Its influence has been baleful upon the largest conceivable scale. Sin has flooded the world with blood and tears through red-handed war; sin has covered the world with oppression, and so has crushed the manhood of many, and broken the hearts of myriads; sin begat slavery, and tyranny, and priestcraft, and rebellion, and slander, and persecution; sin has been at the bottom of all human sorrows; but the crowning culminating point of sin's villainy was when God himself came down to earth in human form—pure, perfect, intent on an errand of love—came to work miracles of mercy, and redemption. Then sinful man could never rest till he had crucified his incarnate God. They coined a word when the Parliamentary party executed the king in England, and called the king's destroyers "regicides," and now we must make a word to describe sin: sin is a deicide. Every sinner, if he could, would kill God, for he says in his heart, "No God." He means he wishes there were none. He would be rejoiced indeed if he could learn for certain that there was no God. In fact, that is the bugbear of his life, that there is a God, and a just God, who will bring him into judgment. His secret wish is that there were no religion and no God, for he might then live as he pleased.

Now, when a man is made to see that sin in its essence is the murderer of Emmanuel, God with us, his heart being renewed, he hates sin from that very moment. "No," he says, "I cannot continue in such evil. If that be the true meaning of every offense against the law of God—that it would put God himself out of his own world if it could—I cannot bear it." His spirit recoils with horror, as he feels—

"My sins have pulled the vengeance down
Upon his guiltless head:
Break, break, my heart, oh burst mine eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed.

Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drown mine eyes
In undissembled woe."

Then the believer has also seen in the death of Christ an amazing instance of the great grace of God; for if sin be an attempt to murder God—and it is all that—then how wonderful it is that the creatures who committed this sin were not destroyed at once. How remarkable that God should consider it worth his while to devise a plan for their restoration; and yet he did, with matchless skill, contrive a way which involved the giving up of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son. Though this was an expense unequalled, yet he did not withdraw from it. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life:" and this for a race of men who were the enemies of their good and gracious God. "Henceforth," saw the believer in Christ, "I can have nothing to do with sin, since it does despite to so gracious a God. O, thou accursed sin, to drive thy dagger at the heart of him who was all grace and mercy! This makes sin to be exceedingly sinful."

Further, the believer has had a view of the justice of God. He sees that God hates sin intensely, for when his only begotten Son took sin upon himself, God would not spare even him. That sin was not his own, in him was no sin, but when he voluntarily took it upon himself, and was made a curse for us, the Judge of all the earth did not spare him. Down from his armoury of vengeance he took his thunderbolts and hurled them at his Son, for his Son stood in the sinner's stead. There was no mercy for the sinner's substitute. He had to cry as never one cried before or since, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Torrents of woe rushed through his spirit; the condemnation of sin overwhelmed him; all God's waves and billows went o'er him.

Now, when a man sees this wonderful fact he can no longer think lightly of transgression. He trembles before the thrice holy Jehovah, and cries in his secret heart, "How can I sin if this be God's opinion of it? If in his justice he smote it so unsparingly, even when it was only laid by imputation upon his Son, how will he smite it when its actual guilt lies on me? O God deliver me from it."

The believer has also had one more sight which, perhaps, more effectually

than any other changes his view of sin. He has seen the amazing love of Jesus. Did you ever see it, my hearer? If you have seen it you will never love sin again. O think, that he who was master of all heaven's majesty came down to be the victim of all man's misery! He came to Bethlehem, and dwelt among us, offering thirty years and more of toilsome obedience to his Father's will; and at the close he reached the crisis of his griefs, the crowning sorrow of his incarnation—his bloody sweat and death agony. That was a solemn Passover which he ate with his disciples, with Calvary full in view. Then he arose and went to Gethsemane,

"Gethsemane, the olive-press,
(And why so called let Christians guess,)
Fit name, fit place, where vengeance strove,
And griped and grappled hard with love.

'Twas there the Lord of life appeared
And sighed, and groaned, and prayed, and feared;
Bore all incarnate God could bear
With strength enough, and none to spare."

Behold how he loved us! He was taken to Pilate's hall, and there was scourged—scourged with those awful Roman whips weighted with little bullets of lead, and made of the intertwined sinews of oxen, into which they also inserted small slivers of bone, so that every blow as it fell tore off the flesh. Our beloved Lord had to suffer this again and again, being scourged often as that verse seems to intimate which says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Yet he loved us, loved us still. Many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it. When they nailed him to the tree, he loved us still. When, every bone being dislocated, he cried in sad soliloquy, "I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint," he loved us still. When the dogs compassed him and the bulls of Bashan beset him round, he loved us still. When the dread faintness came upon him till he was brought into the dust of death, and his heart melted like wax in the midst of his bowels, he loved us still. When God forsook him, and the sun was blotted out, and midnight darkness covered the midday,

and a denser midnight veiled his spirit—a darkness like that of Egypt, which might be felt, he loved us still. Till he had drunk the last dregs of the unutterably bitter coo, he loved us still. And when the light shone on his face, and he could say, "It is finished," that light shone on a face that loved us still. Now, every man to whom it has been given to believe in Jesus, and to know his love, says, "How can I offend him? How can I grieve him? There are actions in this life which I might otherwise indulge in, but I dare not now, for I fear to vex my Lord." And if you say "Dare not, are you afraid of him?" the answer will be, "I am not slavishly afraid, for into hell I can never go." What am I afraid of, then? I am afraid of that dear face, on which I see the gutterings of tears which he once shed for me. I am afraid of that dear brow which wore the thorn-crown for me; I cannot rebel against such kindness, his bleeding love enchains me. How can I do so great a wickedness as to put my dying Lord to shame? "Do you not feel this, my beloved brother? If you have ever trusted the Lord Jesus, you crouch at his feet, and kiss the prints of his nails, for very love; and if he would use you as a footstool, if it would raise him any higher, you would count it the highest honor of your life. Ay, if he bade you go to prison and to death for him, and would say it himself, and put his pierced hand on you, you would go there as cheerfully as angels fly to heaven. If he bade you die for him, though the flesh is weak, your spirit would be willing; ay, and the flesh would be made strong enough, too, if Jesus did but look upon you, for he can with a glance cast out selfishness and cowardice, and everything that keeps us back from being whole burnt-offerings to him. Is it not so?

"Speak of morality! Thou bleeding Lamb
The best morality is love to thee!"

When we once are filled with love to thee, O Jesus, sin becomes the dragon against which we wage a lifelong warfare; holiness becomes our noblest aspiration, and we seek after it with all our heart and soul and strength. If candid minds will but honestly consider the religion of Jesus Christ, they will see that Christian men must hate sin if they are sincere in their faith. I might go farther into that, but I will not.

IV. The last thing of all is this. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WITH THE

GOSPEL, AND WHERE HE IS HOLINESS MUST BE PROMOTED.

Let it never be forgotten that—while the reception of Jesus Christ by simple faith is an avowal of death to sin, and does bring with it an experience of hating sin, and is calculated to do so—there in one thing more. If, dear friends, in any work of revival, or ordinary ministry, there was nothing more than you could see or hear, I think that many criticisms and cavils might be, at least, rational, but they are not so now; for one grand fact makes them for ever unreasonable. Wherever Jesus Christ is preached, there is present One sublime in rank and high in degree. You will not suppose that I am speaking of any—earthly potentate. No, I am speaking of the Holy Ghost—the ever blessed Spirit of God. There is never a gospel sermon preached by an earnest heart but what the Holy Ghost is there, taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto men. When a man turns his eye to Jesus, and simply trusts him—for we adhere to that as being the vital matter—there is accompanying that act—nay, I must correct myself, there is as the cause of that act—a miraculous, supernatural power which in an instant changes a man, as completely as if it flung him back into nothingness and brought him forth into new life. If this be so, then believing in Christ is something very marvellous. Now, if you will turn to the third chapter of John's gospel, and also to his Epistles, you will see that faith is always linked with regeneration, or the new birth, which new birth is the work of the Spirit of God. That same third of John which tells us, "Ye must be born again," goes on to say, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Wherever there is faith in Jesus Christ a miracle of purification has been wrought in the heart. Deny this and you deny the testimony of the Scriptures, which say plainly, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "And whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Wherefore do you doubt, for we who are personal examples can assure you that it has been so in our case? I mean not that myself and one or two others affirm this, but the witnesses may be met with by hundreds and thousands, and they all agree in asserting that the power of the Holy Ghost has changed the current of their desires, and made them love the things which are holy, and just, and

true. Therefore, sirs, whether you believe it or not, you must be so kind as to understand one thing from us very decidedly, namely, that if to preach salvation through faith be vile we purpose to be viler still. Surely you cannot blame us for acting as we do if our stand-point be correct. If the preaching of the cross, though it be to them that perish foolishness, be to them that believe in Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God, we shall not give up preaching Christ for you. If it be so that men are made new creatures—that, while others are talking about morals, our gospel plants and produces them—we shall not give up work for talk, nor the efficient agency of the gospel for the inventions of philosophy.

To the front, my brethren, with the cross, more and more; in your schools and in your pulpits set forth Christ crucified as the sinner's hope more and more plainly. Bid the sinner look to Jesus! Look and live! The gospel is the great promoter of social order, the great reclamer of the waifs and strays of society, the elevator of the human race; this doctrine of free pardon and gracious renewal, freely given to the most worthless upon their believing in Jesus, is the hope of mankind. There is no balm in Gilead, and never was; but this is the balm of Calvary, for there is the true medicine, and Jesus Christ is the infallible Physician. Do but try it, sinners! Do but try it! Look to Jesus, and the passions which you cannot else overcome shall yield to his cleansing power. Believe in Jesus, and the follies which cling to you, and crush you as the snakes engirdled Laocoon and his sons, you shall be able to untwist. Yea, they shall die at Jesus' glance, and shall fall off from you. Believe in Jesus, and you have the spring of excellency, the bath of purity, the source of virtue, the destruction of evil, the bud of perfection.

God grant us still to prove the power of the Lord Jesus in ourselves, and to proclaim his power to all around us.

"Happy if, with our latest breath,
We may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and cry in death
Behold behold, the Lamb!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr Evil-Questioning Tried And Executed

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? - 2 Kings 5:12

Proud self and evil questioning are two of Satan's firmest allies, and two of the chief destroyers of the souls of men. Both of these adversaries attacked Naaman at once. Proud Self fell upon him and gave him the first blow, and Naaman cried, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." When Proud Self had given his blow, on came his friend and helper, Evil Questioning, and he smote Naaman, and then Naaman said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" Ah! it is a hard case with a man who has to fight with two such imps as these - his own proud spirit, and that equally wicked spirit of unbelief - asking questions - evil questions - and tempting the Lord our God. Against the first, namely, our proud and righteous self, God has opened all his batteries. The ten commands are like ten great pieces of ordnance, every one of them pointed against our own pride and self righteousness. The Bible is an opponent, even unto death, of everything like boasting, or encouraging the hope of salvation by any efforts of our own. Righteous Self is doomed to be rent in pieces, and his house to be made a dunghill; God hates him because he is an anti-Christ, and sets himself in opposition to the plenteous atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. As for Evil Questioning, he also doth much ruin among the souls of men. And as it has been my hap of late to meet him very often, I propose this morning to track him to his den, to bring him out to light, and by God's help, if his Spirit shall be here present, to fully defeat him, once for all, to the rescue of many of you. Oh what multitudes of souls have gone to hell asking questions. Not asking, "What must I do to be saved?" but asking questions about matters too high for them; asking, in fact, questions which were only meant to be some excuse for continuing in their sins, pillows for their wicked heads to lean upon; putting queries

to ministers, and propounding hard and knotty points that from the ignorance of man they might draw reasons why they should continue in their evil way, should hold on in their wicked course, and so should resist the mercy of God.

Just listen to what Evil Questioning said to Naaman, and what Naaman said as the result of it. If I understand my text aright, it means just this: "What virtue can there be in water? Why should I be told to go and wash at all? I have washed many times and it never cured my leprosy. This dry disease is not so readily got rid of; but supposing there is some medical influence in water, why must I wash in Jordan? It is but a mere ditch, why can I not go and wash in some of my own rivers? We have medicinal streams in our own land. At any rate, Abana and Pharpar are cleaner and wider, and their current is stronger than that of the Jordan, which empties itself into the Dead Sea. And to my mind," he says "it seems to be but a dead river at the very best. May I not go home to Samaria and there wash? A pretty thing that I should come all this way from Samaria to see and then all he should tell me should be, wash and be clean. It is absurd," he says, "it is contrary to the nature of things; it cannot be possible, and therefore," he save, "I will not go and try it." This, you see, was Evil Questioning. What business was it of Naaman's whether there was any medicinal powers in the water or not? What concern was it to him whether Abana or Pharpar were better or worse than Jordan? he need have nothing to do but with the simple command - "Go, wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." 'Twas his to obey, not to question. 'Twas his to fulfill the command, not to enquire into its philosophy.

Now, what Evil Questioning said to Naaman, that he has said to many of you, my hearers. I know there are some of you who are even to-day harbouring this arch-traitor. I pray that God by his grace may find him out this morning, that we may turn him out of your hearts.

I shall try, first of all, to detect this old Mr. Evil Questioning. When he have found him out, I shall try to describe him to you so that you may know him again the next time you meet him. Then when we have described him, we will bring him out, and by God's help we will execute him; and when we have done that, I shall propose to you that we kill all

his children, for they are a very large family. If we may believe John Bunyan, there are some nine or ten of them, and all of them the picture of their old father. I hope we shall have grace to put an end to them as well as the parent.

I. First, then, let us DETECT OLD MR. EVIL QUESTIONING.

He does not go by that name in the world. When he was brought up to be tried as a traitor, he had the impudence to tell the Judge that his name was not Evil Questioning at all. "My Lord," he said, "my proper name is Honest Enquiry, not Evil Questioning. There may be a man of the name of Evil Questioning, but I am not that person at all, and I hope it will never become a sin for a man to make an honest enquiry, and freely to ask the ground of any truth that is propounded to him. For, my Lord, if we are to take things upon mere credence, matters of faith upon the witness of men, indeed we shall soon make great fools of ourselves. My name is 'Honest Enquiry,' my Lord, and I think myself to be a very honest citizen." Since Evil Questioning goes by that name, then, and you will not, therefore, readily detect him, I must take you round to see if we can find him out by his speech, for it is not by his name, but by his prating, that you may know this fellow.

Now, Lord Will-be-will, according to John Bunyan, in his allegory of the Holy War, kept an officer called Mr. Diligence, who used to go about listening under people's windows, catching every word he heard, and then he would bring to his Lord, intelligence if any traitor were harboured within the gates. Let me play the part of Mr. Diligence, and we will listen a moment or two while we hear old Mr. Evil Questioning talk. He is a ready fellow; he can talk upon almost any subject; I heard him the other day preach a sermon upon doctrine. He had been hearing a Calvinist minister. This minister had preached the truth as it is in Jesus and he had earnestly exhorted him to lay hold on Christ Jesus, but Mr. Evil Questioning put it thus - "Now, if there are so many to be saved, and there are a certain number of people that are not to be saved, then it can make no difference to me, I had better leave it as it is; for if I am to be saved I shall be saved, and if I am not to be saved I shall not be saved. Besides," said he, "it is irresistible grace that saves men. Now, if God

sends that grace into my heart, then I shall be saved, and if he does not, why I cannot do anything, and therefore I may as leave sit still as try and do anything you know, I hear the minister say that faith and repentance are the gift of God; well, if they are the gift of God, how inconsistent he was to exhort me to believe and repent. The man does not understand logic. I shall not believe, I shall not repent. For, do you not see that it does not stand to reason that I should try to do either the one or the other, because they are both the gift of God." Thus the man satisfied himself, and while I heard him talking, I thought to myself, "I know you Mr. Evil Questioning, well, and I know your father too; you are a descendant of the old fellow that was hanged in Bad Street, in old Bunyan's time, and I only wish I had the hanging of you again." He went another day to hear an Arminian preacher. He heard this preacher talking about the universal love, and the universal mercy of God; and this minister exhorted him to lay hold on Christ. But Mr. Evil Questioning is like a spider, he can suck gall out of any flower; so he went home and he said - "Well, if God is co infinitely merciful, then my sins are very little things indeed. I need make all this fuss and bother about them. I will just go on in them, and no doubt God will not be hard with me at the last, but will just forgive those sins off-hand, whether I believe or not. And, besides," said he, "his mercy is so lasting, that when I come to die I will just say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and then I shall enter into the kingdom of heaven as well as the best of them. And what is the use of that man exhorting me to believe and to repent, for he told me I might fall from grace? I might as well not begin, as begin now, presently to leave off, so I will wait till the end of my life before I begin, and then I shall run the less risk of falling from grace afterwards." Thus he reasoned with himself. Now whenever you hear that kind of argument, you may know at once there is a traitor there. You have discovered him. That is old Mr. Evil Questioning. Do not lose a moment, run straight up to your chamber, and tell the Lord that you have found out a traitor; ask him to send at once a warrant after him, to arrest the fellow who is doing the utmost he can to destroy your soul.

Sometimes this gentleman does not preach a doctrinal sermon but it is a practical one. I heard him the other day declaiming thus: "I do not go to any place of worship now-a-day; for to tell the truth, there is such a variety of sects and parties, and one kind of Christians finds fault with

another kind, that they are not agreed among themselves, I do not mean to go and listen to them or to pay any attention to them while they are so divided and so bigoted. Besides," he said, "look at the Christians, they are no better than other people, I dare say; their best ministers, if we could catch them in a corner are not at all superior to the rest of mankind, and as to common professors, why I lost ten pounds the other day by one of them who is a deacon. They are not a whit superior to the rest of mankind, I am sure; therefore, I shall not think about religion at all, it is all a farce and a lie. Why should I consider it? I will have nothing to do with it." There is the traitor again. At other times this man will find out some poor, lean, half-starved Christian, who has but little grace and very great misery, and he begins to talk thus. "There are your Christians, see what moping folks they are! How miserable! I never saw such a set of people in my life. Why if I were to go and listen to their minister I should drown myself in a month; they are such miserable wretches. As for me, I say let us hope well and have well; let us live merrily while we may, and if we must ever think about these serious things, let us put it off to the last." Have you never heard that gentleman? Ah, my hearers, there are some of you that have got him in your hearts, and I am only describing what you have often said to yourselves; or if I have not as yet hit upon the precise discourse of old Mr. Evil Questioning, yet I think I have tracked out some of his haunts. Does he not often give a tap at your door, and you say, "Walk in friend Questioning, I have a little matter to talk over with you. The minister has given me a little trouble in my conscience; come and see if you cannot put a plaster over the wound, so that I may go on in my sins comfortably, and be relieved from the troublesome necessity of changing my life and becoming a Christian." Sometimes this old fellow Evil Questioning goes further and tries, as he says, to lay the axe at the root of the thing. "Why," he says, "this doctrine of the atonement, this salvation by the blood of Christ, I have only just this to say about it, that a rational man cannot believe it at all. It is positively ridiculous to think of a man being saved by the righteousness of somebody else, let the Methodist believe it, I shall not. There is no reason in it." Then he begins to ask questions about the atonement, and proceeds to questions about the decrees, questions about inscrutable matters, questions about effectual calling, about total depravity, and the like, and so he runs through the whole scale of gospel truths and Bible revelations, stopping at each one

and asking a question that he may find in each some apology for disobeying God, some excuse for not yielding up his whole heart to Christ, and now believing in him that died to save the souls of men.

I think, however, I need not give you a more accurate description than I have done of this archdestroyer. In fact, it were utterly impossible for me to describe to you all his speeches. There is no subject which he will not handle. He is so glib of tongue and he has such sophistry of argument, that he will often persuade a man to believe that the worse is the better reason, and make a man imagine that he is not only excusable, but even commendable, for not being a Christian, and giving up his heart to Christ. Oh! if I could but see this Evil Questioning buried seven fathoms deep, I should feel I had an easy work to do in preaching the gospel; but, alas! when I have been the most earnest, my hearers have raised a question on the discourse, instead of yielding to its precepts; and when I have sought to explain the doctrine and lay it down by the rule of the Word, I find instead of producing conviction, that one and another will be questioning the orthodoxy or the heterodoxy of it. No fruit is brought forth because ye suffer not the seed to enter into your hearts, there to work effectually to the saving of your souls. Oh, fools and slow of heart, to be for ever asking questions while time is flying, and men are dying, and hell is filling - to be questioning when there is but a step between you and death - to be trying to unriddle mysteries and to unravel secrets when you are on the borders of the tomb and your souls may soon be required of you. Oh, fools, I say, and slow of heart, but surely so ye will be to the end of the chapter, unless sovereign grace shall open your eyes to see in the face of this Mr. Evil Questioning the marks and lineaments of a child of Satan, and unless God shall give you grace to turn him out of doors, to expel him instantly, find have no more to do with him as long as you live.

But do you know while I was going my rounds this morning looking after Mr. Evil Questioning, I happened to stop at the door of a house that had the blood-mark over the lintel and I was very much surprised to hear a voice just like old Mr. Questioning's inside that house. I could not believe my own ears, but I saw my own name on the door, and so I thought I might venture to enter and lo, I found this old villain sitting at my own table, and what think you he was saying? Why he was talking like this,

"God has promised that you shall hold on your way, but then you have so many temptations you cannot. He has promised to bless your ministry, but then the hearts of men are so hard, you might just as well give up preaching." He began to question the promises and asked how they could be fulfilled, and was beginning to make me question the vitality of my own religion. Get you gone, sir, I will have nothing to do with you, and if I meet you again I hope by the grace of God I shall be able to heave a stone that shall sink deep in your old crazy pate. Begone, sir, and have nought to do with me. With the child of God thou art a hated intruder. Who am I that I should question the Almighty? Who is the finite that he should ask the Infinite where is his power to fulfill his promise? No, my God:

"I trust the all-creating voice,
And faith requires no more,"

II. Having thus detected Mr. Evil Questioning, we will go on to DESCRIBE HIM.

Mr. Evil Questioning often boasts that he is the child of Human Reason; but I will let you know a secret or two about his parentage. Mr. Human Reason has once a very respectable man. He had a country-seat in the gardens of Paradise, and he was then great and honorable. He served his God with all his might and many a great and marvellous thing did he discover for the good of mankind; at that time he had a family, and they were all like himself, right good and loyal. But after the fall this man married again, and he took to himself one called Sin to be his partner, and this old Evil Questioning was one that was born after the fall. He does not belong to the first family at all. The first family was not so numerous as the last. There was one called Right Judgment born at that time. I hope he is still alive, and I believe he is. But the second family was very black and of tainted blood. They did not take at all after the father, except in one point, that at the time of the fall Mr. Human Reason lost his country-seat at Paradise, and together with the rest of the servants of Adam fell from his high estate and became perverted and depraved. His children are like him in their depravity, but not in their power of reasoning. They take after their mother, and they always have a predilection for sin, so that they "put darkness for light and light for

darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." The old gentleman never mentions his mother's name if he can help it. He always likes to boast that he is a lineal descendant of Human Reason, and so indeed he is, but he is a descendant of fallen Human Reason, not of Human Reason as it was in its glorious perfection. Now, all the powers of Adam were by the fall spoiled and ruined. They are there, but their bias was turned from that which is good to that which is evil, and now reason is not a trustworthy guide. Enlightened by the Spirit of God it can judge righteous judgment, but unenlightened and uninstructed, its bias is towards that which shall excuse man in his rebellion, which shall dishonor God, and which shall seek to raise the human race in proud rebellion against their Lord and Master.

Understand then, that the parentage of Evil Questioning lies here; man's perverted reason meets with man's love of sin, and these twain do join to bring forth these evil questions. It is not your reason that makes you talk against God, except it be your perverted reason. It is your love of sin that sets your reason on the wide-awake watch to try and discover some difficulty, and to make that a pretense why you should not be obedient to the heavenly command. Do not believe yourself when you repeat the tale told you by Satan, that you are only making honest enquiries - do not believe it for a minute. The honest enquiry is content with "It is written," and there it stops. Besides, if not content with this, the truth of the Bible is proved by the most conclusive logic. It is proved too by arguments against which all the gates of hell can never prevail. There are many excellent works which have been written, and all the arguments of modern sceptics have been refuted a thousand times over. Every objection that man can make has been already broken in pieces, and if a man be honest in his enquiries, he cannot long remain an unbeliever. Do not believe that your questioning springs from honesty, but be honest with yourself, and acknowledge this, that you do not love the gospel because it is too hard for you - it wants you to give up sins that you love too much, to renounce them, and because of this, you begin to question its truth. If it did not come upon you so sorely, and deal with you so summarily, you would believe it. But because it will have you give up your sins, you go in quest of a doubt, and put in plea after plea to gain time and hold on with the world. Though you do not doubt the justice of the

law, or the truth of the gospel, ye vexatiously question both. And yet you know very well that it is beyond your questioning, for it is the eternal verity of the Eternal God.

I have thus described the old man's parentage; shall I now tell you where he had his education? After Mr. Evil Questioning was born, he was put to the school of that old schoolmaster who has taught a great many of you - Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and this Mr. Worldly Wiseman used to make him read out of a book, called "Human Maxims," and this man has learned all the logic-art of that book of Human Maxims - a book very much patronized by the sacred consistory of hell. They greatly delight in it, and would have it spread everywhere; and they would have even the prophets of God bow their knee to this Baal, and take "for doctrines the commandments of men." No wonder, therefore, that being bad at first, and essentially vicious, this education was just suited to develop his powers, and he has gone from bad to worse, till he has been known at times to question the very existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, the truth of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, in fact; he has questioned everything which can be dear to a true-hearted man, every truth which can sustain the soul in the midst of its troubles, and give it light in its seasons of darkness.

And now to come nearer still to him. I have told you his parentage and education, now as to his character. If, you notice this man, it is only his talking that will strike you, and you will observe this about his talk, that he speaks about things of religion in a very different style from what he thinks about things of the world. If you meet him and he is buying or selling, he talks very rationally indeed; but when he comes to make excuses for himself and tell you why he is not converted, he talks like a fool, as he is. He would not himself act in the world upon the theories that he adopts in religion. Did I not tell you that I heard him say once, that because God had decreed therefore he would do nothing? Now you would expect to find him if he were honest in what he said, going out into the world and folding his arms, and saying, "Now if I am to get rich I shall get rich, and so there is an end of it; and if I am not to get rich I shall not get rich, and therefore I shall not work." No, he is as busy as a bee when he is about the things of the world, and yet he is as idle as possible when he is

meddling with the things of Christ. This same man, if he has a field to sow, he knows very well that if God has ordained a harvest there will be a harvest - but he sows for all that. He can understand in his business how free-agency is quite consistent with Divine Sovereignty. He understands when he is abroad how the decree of God does not at all limit the free action of man, but when he comes to matters of godliness with regard to his own soul, then he sees a wonderful difficulty there. Ah! he sees it because he wants to see it, and a man can see anything he likes to see if he does not want to do a thing that is uncomfortable and unpleasant. If you want an excuse for going to hell, you can find a thousand, every one as bad as the other, and Mr. Evil Questioning will furnish you with any quantity of them to suit every particular case. He has excuses that will suit the Frenchman and excuses that will suit the Englishman. He has a stock of common excuses just adapted to be sold retail to the poor, and he has many a refined excuse of every shade and color to suit the taste of the rich. No man like him. If you want to perish, you may do it logically. If you want to go to hell riding on a syllogism, he will assist you. He will give you the most rational and comfortable conveyance if you want to go there. Only to go to his shop, he will not keep you a single moment, but serve you across the counter with the most polite bow, and send you on your way rejoicing towards the depths of perdition.

You will thus detect Mr. Evil Questioning, because he uses a logic in spiritual things that he would not use in temporal things. Here is another way by which you may discover him. This man, when he is talking about the Infinite God, always measures him by the finite rule of man. When God is in the question, who is not to be limited nor to be grasped by our comprehension, he deals as freely with the matter as if it were a mere thing of ells or inches, or of ounces and pounds. Omnipotence he forgets, and omnipresence, and omniscience, and eternity, - all these attributes of God he casts away, and he talks to God, and talks about God, as if God were nothing different from the creature that his hands have made. Have you never heard him say, "How can such a thing be done?" If he did but stop and think, he would know that it is irrational to use the word can, when he is speaking of an Omnipotent One. He will often say, "Will such a thing that is promised be accomplished?" If he did but pause, he would recollect that to ask a question as to whether a thing will be done about a

God who is true and faithful, is to put a wicked and blasphemous question. But still he will do it. He deals with God's promises as if they were the draft-notes of a rogue. He treats God's doctrines as if they were the utterance of a raving maniac. He will deal with substantial verities as if they were frothy dreams, the mere speculations of a deluded brain. Strange villain that he is, daring to lift his mouth against heaven, and spit his blasphemous questions against the very existence and power of the Most High.

You may know him again by another sign, for he always draws his arguments from exceptions. He meets a miserable Christian - he knows very well that where there is one miserable Christian there are a thousand happy ones - but then he puts these thousand happy ones behind. It is the one miserable one that he fixes his attention upon. If he meets with one fallen professor, he knows that there are ten thousand Christians that stand upright in the hour of temptation, and will not bend in the blast of the terrors of the world when they come against him, seeking to turn him from his upright course - but no, he forgets all these; he only thinks of that one hypocrite, or that one professor, who was overtaken in an evil hour, and then he makes a syllogism like this - "One Christian has proved to be a hypocrite, therefore, as it is a bad thing to be a hypocrite, I will not be a Christian." Now, what an argument! And yet this satisfies some of you. There are some of you, when you have been once taken in by a man, will say, "Ah, well! I will never make a profession of religion. So-and-so made a profession; he was a bad one; therefore I will not have ought to do with it." Where is the force of this argument? If there are bad Christians, that is a presumption in itself that there are good ones, for if ever you see a bad sovereign in circulation, you may be sure there are some good ones, for if they were all bad we would none of us take any of them. Be sure of it, then, the name of Christian would cease to be, unless there were some good ones to keep up the current coin - the real stock in trade - on which the world grows rich. And suppose they were all bad, is that any reason why you should not be true and honest? If the church were all hypocrites, at least let me be an honest man, and serve my God truly, and with all my heart. That is the proper way of reasoning. But Evil Questioning takes exceptions, and considers them as if they were rules, and then from the exceptions draws a deduction which would not be logical even if they

were the rule, but which, seeing it is based upon the exceptions, is without a basis at all, and sinks to the ground as a mere wanton wilful falsehood.

I will only keep you one more minute upon this part of my subject. You may always know Mr. Evil Questioning by this one fact, that he invariably draws his conclusions from his wishes. When I have got an argument on hand, and the conclusion is contrary to what I would like it to be, I always think there is more likelihood that my reasoning is correct; but if the conclusion is just what my carnal heart would like it to be, I say I am afraid that my logic was at fault somewhere; for if I draw a conclusion that pleases myself, I ought to be very careful, especially when it is a matter in which my soul is concerned. We draw Justice with a bandage over her eyes, holding a pair of scales: now, whenever we are trying other people, that is how our justice ought to be meted out, and so it should be when we are trying ourselves. But, my dear friends, whenever we try ourselves, we are apt to move the bandage a little up, that the right eye may see just a little, that we may manage to put, somehow or other, a little extra weight in the scale that will favor ourselves. No man is so partial a judge as the man that is trying his own character. We are very severe with others, but we are very lenient to ourselves; we keep our swords well sharpened for our enemies; but if we do hit ourselves it is with the back of the blade; we never venture to strike deep and we always wish to have a little salve ready, some kind of extenuation. Habitually almost without knowing it we shake hands with ourselves very often, and say, "You are not so bad a fellow after all, I thought there was something amiss with you, and so there certainly is; but still there is not so much wrong with you as there is with a great many people, and you are a very respectable individual taking you for all in all." Now, if that is the conclusion you come to, suspect it, there is a flaw in the logic somewhere. Just look the reasoning through again. Cast that sum up once more, if it comes to this result, "Thou art rich," cast it up again, there is an extra figure that you have put in; for the right conclusion is, if you are an unconverted man, you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Do not believe the arithmetic or the logic which would bring you to any other conclusion than this.

III. Having thus described this old enemy after whom I am in full pursuit; I pause awhile and go on to my third division, which is bringing him out TO EXECUTE HIM.

I must give you a bit from John Bunyan's Holy War, for it is so wonderfully suggestive, and so thoroughly worthy of its quaint author. Mr. Evil Questioning was detected harbouring four doubters, who had come to attack the town of Mansoul; when he was brought up, the indictment was that he had studied the ruin of the town of Mansoul, that he had feloniously and treacherously harboured four of the king's enemies, and that he had expressed in the hearing of one Mr. Diligence, his wish that there were ten thousand such doubters in Mansoul. The old fellow when he was brought before the bar, first denied his name, and said his real name was Mr. Honest Enquiry, but when it was proved that he was old Evil Questioning, for Lord Will-be-will in the time of his evil estate had known him very intimately, then the old fellow pleaded "Not Guilty," and he began at once to utter his defense. "I answer," said Evil Questioning "the men that came into my house were strangers, and I took them in, and is it now become a crime in Mansoul for a man to entertain strangers? That I also nourished them is true, and why should my charity be blamed? As for the reason why I wished ten thousand of them in Mansoul, I never told it to the witnesses nor to themselves. I might wish them to be taken, and so might wish well to the town of Mansoul. I also bid them take heed that they fell not into the Captain's hands, but that might be because I am unwilling that any man should be slain, and not because I would have the king's enemies escape." So Mr. Evil Questioning was true to his name, he kept on questioning till the verdict was given, the sentence of death pronounced, and carried into execution; for they hanged him, as Bunyan says, opposite the door of his own house at the top of Bad Street, Ah! but I am afraid that he is alive now, still living and going about: I wish therefore to bring him up again to trial, and we will see if we cannot bring some charges against him; we will empanel an honest jury, and I know what the sentence will be, we shall lead him out to execution.

Men and brethren, if you have been questioning, instead of believing, if you have been making enquiries, instead of saying, "What must I do to be

saved?" which is the only allowable question, let me first beg of you to drive out this Evil Questioning, because he is a traitor to the King of heaven. He does not wish your good, but your ill; more than this, he is sent by Satan to prevent your obeying the commands of God: he is come to betray you. Oh I listen not to his words, though they are smoother than butter, for inwardly they are drawn swords: the drift of all he says is to keep you unreconciled to God. The great end of all he says is to make you wander further and further from the central point of bliss, to make you forsake the cross, to make you follow the devices of your own heart, and so bring upon yourself inevitable destruction. Oh! I beseech you, drive him out, because he is a traitor to the great King to whom all your allegiance is due. He wants to make you an enemy to God, and to keep you so. Out with him, I pray you. Hang him! let a straight end be put to him at once: let him no more delude and ruin your souls, and make you persevere in disobedience to God.

And then, again, I beseech you turn him out, for he is a liar. All the conclusion to which he has brought you are false ones, and you know they are. When you have sometimes in company bragged a little, and when a hard word has been said that has come home to your conscience, when you have put on a stout confidence and have begun to insinuate some doubts, you know very well you are not speaking honestly. You know there is a hell, though you often laugh at the idea; you know there is a world to come, though you argue against it. You are conscious that there is a God, though you yourself will sometimes deny it, you know very well that every conclusion to which this false reasoning of yours has brought you, is a downright falsehood, and a libel against the common-sense and sterling honesty of your nature. Oh! turn out, then, this wretch who is a descendant of the Father of Lies; and let us, each man of us, lay our hands on him as witnesses, and take up our stone to stone him.

Another accusation I bring against him is this: he has led you into a world of mischief. This habit of questioning has often blunted the edge of some sermon that you have heard; when the Word was coming right home to your conscience, this Mr. Evil Questioning has held up a shield and prevented the point from entering into your heart; besides that, have you not sometimes when under the influence of his delusive logic gone off to

the place where your lust has been cultivated, and where your conscience has been lulled to sleep? You know if it had not been for these questions, you would not be found so often in the tavern, or in the casino, or in the midst, perhaps, of even worse associations than these. It is because you have tried to make yourself an infidel that you have been able to go into sin. You have felt that if you did behave, sin would become unpleasant; in fact, you would be too gross a fool if you professed to believe, and then afterwards run and cut your own throat, and destroy your own soul, by persevering in your iniquities. Oh! I beseech you, remember the mischief this wicked habit has done you; it has brought you low, very low, even to the gates of hell; and if you persevere much longer in it, as I pray God you may not, it will bring you within the portals of hell. And then, when the gate of fire is shut, there is no arm that can open it, there is no question, no subtle questioning, that can administer a drop of comfort to you; there is no puzzling particle of metaphysics that can be as a drop of water to cool your burning tongue. The questioning that damned you shall be the tormentor that shall vex you, and your brain carried through fiery speculations shall for ever be horrified and alarmed by new difficulties and new mysteries, which shall be as faggots for the flames of hell for ever and for ever. Oh! let us bring out this Evil Questioning, and hang him on a gallows high as the gallows of Haman, and God grant that we may never see him again.

I have one other charge, and then I shall have closed up the accusation. Men and brethren, this man must die, for he has been a murderer. Oh! what millions of fools has Evil Questioning sent to hell! There are many gates to hell, but this is one of the widest and it is one of the most frequented, because it is a respectable gate. Men do not like to go on to perdition without having some reason, some logic to back them up, so they carry a lie in their right hand, and then they go there quietly, to meet their damnation logically, and to reason about the flames of hell when they are lying in them. Oh! my dear hearers, let us have done with this Evil Questioning, for if not, he will ruin us, as surely as he has ruined others. Be satisfied with "Thus saith the Lord." Take the Bible as it stands. Do not for ever be raising these doubts. Do not be busying yourself with secret things that are no business of yours whatever. Do not for ever be quibbling and putting these hard knotty points to us, while your poor soul

is perishing for lack of that grace which alone can save you from the wrath to come. "Well," says one, "but I mean to ask questions a little longer." Ah! but my dear friend, remember the habit of evil questioning grows upon a man; and at last God will fill you with your own devices. Draws there nigh a day when you will want to believe and you cannot - when questioning will come to be a strong delusion, so that you shall believe a lie - when from merely trying to be an infidel, you shall become at last a master in the arts of Belial. Yea, you shall take your degree of Doctor in Damnation, and shall sit in the seat of the scorner, condemned, already hardened in your sin, and ripened for the fire, as those who are ready to be burned. God grant that may not be the consequence; but it will be unless Mr. Evil Questioning be speedily brought out, given up to the gallows, and never more harboured in your house.

I have thus spoken in the form of an allegory. If I have put in some words of pleasantry, it was that I might engage your attention. I feel the subject to be awfully solemn, and it is necessary that we should all think of it, and I hope you will think of it none the less because it has been clothed somewhat in an allegorical form, and because I have tried to represent this evil habit as though it were an evil being that sought your destruction. My concluding head is especially addressed to the people of God, and to them I hope it will be very interesting.

IV. Old Mr. Evil Questioning is the father of a large family, and John Bunyan tells you about his family. He says, he married one called Miss No-hope, she was the daughter of old Dark, and when old Dark was dead, her uncle Incredulity took her and brought her up as his own daughter, and then he gave her to old Evil Questioning, and he had by her several children. I will give you the names of them, because it shall be my earnest endeavor to fire a shot at them this morning, as well as at their old father. Their names are these - Mr. Doubt, Mr. Legal Life, Mr. Unbelief, Mr. Wrong Thoughts of Christ, Mr. Clip Promise, Mr. Carnal Sense, Mr. Live-by-Feeling, and Mr. Self Love. All these were the offspring of the father, and against all these a warrant was issued by the prince Immanuel that they should be hunted down, and every one of them given to the sword.

Now, I will take the eldest son, there is Mr. Doubt, - Is he not the child of

Evil Questioning? Why, you can see his father's image in his face. You remember Mr. Doubt called one day at the tent of Sarah, and his father with him, and Sarah said, "Shall I who am ninety years of age have pleasure? shall these breasts afford nourishment for a child?" Here was Evil Questioning; and then Sarah laughed. That was Mr. Doubt that played off a bit of his satire, and set her laughing. Ah! had she but believed, she might have attained a nobler commendation. It almost tarnishes her fair reputation that we must remember this of her - she was the woman who laughed at God's promise, as though it were impossible. Brothers and sisters, Mr. Doubt has often called at your house and made you cast reflections on the promise. He has said, "How can it be true? Such a sinner as you, so weak, so vile, so unworthy." Oh believer, the promise is true; God has pledged his word and stamped his covenant with his oath. When you see a promise, never doubt it; for Doubt is the descendant of Evil Questioning, and he is a Diabolian from the birth up. However, I am rather apprehensive, though I publish his name to-day, and though I were to give you his portrait in the Hue anti Cry, he will not get arrested just yet, or if he be arrested, I am afraid he will break his prison, and be at liberty again. For this Mr. Doubt is everywhere about the country; and I find him in many a secluded nook by the way-side, troubling some poor woman on her dying bed, and I find him, too, in many a hall where the rich man is thinking about Christ, but is kept back by this troublesome intruder, who whispers a doubt as to whether Christ will receive him. He is everywhere - but drive him out; make him hide his head, let him not be pampered and fed as he is by some people, lest Doubt grow into Despair, and you should lose your comfort, and bring sorrow into your heart for ever.

Another child is Mr. Clip-Promise. Do you know him? He does not doubt the promise, but he clips the edge of it. He makes out that it will not all be fulfilled, only a part of it. Now there is a proclamation issued against Mr. Clip Promise, that whoever will arrest him shall be greatly honored, for he is a notorious villian, by whose doings much of the King's coin was abased, therefore it was expedient that he should be made a public example. And, Bunyan says, "They did take him, and they first set him in the pillory, and afterwards they tied his hands behind him and they whipped him through the streets of Mansoul, bidding all the children and

servants whip him, and then at last they hanged him. And," says mine author, "this may seem very hard treatment, but when one considers how much loss the town of Mansoul may sustain by the clipping of the promises which are the coins with which they trade, I can only say I hope that all his kith and kin may be treated with the like severity." Oh! it you have attempted to cut the promise down, have done with it I pray you; and do take it as it stands in all its plenteousness of grace and all its sufficiency. Judge it not by your own notions, but take it as it comes from God, shining and glittering from the mint of heaven. Take it at its full current value with the merchants, and you shall surely have its equivalent in the fulfilments which God will work to you in his providence and his grace. Moreover, I will say this unto thee, the more thou tradest with this precious coin the more thou wilt prize it, as Eskine sings -

"Let thy experience sweet declare,
If able to remind,
A Bochim here, a Bethel there,
Thy Savior made thee find."

Then there is Mr. Wrong-thoughts of Christ. Do you know him? Well I do not know that I have met him very lately, but there was a time when he and I had a great battle, and I think he had the worst of it, for by grace I was enabled to strike him very hard. Do you know what this fellow had the impudence to tell me? He said, "Oh! Christ will never receive such a sinner as you are." And when I had come to Christ, and he received me, he said, "Oh! Christ will not hold you fast." He will it you let him, but then you will not let him, for you are such a sinner he cannot hold you, and he will not. He has often made me doubt my Master's immutability or his faithfulness, or his power to save. But as far as I am personally concerned of late, I was able to seize him, and I have laid him in prison; I think he is dying of a consumption, for I have not heard much of him lately. Glad enough shall I be to have him buried once for all. And if any of you are troubled with him, lock him up, do not let him keep abroad, for Wrong-thoughts of Christ is one of the worst spirits that ever came up from the pit. What! to think badly of Christ, to think of him who is all goodness, as if he were hard-hearted or unkind. Begone, Wrong thoughts of Christ, we will not harbour thee but will put thee in durance vile, and there shalt

thou starve and die.

There are two others whom some of you may have known, Mr. Legal Life, and Mr. Live-by-Feeling. I think they were twins. Mr. Legal Life sometimes gets hold of the Christian and makes him judge himself by legal evidences, and not by evangelical evidence. When the Christian has kept a commandment, Mr. Legal Life will say, "There now you live by your works." He knows that Christians would die by their works, and that the best of them can only live by faith. And when a Christian has made a slip, and has not kept the commandment, in comes Mr. Legal Life, and he says, "You are a lost soul, for you have not kept the commandment;" though he knows right well, "that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Yet he tries to make his life by the law which no Christian ever did do or ever will do, for the law is of death and not of life.

Then there is Mr. Live-by-Feeling, who makes us judge ourselves according to what we feel. If we feel happy and devout, "Oh," he says. "now you are in a blessed frame, the Master will accept you," anon you feel unhappy, and dull, and cold, and dead. "Oh," says Mr. Live-by-Feeling, "you are no child of God, or else you would not be like this." Now catch both these fellows, if you can, and away with them; away with such fellows from the earth. It is not fit that they should live. Come, ye Christians, and crucify them, nail them up, they are relatives of the old flesh, and let them die with the flesh; they will never bring you any good; they are the down-right direct opponents of the gospel. Away with them, for "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and if we believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ, neither our feelings nor our efforts can ever save our souls in any measure whatsoever. Legal Life, and Live-by-Feeling must be put to the death.

And now I want your attention, because here is a fine opportunity for some of you to become celebrated and rich, if you are able to fully the commission. One of the children of old Evil Questioning was Mr. Carnal-Sense. Now John Bunyan tells us, and I believe that he is right, at least I have his authority for it, and that is no mean authority, that there is a proclamation set up in the market place at Man-Soul, that whosoever

shall bring Mr. Carnal-Sense, dead or alive, to the King Immanuel, shall be made a nobleman, shall have a right to sit at the King's table every day, and moreover, he shall be made keeper of the treasury of the city of Man-Soul. There you see is a noble opportunity for you. But, with John Bunyan, "It is rather unfavorable if you are ambitious; many there were that spent much of their time in endeavoring to discover him, but they have never been able to find him; still it is well known that he is abroad, and that he frequents poor men's houses by night very much to their sorrow and grief." Now if you can but lay hold of him, see how you shall be exalted; you shall have daily fellowship with your king, and you shall have the whole treasure of God to make you rich. Well, blessed be God, we do know one thing, that is, that if we cannot kill Carnal-Sense, yet we can starve him a little, and if he will come abroad it shall be by night, for we will not let him come abroad in the day. Old Carnal-Sense, what mischief has he done!

"Judge not the Lord by carnal sense,
But trust him for his grace,
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face."

Oh! Christians, get rid of the thought that thou canst judge thy God by carnal appearances, do not take the promise by the providence, but the providence by the promise. Do not read the book of life by thy life, but read thy life by the book of life. Have done with Carnal Sense and thou shalt be happy, thou shalt have daily fellowship with God and all the riches of his treasury.

There remains another one upon whom I must speak just for a minute. It is one called Mr. Self-Love. Ah, he is one of the biggest of the children of Mr. Evil Questioning. Now Mr. Self-Love was tried and condemned to die, but he had so many friends in the city, that they did not like to hang him outright. There was, however, a brave man in the king's army, a common soldier, a man that was need to sleep out in the fields at night, and to do much hard work - his name was Mr. Self-Denial, and coming out from the midst of the crowd, just when the prisoner was going to be acquitted, he said, "If such villains as these are winked at in Man-soul I

will lay down my commission." He then took him from the crowd and had him among the soldiers, and there he was put to death. For this, the king made the common soldier a lord, and he was honored in the town of Mansoul. "Though," says Bunyan, "there were a good many people in the town that did not like it, and they used to mutter at it, but they did not say much as long as king Immanuel was there. Oh, do you know that old Self-Love? You will never get rid of him unless you get Mr. Self-Denial to help you; unless you are ready to deny the affections and lusts, to pluck out right eyes, and cut off right hands, and to yield up one delight after another, that so self may be trodden under foot, and Jesus Christ may be all in all.

There is one other child. I have left him to the last; and then I have done with the family - Mr. Unbelief "Now," says Bunyan, "Unbelief was a nimble fellow." He was often caught, but he was like the hero of the wicked Shepherd, he always broke his prison and was out again. Although he has often been kept in hold, he has always escaped, and he is every day about somewhere or other. Oh, brothers and sisters, Unbelief is abroad to-day, he will be attacking some of you, seeking to rend your jewels from you. I beseech you, do not harbour him, but do live by faith, remember you how many die by unbelief; therefore cling ye - cling to Christ.

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
And at his footstool bow the knee,
So Israel's' God thy peace shall be."

When thine evidences are dark and thy joys are gone, still throw thine arms about the cross; and remember, thou canst never perish trusting there.

And thou, poor sinner, this last word to thee. Have done with thy questionings, end thy questions all of them, at the cross of Christ. Look to my Master now: a look will save you. Trust him, and you are saved - saved now and saved for ever. Cast yourself on him. Have done with your own wit and wisdom; take him to be your wisdom, your righteousness, your all, and he will not cast you away. Poor soul! he will take you in, though

you are black as Satan himself. He will wash you and make you clean; he will take you to himself, and put the crown of immortality upon your head; he will robe you in the garments of glory; and you shall be his in that day when he maketh up his jewels.

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Mr Fearing Comforted

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? - Matthew 14:31

It seems as if doubt were doomed to be the perpetual companion of faith. As dust attends the chariotwheels so do doubts naturally becloud faith. Some men of little faith are perpetually enshrouded with fears; their faith seems only strong enough to enable them to doubt. If they had no faith at all, then they would not doubt, but having that little, and but so little, they are perpetually involved in distressing surmises, suspicions, and fears. Others, who have attained to great strength and stability of faith, are nevertheless, at times, subjects of doubt. He who has a colossal faith will sometimes find that the clouds of fear float over the brow of his confidence. It is not possible, I suppose, so long as man is in this world, that he should be perfect in anything; and surely it seems to be quite impossible that he should be perfect in faith. Sometimes, indeed, the Lord purposely leaves his children, withdraws the divine inflowings of his grace, and permits them to begin to sink, in order that they may understand that faith is not their own work, but is at first the gift of God, and must always be maintained and kept alive in the heart by the fresh influence of the Holy Spirit. I take it that Peter was a man of great faith. When others doubted, Peter believed. He boldly avowed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, for which faith he received the Master's commendation, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." He was of faith so strong, that at Christ's command he could tread the billow and find it like glass beneath his feet, yet even he was permitted in this thing to fall. Faith forsook him, he looked at the winds and the waves,

and began to sink, and the Lord said to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" As much as to say, "O Peter, thy great faith is my gift, and the greatness of it is my work. Think not that thou art the author of thine own faith; I will leave thee, and this great faith of thine shall speedily disappear, and like another who hath no faith, thou shalt believe the winds, and regard the waves, but shalt distrust thy Master's power, and therefore shalt thou sink."

I think I shall be quite safe in concluding this morning, that there are some here who are full of doubting and fearing. Sure I am that all true Christians have their times of anxious questioning. The heart that hath never doubted has not yet learned to believe. As the farmers say, "The land that will not grow a thistle, will not grow wheat;" and the heart that cannot produce a doubt has not yet understood the meaning of believing. He that never doubted of his state - he may, perhaps he may, too late. Yes, there may be timid ones here, those who are always of little faith, and there may be also great hearts, those who are valiant for truth, who are now enduring seasons of despondency and hours of darkness of heart.

Now in endeavoring to comfort you this morning, I would remark that the text goes upon a very wise principle. If a man believes in anything it is always proper to put to him the question, "Why do you believe? What evidence have you that what you believe is certainly correct?" We believe on evidence. Now the most foolish part of many men's doubts, is, that they do not doubt on evidence. If you should put to them the question, "Why do you doubt?" - they would not be able fairly to answer. Yet mark, if men's doubts be painful, the wisest way to remove them is by simply seeing whether they have a firm basis. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" If you believe a thing you want evidence, and before you doubt a thing you ought to have evidence too. To believe without evidence is to be credulous, and to doubt without evidence is to be foolish. We should have ground for our doubts as well as a basis for our faith. The text, therefore, goes on a most excellent principle, and it deals with all doubting minds by asking them this question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

I shall endeavor to exhort you on the same plan this morning. I shall

divide only sermon into two parts. First, I shall address myself to those of you who are in great trouble with regard to *temporal circumstances*, you are God's people, but you are sorely tried, and you have begun to doubt. I shall then deal with you upon *spiritual matters* - there are some here who are God's true, quickened, and living people, but they are doubting - to them also I shall put the same question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?"

I. First, then, in TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES, God has not made for his people a smooth path to heaven. Before they are crowned they must fight; before they can enter the celestial city they must fulfill a weary pilgrimage. Religion helps us in trouble, but it does not suffer us to escape from it. It is through much tribulation that we inherit the kingdom. Now the Christian when he is full of faith passes through affliction with a song in his mouth; he would enter the fiery furnace itself, fearless of the devouring flame, or with Jonah he would descend into the great deeps, unalarmed at the hungry sea. As long as faith maintains its hold, fear is a stranger; but at times, during sundry great and sore troubles, the Christian begins to fear that surely at last he shall be overcome, and shall be left to himself to die and perish in despair.

Now, what is the reason why you doubt? I must come to the plan of the text and put the great question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Here it will be proper for us to enquire: Why did Simon Peter doubt? He doubted for two reasons. First, because he looked too much to second causes and secondly, because he looked too little at the first cause. The answer will suit you also, my trembling brother. This is the reason why you doubt, because you are looking too much to the things that are seen, and too little to your unseen Friend who is behind your troubles and who shall come forth for your deliverance. See poor Peter in the ship - his Master bids him come; in a moment he casts himself into the sea, and to his own surprise he finds himself walking the billows. He looks down, and actually it is the fact; his foot is upon a crested wave, and yet he stands erect; he treads again, and yet his footing is secure. "Oh!" thinks Peter, "this is marvellous." He begins to wonder within his spirit what manner of man *he* must be who has enabled him thus to tread the treacherous deep; but just then, there comes howling

across the sea a terrible blast of wind; it whistles in the ear of Peter, and he says within himself, "Ah! here comes an enormous billow driven forward by the blast now, surely, I must, I shall be overwhelmed." No sooner does the thought enter his heart than down he goes; and the waves begin to enclose him. So long as he shut his eye to the billow, and to the blast, and kept it only open to the Lord who stood there before him, he did not sink; but the moment he shut his eye on Christ, and looked at the stormy wind and treacherous deep, down he went. He might have traversed the leagues of the Atlantic, he might have crossed the broad Pacific, if he could but have kept his eye on Christ, and ne'er a billow would have yielded to his tread, but he might have been drowned in a very brook if he began to look at second causes, and to forget the Great Head and Master of the Universe who had bidden him walk the sea. I say, the very reason of Peter's doubt was, that he looked at second causes and not at the first cause. Now, that is the reason why you doubt. Let me just probe you now for a while. You are in despondency about temporal affairs: what is the reason why you are in trouble? "Because," say you, "I never was in such a condition before in my life. Wave upon wave of trouble comes upon me. I have lost one friend and then another. It seems as if business had altogether run away from me. Once I had a flood-tide, and now it is an ebb, and my poor ship grates upon the gravel, and I find she has not water enough to float her - what will become of me? And, oh! sir, my enemies have conspired against me in every way to cut me up and destroy me; opposition upon opposition threatens me. My shop must be closed; bankruptcy stares me in the face, and I know not what is to become of me." Or else your troubles take another shape, and you feel that you are called to some eminently arduous service for your Lord, and your strength is utterly insignificant compared with the labor before you. If you had great faith it would be as much as you could do to accomplish it; but with your poor little faith you are completely beaten. You cannot see how you can accomplish the matter at all. Now, what is all this but simply looking at second causes? You are looking at your trouble, not at the God who sent your trouble; you are looking at yourselves, not at the God who dwells within you, and who has promised to sustain you. O soul! it were enough to make the mightiest heart doubt, if it should look only at things that are seen. He that is nearest to the kingdom of heaven would have cause to droop and die if he had nothing to look at but that which

eye can see and ear can hear. What wonder then if thou art disconsolate, when thou hast begun to look at the things which always must be enemies to faith?

But I would remind you that you have forgotten to look to Christ since you have been in this trouble. Let me ask you, have you not thought less of Christ than you ever did? I will not suppose that you have neglected prayer, or have left your Bible unread; but still, have you had any of those sweet thoughts of Christ which once you had? Have you been able to take all your troubles to him and say - "Lord, thou knowest all things; I trust all in thy hands?" Let me ask you, have you considered that Christ is omnipotent, and therefore able to deliver you; that he is faithful, and must deliver you, because he has promised to do so? Have you not kept your eye on his rod, and not on his hand? Have you not looked rather to the crook that smote you, than to the hand that moved that crook? Oh, recollect, that you can never find joy and peace while you are looking at the things that are seen, the second causes of your trouble; your only hope, your only refuge and joy must be to look to him who dwells within the veil. Peter sunk when he looked to outward providences, so must you. He would never have ceased to walk the wave, never would he have begun to sink, if he had looked alone to Christ, nor will you if you will look alone to him.

And here let me now begin to argue with such of you as are the people of God, who are in sore trouble lest Christ should leave you to sink. Let me forbid your fears by a few words of consolation. You are now in Peter's condition; you are like Peter; *you are Christ's servant*. Christ is a good master. You have never heard that he suffered one of his servants to be drowned when going on his errands. Will he not take care of his own? Shall it be said at last that one of Christ's disciples perished while he was in obedience to Christ. I say he were a bad master if he should send you on an errand that would involve your destruction. Peter, when he was in the water, was where his master had called him to be, and you in your trouble now, are not only Christ's servant, but you are where Christ has chosen to put you. Your afflictions, remember, come neither from the east nor from the west, neither doth your trouble grow out of the ground. All your suffering is sent upon you by your God. The medicine which you

now drink is compounded in heaven. Every grain of this bitterness which now fills your mouth was measured by the heavenly physician. There is not an ounce more trouble in your cup, than God chose to put there. Your burden was weighed by God before you were called to bear it. The Lord who gave you the mercy has taken it away; the same God who has blessed you with joy is he that hath now ploughed you with grief. You are where God put you. Ask yourself this question then: - Can it be possible that Christ would put his own servant into a perilous condition and then leave him there? I have heard of fiends, in fables, tempting men into the sea to drown them; but is Christ a syren? Will he entice his people on to the rocks? Will he tempt them into a place where he shall destroy them? God forbid. If Christ calls thee into the fire, he will bring thee out of it; and if he bids thee walk the sea, he will enable thee to tread it in safety. Doubt not, soul; if thou hadst come there of thyself, then thou mightest fear, but since Christ put thee there, he will bring thee out again. Let this be the pillar of thy confidence - thou art his servant, he wilt not leave thee; thou art where he put thee, he cannot suffer thee to perish. Look away, then, from the trouble that surrounds thee, to thy Master, and to his hand that hath planned all these things.

Remember too, who it is that hath thee where thou art. It is no harsh tyrant who has led thee into trouble. It is no austere unloving heart who hath bidden thee pass through this difficulty to gratify a capricious whim. Ah, no, he who troubles thee is *Christ*. Remember his bleeding hand; and canst thou think that the hand which dropped with gore can ever hang down when it should be stretched for thy deliverance? Think of the eye that wept over thee on the cross; and can the eye that wept for thee be blind when thou art in grief? Think of the heart that was opened for thee; and shall the heart that did bleed its life away to rescue thee from death, be hard and stolid when thou art overwhelmed in sorrow? It is Christ, that stands on yonder billow in the midst of the tempest with thee. He is suffering as well as thou art. Peter is not the only one walking on the sea; his master is there with him too. And so is Jesus with thee to-day, with thee in thy troubles, suffering *with* thee as he suffered *for* thee. Shall he leave thee, he that bought thee, he who is married to thee, he that hath led thee thus far, hath succoured thee hitherto he who loves thee better than he loves himself, shall he forsake thee? O turn thine eyes from the

rough billow, listen no longer to the howling tempest, turn thine eyes to him thy loving Lord, thy faithful friend, and fix thy trust on him, who even now in the midst of the tempest, cries, "It is I, be not afraid."

One other reflection will I offer to such of you as are now in sore trouble on account of temporal matters, and it is this - *Christ has helped you hitherto*. Should not this console you? Ah, Peter, why couldest thou fear that thou shouldest sink? It was miracle enough that thou didst not sink at first. What power is it that hath held thee up till now? Certainly not thine own. Thou hadst fallen at once to the bottom of the sea, O man, if God had not been thy helper; if Jesus had not made thee buoyant, Peter, thou wouldest soon have been a floating carcass. He who helped thee then to walk so long as thou couldest walk, surely he is able to help thee all the way until he shall grasp thy hand in Paradise to glorify thee with himself. Let any Christian look back to his past life, and he will be astonished that he is what he is and where he is. The whole Christian life is a series of miracles, wonders linked into wonders, in one perpetual chain. Marvel, believer, that thou hast been upheld till now; and cannot he that hath kept thee to this day preserve thee to the end? What is yon roaring wave that threatens to overwhelm thee - what is it? why thou hast endured greater waves than these in the past. What is yon howling blast? Why, he has saved thee when the wind was howling worse than that. He that helped thee in six troubles will not forsake thee in this. He who hath delivered thee out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will not, he cannot forsake thee now.

In all this, I have labored to turn your eyes from what you are seeing to that which you cannot see, but in which you must believe. Oh! if I might but be successful, though feeble my words, yet mighty should be the consolation which should flow therefrom.

A minister of Christ, who was always in the habit of visiting those whom he knew to be eminent for piety, in order that he might learn from them, called upon an aged Christian who had been distinguished for his holiness. To his great surprise, however, when he sat down by his bedside, the erred man said, "Ah! I have lost my way. I did think at one time that I was a child of God, now I find that I have been a stumbling-

block to others; for these forty years I have deceived the church and deceived myself, and now I discover that I am a lost soul." The minister very wisely said to him, "Ah! then I suppose you like the song of the drunkard and you are very fond of the amusements of the world and delight in profanity and sin?" "Ah! no," said he, "I cannot bear them, I could not endure to sin against God." "O then," said the minister, "then it is not at all likely that God will lock you up in hell with men that you cannot bear here. If now you hate sin, depend on it God will not shut you up for ever with sinners. But, my brother," said the minister "tell me what has brought you into such a distressed state of mind?" "O sir, "said he, "it was looking away from the God of providence, to myself I had managed to save about one hundred pounds, and I have been lying here ill now this last six months, and I was thinking that my one hundred pounds would soon be spent, and then what should I do. I think I shall have to go to the workhouse, I have no friend to take care of me, and I have been thinking about that one hundred pounds of mine. I knew it would soon be gone, and then, then, how could the Lord provide for me. I never had either doubt or fear till I began to think about temporal matters. The time was when I could leave all that with God. If I had not had one hundred pounds, I should have felt quite sure he would provide for me; but I begin to think now that I cannot provide for myself. The moment I think of that, my heart is darkened." The minister then led him away from all trust in an arm of flesh, and told him his dependence for bread and water was not on his one hundred pounds, but on the God who is the possessor of heaven and earth - that as for his bread being given him and his water being sure God would take care of that, for in so doing he would only be fulfilling his promise. The poor man was enabled in the matter of providence to cast himself entirely upon God, and then his doubts and fears subsided, and once more he began to walk the sea of trouble, and did not sink. O believer, if thou takest thy business into thine own hands, thou wilt soon be in trouble. The old Puritan said, "He that carves for himself will soon cut his fingers," and I believe it. There never was a man who began to take his own matters out of God's hand that was not glad enough to take them back again. He that runs before the cloud runs a fool's errand. If we leave all our matters, temporal as well as spiritual, in the hand of God, we shall lack no good thing, and what is better still, we shall have no care, no trouble, no thought; we shall cast all our burden

upon him for he careth for us. There is no need for two to care, for God to care and the creature too. If the Creator cares for us, then the creature may sing all day long with joy and gladness: -

"Mortals cease from toil and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow."

II. But now, in the second part of the discourse, I have to speak of SPIRITUAL THINGS. To the Christian, these are the causes of more trouble than all his temporal trials. In the matters of the soul and of eternity many doubts will arise. I shall, however, divide them into two sorts - doubts of our present acceptance, and doubts of our final perseverance.

Many there are of God's people who are much vexed and troubled with doubts about their present acceptance. "Oh," say they "there was a time when I knew I was a child of God; I was sure that I was Christ's, my heart would fly up to heaven at a word; I looked to Christ hanging on the cross, I fixed all my trust on him, and a sweet, calm, and blessed repose filled my spirit.

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.'

And now," saith this doubting one, "now I am afraid I never knew the Lord; I think that I have deceived myself, and that I have been a hypocrite. Oh that I could but know that I am Christ's, I would give all I had in the world, if he would but let me know that he is my beloved, and that I am his." Now, soul, I will deal with thee as I have been just now treating of Peter. Thy doubts arise from looking to second causes, and not to Christ. Let us see if this is not the truth. Why do you doubt? Your answer is, "I doubt, because I feel my sin so much. Oh, what sins have I committed! When first I came to Christ I *thought* I was the chief of sinners; but now I *know* I am. Day after day I have added to my guilt; and since my pretended conversion," says this doubting one, "I have been a bigger sinner than ever I was before. I have sinned against light and

against knowledge, against grace, and mercy, and favor. O never was there such a sinner under God's heaven out of hell as I am." But, soul, is not this looking to second causes? It is true, thou art the chief of sinners; take that for granted, let us not dispute it. Thy sins are as evil as thou sayest they are, and a great deal more so. Depend on it, thou art worse than thou thinkest thyself to be. Thou thinkest thou art bad enough, but thou art not so bad in thine own estimation as thou really art. Thy sins seem to thee to be like roaring billows, but in God's sight they are like towering mountains without summit. Thou seemest to thyself to be black - black as the tents of Kedar; in God's eyes thou art blacker still. Set that down, to begin with, that the waves are big, and that the winds are howling, I will not dispute that. I ask thee, what hast thou to do with that? Does not the Word of God command thee to look to Christ. Great as thy sins are, Christ is greater than they all. They are black; but his blood can wash thee whiter than snow. I know thy sins deserve damnation; but Christ's merits deserve salvation. It is true, the pit of hell is thy lawful portion, but heaven itself is thy gracious portion. What! is Christ less powerful than thy sin? That cannot be! To suppose *that* were that to make the creature mightier than the Creator. What! is thy guilt more prevalent with God than Christ's righteousness? Canst thou think so little of Christ as to imagine that thy sins can overwhelm and conquer him? O man, thy sins are like mountains; but Christ's love is like Noah's flood; it prevaieth twenty cubits, and the tops of the mountains are covered. It is looking at sin and not looking to the Saviour that has made thee doubt. Thou art looking to the second cause, and not to him who is greater than all.

"Nay, but," you reply, "it is not my sin, sir, that grieves me; it is this: I feel so hardened, I do not feel my sin as I ought. Oh if I could but weep as some weep! If I could but pray as some pray! Then I think I could be saved. If I could feel some of the terrors that good men have felt, then I think I could believe. But I feel none of these things. My heart seems like a rock of ice, hard as granite, and as cold as an iceberg. It will not melt. You may preach, but it is not affected; I may pray, but my heart seems dumb, I may read even the story of Christ's death, and yet my soul is not moved by it. Oh surely I cannot be saved!" Ah this is *looking to second causes*, again! Hast thou forgotten that Word which saith, "God is greater than our hearts?" Hast thou forgotten that? O child of God! shame on

thee that thou dost look for comfort where comfort never can be found. Look to thyself for peace! Why, there ne'er can be any in this land of war. Look to thine own heart for joy! There can be none there, in this barren wilderness of sin. Turn, turn thine eye to Christ: he can cleanse thine heart, he can create life, and light, and truth in the inward parts; he can wash thee till thou shalt be whiter than snow, and cleanse thy soul and quicken it, and make it live, and feel, and move, so that it shall hear his simplest words, and obey his whispered mandate. O look not now at the second cause; look thou at the great first cause; otherwise I shall put to thee again the question, "O thou of little faith, *wherefore* didst thou doubts"

"Still," says another, "I could believe, notwithstanding my sin and my hardness of heart; but, do you know, that of late I have lost communion with Christ to such an extent that I cannot help thinking that I must be a cast-away. Oh! sir, there were times when Christ used to visit me, and bring me such sweet love-tokens. I was like the little ewe lamb in the parable; I did drink out of his cup, and feed from his table, and lie in his bosom; often did he take me to his banqueting-house, his banner over me was love. What feastings I then had! I would bask in the sunlight of his countenance. It was summer with my soul. But now it is winter, and the sun is gone, and the banqueting-house is closed. No fruits are on the table; no wines are in the bottles of the promise; I come to the sanctuary, but I find no comfort; I turn to the Bible, but I find no solace; I fall on my knees, but even the stream of prayer seems to be a dry brook. Ah! soul, but art thou not still looking to second causes? These are the most precious of all secondary things, but yet thou must not look to them, but to Christ. Remember, it is not thy communing that saves thee, but Christ's dying; it is not Christ's comfortable visit to thy soul, that ensures thy salvation; it is Christ's own visit to the house of mourning, and to the garden of Gethsemane. I would have thee keep thy comforts as long as thou canst; but when they die, believe on thy God still. Jonah had a gourd once, and when that gourd died he began to mourn. Well might some one have said to him, "Jonah! thou hast lost thy gourd, but thou hast not lost thy God." And so might we say to you: you have not lost his love; you have lost the light of his countenance, but you have not lost the love of his heart; you have lost his sweet and gracious communion, but he is the

same still, and he would have thee believe his faithfulness and trust him in the dark and rely upon him in the stormy wind and tempest. Look to none of these outward things, but look alone to Christ - Christ bleeding, Christ dying Christ dead, Christ buried, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ interceding. This is the thing thou art to look to - Christ, and him only. And looking there, thou shalt be comforted. But look to aught else, and thou shalt begin to sink; like Peter, the waves shall fail thee, and thou shalt have to cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

But, again, to conclude: others of God's people are afraid that they shall never be able to persevere and hold out to the end. "Oh!" says one, "I know I shall yet fall away and perish, for look! - look what an evil heart of unbelief I have; I cannot live one day without sin; my heart is so treacherous, it is like a bomb-shell; let but a spark of temptation fall upon it and it will blow up to my eternal destruction. With such a tinder-box heart as I have, how can I hope to escape, while I walk in the midst of a shower of sparks." "Oh!" saith one, "I feel my nature to be so utterly vile and depraved that I cannot hope to persevere. If I hold on a week or a month it will be a great work; but to hold on all my life until I die - oh! this is impossible." Looking to second causes again, are you not? Will you please to remember that if you look to creature strength it is utterly impossible that you should persevere in grace, even for ten minutes, much less for ten years! If your perseverance depends upon yourself you are a lost man. You may write that down for a certainty. If you have one jot or one tittle to do with your own perseverance in divine grace you will never see God's face at last; your grace will die out; your life will be extinguished, and you must perish, if your salvation depends upon yourself. But remember, you have already been kept these months and these years: what has done that? Why, divine grace; and the divine grace that has held you on for one year can hold you on for a century, nay, for an eternity, if it were necessary. He that has begun can carry on and must carry on too, otherwise he were false to his promise and would deny himself. "Ah! but," you say, "sir, I cannot tell with what temptations I am surrounded; I am in a workshop, where everybody laughs at me; I am called nicknames because I follow the cause of Christ. I have been able hitherto to put up with their rebukes and their jests; but now they are adopting another plan; they try to tempt me away from the house of God,

and entice me to the theater, and to worldly amusements, and I feel that, placed as I am, I never can hold on. As well might a spark hope to live in the midst of an ocean as for grace to live in my heart." Ah! but, soul, who has made it to live hitherto? What is it that hath helped thee up till now to say, "Nay," to every temptation? Why, the Lord thy Redeemer. Thou couldst not have done it so long, if it had not been for him; and he that hath helped thee to stand so long will never put thee to shame. Why, if thou be a child of God, and thou shouldst fall away and perish, what dishonor would be brought on Christ! "Aha!" the devil would say, "here is a child of God, and God has turned him out of his family, and I have got him in hell at last. Is this what God doth with his children - loves them one day, and hates them the next - tells them he forgives them, and yet punishes them - accepts them in Christ, and yet sends them into hell?" Can that be? Shall it be? Never: not while God is God. "Aha!" again, says Satan, "believers have eternal life given to them. Here is one that had eternal life, and this eternal life has died out. It was not eternal. The promise was a lie. It was temporary life; it was not eternal life. Aha!" says he, "I have found a flaw in Christ's promise; he gave them only temporary life, and called it eternal." And again, the arch-fiend would say, if it were possible for one child of God to perish: "Aha! I have one of the jewels of Christ's crown here;" and he would hold it up, and defy Christ to his very face, and laugh him to scorn. "This is a jewel that thou didst purchase with thine own blood. Here is one that thou didst come into the world to save and yet thou couldst not save him. Thou didst buy him, and pay for him, and yet I have got him, he was a jewel of thy crown, and yet here he is, in the hand of the black prince, thine enemy. Aha! king with a damaged crown! thou hast lost one of thy jewels." Can it be so? No, never, and therefore every one that believeth is as sure of heaven as if he were there. If thou casteth thyself simply on Christ, nor death, nor hell, shall ever destroy thee. Remember what good old Mr. Berridge said, when he was met by a friend one morning, "How do you do, Mr. Berridge?" "Pretty well, I thank you," said he, "and as sure of heaven as if I were there; for I have a solid confidence in Christ." What a happy man such a man must be, who knows and feels that to be true! And yet, if you do not feel it, if you are the children of God, I put to you this question, "Wherefore dost thou doubt?" Is there not good reason to believe. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" If thou hast believed in Christ, saved thou

art, and saved thou shalt be, if thou hast committed thyself to his hands: "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

"Yes." says one. "this is not the fear that troubles me; my only doubt is whether I am a child of God or not." I finish, therefore, by going over the old ground. Soul, if thou wouldst know whether thou art a child of God, look not to thyself, but look to Christ. Ye who are here to-day, who desire to be saved, but yet fear you never can be, never look to yourselves for any ground of acceptance before God. Not self, but Jesus; not heart, but Christ; not man, but man's Creator. O sinner! think not that thou art to bring anything to Christ to recommend thee. Come to him just as thou art. He wants no good works of thine - no good feelings either. Come, just as thou art. All that thou canst want to fit thee for heaven, he has bought for thee, and he will give thee; all these freely thou shalt have for the asking. Only come, and he will not cast thee away. But do you say, "Oh, I cannot believe that Christ is able to save such a sinner as I am." I reply, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" He has already saved sinners as great as thou art; only try him, only try him.

"Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

Try him, try him; and if you find him false, then tell it everywhere that Christ was untrue. But that shall never be. Go to him; tell him you are a wretched undone soul, without his sovereign grace; ask him to have mercy on you. Tell him you are determined, if you do perish, that you will perish at the foot of his cross. Go and cling to him, as he hangs bleeding there; look him in the face, and say, "Jesus, I have no other refuge; if thou spurn me, I am lost; but I will never go from thee; I will clasp thee in life, and clasp thee in death, as the only rock of my soul's salvation" "Depend upon it, you shall not be sent empty away; you must, you shall be accepted, if you will simply believe. Oh, may God enable you, by the divine influence of his Holy Spirit, to believe; and then, shall we not have to put the question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" I pray God now apply these words to your comfort. They have been very simple, and very homely words; but nevertheless, they will suit simple, homely hearts. If God shall bless them, to him be the glory!

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The Mustard Seed: A Sermon For The Sabbath-School Teacher

Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. - Luke 13:18-19

I shall not attempt fully to explain this great little parable. A full exposition may be left for another occasion. The parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living seed. You know also how His church is the tree that springs from Him, and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried, and so hidden away from among men—from Him, I say, there arises a multitude which no one can number. These spread themselves, like some tree which grows by the rivers of waters, and they yielded both gracious shelter and spiritual food. I called it a great little parable, and so it is: it has a world of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed, but its meanings are as a great tree.

At this time of the year, Sabbath-school teachers come together especially to pray for a blessing on their work, and pastors are invited to say a word to cheer them in their self-denying service. This request I would cheerfully fulfill, and therefore my discourse will not be a full explanation of the parable, but an adaptation of it to the cheering of those who are engaged in the admirable work of teaching the young the fear of the Lord. Never service more important; to overlook it would be a grave fault. We rejoice to encourage our friends in their labor of love.

In this parable light is thrown upon the work of those who teach the

Gospel. First, notice a very simple work: "a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden." Secondly, observe what came of it: "it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it."

First, NOTICE A VERY SIMPLE WORK. The work of teaching the gospel is as the casting of a grain of mustard seed into a garden.

Note, first, what the nameless man did. "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took." He took it; that is to say, picked it out from the bulk. It was only one grain, and a grain of a very insignificant seed; but he did not let it lie on the shelf; he took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition; the man who takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed, but the man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with. He was not sowing mustard over broad acres, but he was sowing "a grain of mustard seed" in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going to teach, to have that truth distinctly in his mind's eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come of it to the taught. It may be a very simple truth, but if a someone takes it, understands it, grasps it, and loves it, he will do something with it. Beloved, first and foremost let us ourselves take the Gospel, let us believe it, let us appreciate it, let us prize it beyond all things; for truth lives as it is loved, and no hand is so fit for its sowing as the hand which grasps it well.

Further, in this little parable we notice that this man had a garden: "Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden." Some Christian people have no garden—no personal sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole world, but they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses, and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations; but, after all, the net result of a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much. As we should have no horticulture if people had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless each person

has a mission. It is the duty of every believer in Christ, like the first man, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday-schools by millions: thank God for that! But have you a class of your own? All the church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are you up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every believer has his allotment, and is sowing it with the seed of truth. The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses. Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed but in his own garden? It was near him, and dear to him, and to it he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you.

Having a garden, and having this seed, the man sowed it, and simple as this is, it is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pill-box. There they are: look at them! Take that box down this day a year from now, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years, and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves; it is to be published and advocated. There is an old proverb, "Truth is mighty, and will prevail." The proverb is true in a sense, but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. If you put truth away and leave it without a voice, it won't prevail; it will not even contend. When have great truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been at the first unpopular, and they have spoken about it so earnestly and so often that at length the cause has commanded attention; they have pressed on and on until the cause has triumphed altogether. Truth has been mighty, and has prevailed, but yet not without the people who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it is not taught, will prevail. If revealed truth is laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how through the dark ages the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries until Luther and his fellow reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men.

This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it around with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn it, but he put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. O teachers, do not try to make the Gospel look fine; do not overlay it with your fine words or elaborate

explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into the young heart just as it is. Get the truth concerning the Lord Jesus into the children's minds. Make them know, not what you can say about the truth, but what the truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it to hang our old clothes upon. The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry, and pretty tales. No, no. The Gospel is the thought of God; in and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel itself which will grow. Take a truth, especially that great doctrine, that humanity is lost and that Christ is the only Saviour, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the great truth that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and that the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree and suffered for us, the just for the unjust—I say take these truths and set them forth to the mind, and see what will come of it. Sow the very truth; not your reflections on the truth, not your embellishments of the truth, but the truth itself. This is to be brought into contact with the mind, for the truth is the seed, and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in.

These remarks of mine are very plain and trite; and yet everything depends upon the simple operation described. Nearly everything has been tried in preaching of late, except the plain and clear statement of the glad tidings and of the atoning sacrifice. People have talked about what the church can do, and what the Gospel can do; we have been informed as to the proofs of the Gospel, or the doubts about it, and so forth; but when will they give us the Gospel itself? Friends, we must come to the point and teach the Gospel, for this is the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency of mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce, and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the influence of the Gospel, the ethics of Christianity, the elevating power of the love of Christ, and so on; but what we want is the Gospel itself, which exercises that influence. Sow the seed: tell the children the doctrine of the Cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified. What is wanted is not talk about the Gospel, but the Gospel itself. We must continually bring the living Word of the living God into

contact with the hearts of men. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit in this! He will help us, for He delights to glorify Jesus.

That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business: the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach children; he is more likely to point to the children in the temple and sneeringly say, "Hearest thou what these say?" It is a lowly business altogether, but yet, to the mustard seed, and to the man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter. The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil; the owner of the garden will never have a crop of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday-school teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance. Tell the boys and girls of the Son of God, who lived and loved and died that the ungodly might be saved. Urge them to immediate faith in the mighty Saviour that they may be saved at once. Tell of the new birth, and how the souls of human beings are renewed by the Holy Spirit, without whose divine working none can enter the kingdom of heaven. Cast in mustard seed, and nothing else but mustard seed, if you want to grow mustard. Teach the Gospel of grace, and nothing but the Gospel of grace, if you would see grace growing in the hearts of your young people.

Secondly, let us consider what it was that the man sowed. We have seen that he sowed; what did he sow? It was one single seed, and that seed a very small one; so very, very small that the Jews were accustomed to say, "As small as mustard seed." Hence the Saviour speaks of it as the smallest among seeds, which it may not have been absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance; our Lord was not teaching botany, but speaking a popular parable. Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thing: Believe and live! Look to Jesus lying in the sinner's stead! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself; in fact, the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it and look out for something more difficult of comprehension. People nowadays are like the person who liked to hear

the Scriptures "properly confounded"; or like the other who said, "You should hear our minister dispense with the truth." Sowing seed is work too ordinary for the moderns; they demand new methods. But, beloved, we must not run after vain inventions; our one business is to sow the Word of God in the minds of children. It is yours and mine to teach everybody the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We know nothing else among adults or among children. This one seed, apparently so little, so insignificant, we continue to sow. They sneeringly say, "What can be the moral result of preaching such a Gospel? Surely it would be better to discourse upon morals, social economics, and the sciences?" Ah, friends! if you can do any good in those ways, we will not hinder you, but our belief is that a hundred times more can be done with the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes. The Gospel is not the enemy of any good thing; say, rather, it is the force by which good things are to be carried out. Whatsoever things are pure and honest and of good repute are all nurtured by that spirit which is begotten by the simple Gospel of Christ. Yet conversions do not come by essays upon morals but by the teaching of salvation by Christ. The cleansing and raising of our race will not be effected by politics or science, but by the Word of the Lord, which lives and abides forever. To bring the greatest blessings upon our rising youth we must labor to implant in their minds faith in the Lord Jesus. Oh, for divine power in this work!

But the seed, though very small, was a living thing. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is we cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery, but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture. A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a person in some right direction, but who has ever heard of a someone's whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel, with all

its triteness and simplicity, there is a divine life and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the divine, for it lacks the life-fire. It is better to preach five words of God's Word than five million words of human wisdom. Human words may seem to be the wiser and the more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within God's Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God from whose lips it came.

Truth to tell, a seed is a very comprehensive thing. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must be so. Every branch and every leaf and every flower and every seed that is to be is, in its essence, all within the seed. It needs to be developed, but it is all there. And so, within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all until we sow the seed and it grows; yet it is all there. Do you believe it, young teacher? Have you realized what you have in your hold when you grasp the Gospel of the grace of God? It is the most wonderful thing beneath the skies. Do you believe in the Gospel which you have to teach? Do you discern that within its apparently narrow lines the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect, and the Divine are all enclosed? As in the babe of Bethlehem there was the Eternal God, so within the simple teaching of "Believe and live" there are all the elements of eternal blessedness for people, and boundless glory for God. It is a very comprehensive thing, that little seed, that Gospel of God.

And for this reason it is so wonderful: it is a divine creation. Summon your chemists, bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed, and pound it and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the elements of mustard in yonder mortar. Make us one living grain; we do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of

mustard seed will suffice us. Great chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you, and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you at? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service and all known substances for your material and all the world's coal beds for your fuel, get to your work. The air is black with your smoke and the streams run foul with your waste products; but where is the mustard seed? This baffles the wise; they cannot make a living seed. No; and nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already. I go further: they could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their anvils: let them write a fifth Gospel—say the Gospel according to Peter, or Andrew. Let us have it! They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, "No, we cannot make a mustard seed"; and wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century, but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all; He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The Gospel of Sunday-school teachers, that Gospel of "Believe and live," however people may despise it, has Godgiven life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it, for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living truth with your children, for nothing else has God's life in it.

I want you to see what a little affair the sowing seemed, as we answer the question, What was it to him? It was a very natural act; he sowed a seed. It is a most natural thing that we should teach others what we believe ourselves. I cannot make out how some professors can call themselves Christians and yet never communicate the faith to others. That the young people of our churches should gather other young people around them and tell them of Jesus, whom you love, is as natural as for a gardener to put seeds into his prepared ground.

To sow a mustard seed is a very inexpensive act. Only one grain of mustard: nobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man had; certainly it is not a rare thing, but he only took one grain of it and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure; this is one of the excellencies of Sabbath-school work, that it neither exhausts the church of people nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion; it is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of life, and yet what a fountain of blessing it is!

Still, it was an act of faith. It is always an act of faith to sow seed, because you have, for the time, to give it up and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed corn and throws it into the soil of his field. He might have made many a loaf of bread with it, but he casts it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniac: he expects it to return to him fiftyfold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that someone burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad; if you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching to boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree. We preach and teach as a work of faith, and remember, it is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, "According to thy faith, be it unto thee." Believe, dear teacher, believe in the Gospel. Believe in what you are doing when you tell it. Believe that great results from slender causes spring. Go on sowing your mustard seed of salvation by faith, expecting and believing that fruit will come thereof.

It was an act which brought the sower no honor. The Saviour has chronicled the fact that the man took a grain of mustard seed and sowed it, but thousands of people had gone on sowing mustard seed for half a lifetime without a word. Nobody has ever spoken in your honor, my friend, though you have taught the truth. Dear teacher, go on sowing, though nobody should observe your diligence or praise your faithfulness. Sow the seed of precious truth in the garden of the child's mind, for much more will come of it than you have dared to hope.

It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seed—for an oak or a cedar are much greater growths than a mustard tree—but He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed. Follow out the analogy. Come to yonder school, and see! That earnest young man is teaching a boy, one of those wild creatures of the street; they swarm in every quarter. A dozen young Turks are before him, or say young Arabs of the street; he is teaching them the Gospel. Small affair, is it not? Yes, very; but what may come of it? Think of how joyfully much may grow out of this little! What is that young man teaching? Only one elementary truth. Do not sneer; it is truth, but it is the mere alphabet of it. He touches upon nothing deep in theology; he only says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Dear boy, believe in the Lord Jesus and live." That is all he says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The teacher himself is teaching the one truth in a very poor way; at least, he thinks so. Ask him, when he has done, what he thinks of his own teaching, and he replies, "I do not feel fit to teach." Yes, that young man's teaching is sighed over, and in his own judgment it is poor and weak, but there is life in the truth he imparts and eternal results will follow—results of which I have now to speak in the second part of my sermon. May the good Spirit help me so to speak as to encourage my beloved friends, who have given themselves up to the Christlike work of teaching the little ones!

Secondly, let us enquire, WHAT CAME OF IT?

First, "it grew." That was what the sower hoped would come of it: he placed the seed in the ground hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Dear teacher, do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable. Expect the truth to take root and expand and grow up. Teach divine truth with earnestness and expect that the life within it will unveil its wonders.

But though the sewer expected growth, he could not himself have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground he could water it, he

could pray God to make the sun shine on it, but he could not directly produce growth. Only He that made the seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is God's work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is God's work too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond your power.

A very wonderful thing it is that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is God's abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market garden, and after a few months you go by the place and you see streets and a public square and a church and a great population. You say to yourself, "It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months." Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a plowed field to become covered four feet high with corn, and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest. Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels; without handiwork of man, the whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of grace. See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in grace is a marvel of divine love. That a person should repent through the Gospel, that he should believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God—these are all marvelous things; yet they are going on under our eyes and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.

To the sower this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard-and-ress as a child, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown? How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoot, and afterward a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher: he or she is anxious to see growth and makes eager inquiry for it. What was expected is taking place and it is most delightful to that teacher, whatever it may be to others. An unsympathetic person cries, "Oh, I do not think anything of that child's emotions. It is merely a passing impression: he will soon forget it." The

teacher does not think so. The cold critic says, "I don't think much of a child's weeping. Children's tears lie very near the surface." But the teacher is full of hope that in these tears is a real sorrow for sin, and an earnest seeking after the Lord. The questioner says, "It is nothing for a child to say that he gives his heart to Jesus. Youngsters soon think that they believe. They are so easily led." People talk thus because they do not love children and live with the desire to save them. If you sympathize with children, you are pleased with every hopeful token and are on the watch for every mark of divine life within them. If you are a florist, you will see more of the progress of your plants than if you are no gardener and have no interest in such things. Think, then, of what my text says: "It grew." Oh, for a prayer just now from all of you this morning, "Lord, make the Gospel grow wherever it falls! Whether the preacher scatters it, or the teacher sows it; whether it falls among the aged people, or the young; Lord, make the Gospel grow!" Pray hard for it, friends! You cannot make it grow, but you can prevail with God to bless it to His honor and praise.

Next, having started growing, it became a tree. Luke says, "It waxed a great tree." It was great in itself, but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder, not that it became a tree, but that being a mustard seed, it should become "a great tree." Do you see the point of the parable? I have already brought it before you. Listen! It was only a word spoken—"Dear boy, look to Jesus." Only such a word, and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven, its whole being was changed, a new heir of heaven was born. Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life. That is not all: the teacher, with many prayers and tears, took her girl home, and pleaded with her for Christ, and the girl was led to yield her heart to the dominion of Christ Jesus—a holy, heavenly life came out of that pleading. See! she becomes a thoughtful girl, a loving wife, a gracious mother, a matron in Israel, such a one as Dorcas among the poor, or Hannah with her Samuel. What a great result from a little cause! The teacher's words were tearfully spoken; they could not have been printed, for they were far too broken and childlike; but they were, in God's hands, the means of fashioning a life most sweet, most chaste, most beautiful.

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets; a teacher knelt by his side with his arm about the lad's neck. He pleaded with God for the boy, and with the boy for God. That boy was converted, and as a youth in business he was an example to the workroom; as a father he was a guide to his household; as a man of God he was a light to all around; as a preacher of righteousness he adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture, but you can work it out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great tree; a few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.

But is that all? Beloved, our teaching may preserve souls from the deep darkness of the abode of the lost. A soul left to itself might hurry down from folly to vice, from vice to obduracy, from obduracy to fixed resolve to perish; but by the means of loving teaching all this is changed. Rescued from the power of sin, like a lamb snatched from between the jaws of the lion, the youth is now no longer the victim of vice, but seeks holy and heavenly things. Hell has lost its prey, and see up yonder, heaven's wide gate has received a precious soul. "Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem" many have come who were led there from the Sunday-school. They who once were foul are now white-robed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Hark to their songs of praise! You may keep on listening, for those songs will never come to an end. All this was brought about through a brief address of a trembling brother who stood up one Sunday afternoon to close the school and talk a little about the Cross of Jesus. Or all this came of a gentle sister who could never have spoken in public, yet was enabled to warn a young girl who was growing giddy and seemed likely to go sadly astray. Wonderful that a soul's taking the road to heaven or to hell should be made, in the purpose of God, to hinge upon the humble endeavors of a weak but faithful teacher! You see how the mustard seed grew until it waxed a great tree.

This great tree became a shelter: "the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." Mustard in the East does grow very large indeed. The commonest kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high, but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree, and there probably were

some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it. Here we have unexpected influences. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed, when he put it into his garden, had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it, and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well, and no one knows all the effect which the waters will produce on that spot. There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air, but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea, but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea of all the Ragged schools in London, but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat of arms of the Ragged school Union. When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No one can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love, but hope to reap at least a hundredfold.

How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in the year, came and found a resting place, and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him none can tell. Now is the day for romances: our literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject,

I can assure you I can match it with something better still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent, and belt the world with blessing.

But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree—it is a very wonderful tree; but I not only see, I hear! Music! music! The birds! the birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely up—what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed, and reap songs? I thought we must buy an organ or purchase a violin, or by some wind or stringed instrument come at music, but here is a new plan altogether. Nebuchadnezzar had his flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, but all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. I shall sow mustard seed now, and get music in God's own way. Friends, when you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of glory with sweet voices which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night trill out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a Ragged school, let us never cease from our hallowed service.

Having said so much, I now close with these three practical observations. Are we not highly honored to be entrusted with such a marvelous thing as the Gospel? If it is a seed comprehending so much within it which will come to so much if it be properly used, blessed and happy are we to have such good news to proclaim! I thought this morning, when I awoke into the damp and rain, and felt my bones complaining, I shall be glad when four more Sundays shall have gone, and I shall be free to take a little rest in a sunnier clime. Jaded in mind, and weary in spirit, I braced myself with this reflection—what blessed work I have to do! What a glorious Gospel have I to preach! I ought to be a very happy man to have such glad tidings to bear to my fellows. I said to myself, "So I am." Well now, beloved teacher, next Sunday, when you leave your bed, and say, "I have had a hard week's work, and I could half wish that I had not to go to my class," answer yourself thus: "But I am a happy person to have to talk to children about Christ Jesus. If I had to teach them arithmetic or carpentering, I might get tired of it, but to talk about Jesus, whom I love,

why, it is a joy forever.

Let us be encouraged to sow the good seed in evil times. If we do not see the Gospel prospering elsewhere, let us not despair; if there were no more mustard seed in the world, and I had only one grain of it, I should be all the more anxious to sow it. You can produce any quantity if only one seed will grow. So now today there is not very much Gospel about, the church has given it up, a great many preachers preach everything but the living truth. This is sad, but it is a strong reason why you and I should teach more Gospel than ever. I have often thought to myself—Other men may teach socialism, deliver lectures, or collect a band of fiddlers that they may gather a congregation, but I will preach the Gospel. I will preach more Gospel than ever if I can; I will stick more to the one cardinal point. The others can attend to the odds and ends, but I will keep to Christ crucified. To those of vast ability who are looking to the events of the day I would say, "Allow one poor fool to keep to preaching the Gospel." Beloved teachers, be fools for Christ, and keep to the Gospel. Don't you be afraid. It has life in it, and it will grow; only you bring it out, and let it grow. I am sometimes afraid that we may prepare our sermons and addresses too much, so as to make ourselves shine. If so, we are like the man who tried to grow potatoes—he never grew any, and he wondered much, "for," said he, "I very carefully boiled them for hours." So, it is very possible to extract all the life out of the Gospel, and put so much of yourself into it that Christ will not bless it.

And, lastly, we are bound to do it. If so much will come out of so little, we are bound to go in for it. Nowadays people want ten percent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme or speculation or limited liability company that promises to give them immense dividends! I would like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed, and grow a tree. Talk of Christ, and save a soul; that soul saved will be a blessing for ages, and a joy to God throughout eternity. Was there ever such an investment as this? Let us go on with it. If on our simple word eternity is hung, let us speak with all our heart. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, hang on the lips of the earnest teacher of the Gospel of Jesus. Let us never cease speaking while we have breath in our body. The Lord bless you! Amen, and Amen.

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My Garden, His Garden

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. - Song Of Solomon 4:16

What a difference there is between what the believer was by nature and what the grace of God has made him! Naturally, we were like the waste howling wilderness, like the desert which yields no healthy plant or verdure. It seemed as if we were given over to be like a salt land, which is not inhabited; no good thing was in us, or could spring out of us. But now, as many of us as have known the Lord are transformed into gardens; our wilderness is made like Eden, our desert is changed into the garden of the Lord. "I will turn unto you," said the Lord to the mountains of Israel when they were bleak and bare, "I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown;" and this is exactly what he said to the barrenness of our nature. We have been enclosed by grace, we have been tilled and sown, we have experienced all the operations of the divine husbandry. Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "My Father is the husbandman," and he has made us to be fruitful unto his praise, full of sweetness where once there was no fruit, and nothing that could give him delight.

We are a garden, then, and in a garden there are flowers and fruits, and in every Christian's heart you will find the same evidences of culture and care; not in all alike, for even gardens and fields vary in productiveness. In the good ground mentioned by our Lord in the parable of the sower, the good seed did not all bring forth a hundredfold, or even sixty-fold; there were some parts of the field where the harvest was as low as thirty-fold, and I fear that there are some of the Lord's gardens which yield even less than that. Still, there are the fruits and there are the flowers, in a

measure; there is a good beginning made wherever the grace of God has undertaken the culture of our nature.

I. Now coming to our test, and thinking of Christians as the Lord's garden, I want you to observe, first, that **THERE ARE SWEET SPICES IN BELIEVERS.**

The text assumes that when it says, "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." There are in the Lord's garden sweet flowers that drip with honey, and all manner of delightful perfumes. There are such sweet apices within the believer's heart; let us think of them for a few minutes, and first, let me remind you of the names of these sweet spices.

For instance, there is faith; is there anything out of heaven sweeter than faith,—the faith which trusts and clings, which believes and hopes, and declares that, though God shall slay it, yet will it trust in him? In the Lord's esteem, faith is full of fragrance. He never delighted in the burning of bulls and the fat of fed beasts, but he always delighted in the faith which brought these things as types of the one great sacrifice for sin. Faith is very dear to him. Then comes love; and again I must ask,—Is there to be found anywhere a sweeter spice than this,—the love which loves God because he first loved us, the love which flows out to all the brotherhood, the love which knows no circle within which it can be bounded, but which loves the whole race of mankind, and seeks to do them good? It is exceedingly pleasing to God to see love growing where once all was hate, and to see faith springing up in that very soul which was formerly choked with the thorns and briers of doubt and unbelief. And there is also hope, which is indeed an excellent grace, a far-seeing grace by which we behold heaven and eternal bliss. There is such a fragrance about a God-given hope that this poor sin-stricken world seems to be cured by it. Wherever this living, lively hope comes, there men lift up their drooping heads, and begin to rejoice in God their Savior. You do not need that I should go over all the list of Christian graces, and mention meekness, brotherly kindness, courage, uprightness, or the patience which endures so much from the hand of God; but whatsoever grace I might mention, it would not be difficult at once to convince you that there

is a sweetness and a perfume about all grace in the esteem of him who created it, and it delights him that it should flourish where once its opposite alone was found growing in the heart of man. These, then, are some of the saints' sweet spices.

Next notice, that these sweet spices are delightful to God. It is very wonderful that we should have within us anything in which God can take delight; yet when we think of all the other wonders of his grace, we need not marvel at all. The God who gave us faith may well be pleased with faith. The God who created love in such unlovely hearts as ours may well be delighted at his own creation. He will not despise the work of his own hands; rather will he be delighted with it, and find sweet complacency therein. What an exaltation it is to us worms of the earth that there should ever be anything in us well-pleasing unto God! Well did the psalmist say, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" But God is mindful of us, and he does visit us. Of old, before Christ came into this world-in human form, his delights were with the sons of men; much more is it so now that he has taken their nature into heaven itself, and given to those sons of men his own Spirit to dwell within them. Let it ravish your heart with intense delight that, though often you can take no complacency in yourself, but go with your head bowed down, like a bulrush, and cry, "Woe is me!" yet in that very cry of yours God hears a note that is sweet and musical to his ears. Blessed is repentance, with her tear-drops in her eyes, sparkling like diamonds. God takes delight even in our longings after holiness, and in our loathings of our own imperfections. Just as the father delights to see his child anxious to be on the best and most loving terms with him, so does God delight in us when we are crying after that which we have not yet reached, the perfection which shall make us to be fully like himself. O beloved, I do not know anything that fills my soul with such feelings of joy as does the reflection that I, even I, may yet be and do something that shall give delight to the heart of God himself! He has joy over one sinner that repenteth, though repentance is but an initial grace; and when we go on from that to other graces, and take yet higher steps in the divine life, we may be sure that his joy is in us, and therefore our joy may well be full.

These spices of ours are not only delightful to God, but they are healthful

to man. Every particle of faith that there is in the world is a sort of purifier; wherever it comes, it has a tendency to kill that which is evil. In the spiritual sanitary arrangements which God made for this poor world, he put men of faith, and the faith of these men, into the midst of all this corruption, to help to keep other men's souls alive, even as our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." The sweet perfumes that flow out from the flowers which God cultivates in the garden of his Church are scattering spiritual health and sanity all around. It is a blessed thing that the Lord has provided these sweet spices to overpower and counteract the unhealthy odours that float on every breeze. Think, then, dear friends, of the importance of being God's fragrant flowers, which may yield perfumes that are delightful to him, and that are blessed and healthful to our fellow-men. A man of faith and love in a church sweetens all his brethren. Give us but a few such in our midst, and there shall be no broken spiritual unity, there shall be no coldness and spiritual death; but all shall go well where these men of God are among us as a mighty influence for good. And, as to the ungodly around us, the continued existence in the earth of the Church of Christ is the hope of the world. The world that hates the Church knows not what it does, for it is hating its best friend. The spices with which God is conserving this present evil age, lest his anger should destroy it because of the growing corruption, are to be found in the flowers which he has planted in the garden of his Church.

It sometimes happens that these sweet odours within God's people lie quiet and still. There is a stillness in the air, something like that which the poet Coleridge makes "The Ancient Mariner" speak of in his graphic description of a calm within the tropics. Do you, dear friends, never get into that becalmed condition? I recollect, when I was young, reading an expression,—I think of Erskine's,—in which he says that he lines a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil. It struck me then that, if I could keep the devil always asleep, it would be the best thing that could possibly happen for me; but now I am not so sure that I was right. At all events, I know this, when the old dog of hell barks very loudly, he keeps me awake; and when he howls at me, he drives me to the mercy-seat for protection; but when he goes to sleep, and lies very quiet, I am very apt to go to sleep, too, and then the graces that are within my soul seem to be absolutely

hidden. And, mark you, hidden grace, which in no way reveals itself by its blessed odours, is all the same as if there were none, to those that watch from the outside, and sometimes to the believer himself. What is wanted, in order that he may know that he has these sweet perfumes, is something outside himself. You cannot stir your own graces, you cannot make them more, you cannot cause their fragrance to flow forth. True, by prayer, you may help to this end; but then, that very prayer is put into you by the Holy Spirit, and when it has been offered to the Lord, it comes back to you laden with blessings; but often, something more is needed, some movement of God's providence, and much more, some mighty working of his grace, to come and shake the flower bells in his garden, and make them shed their fragrance on the air. Alas! on a hot and drowsy day, when everything has fallen into a deep slumber, even God's saints, though they be wise virgins, go as soundly asleep as the foolish virgins, and they forget that "the Bridegroom cometh." "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept;" and, sometimes, you and I must catch ourselves nodding when we ought to be wide awake. We are going through a part of that enchanted ground which John Bunyan describes, and we do not know what to do to keep ourselves awake.

At such times, a Christian is very apt to ask, "Am I indeed planted in God's garden? Am I really a child of God?" Now, I will say what some of you may think a strong thing; but I do not believe that he is a child of God who never raised that question. Cowper truly wrote,—

"He has no hope who never had a fear;
And he who never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps,—perhaps he may—too late."

I have sung, and I expect that I may have to sing again,—

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

I cannot bear to get into that condition, and I cannot bear to keep in it when I am in it, but still, there must be anxious thought about this all-important matter. Because you happened to be excited on a certain occasion, and thought you were converted and were sure of heaven, you had better look well to the evidence on which you are relying. You may be mistaken after all; and while I would not preach up little faith, I would preach down great presumption. No man can have a faith too strong, and no assurance can be too full, if it comes really from God the Holy Spirit; but if it comes merely out of your fancying that it is so, and, therefore, will not examine yourself, whether you be in the faith, I begin to make up my mind that it is not so, because you are afraid to look into the matter. "I know that I am getting rich," says a merchant, "I never keep any books, and I do not want any books, but I know that I am getting on well in my business." If, my dear sir, I do not soon see your name in the Gazette, I shall be rather surprised.

Whenever a man is so very good that he does not want to esquire at all into his position before God, I suspect that he is afraid of introspection, and self-examination, and that he dare not look into his own heart. This I know; as I watch the many people of God committed to my care here, I see some run on for ten years or more serving God with holy joy, and having no doubt or fear. They are not generally remarkable for any great depth of experience, but when God means to make mighty men of them, he digs about them, and soon they come to me crying, and craving a little comfort, telling me what doubts they have, because they are not what they want to be. I am glad when this is the case, I rejoice because I know that they will be spiritually better off afterwards. They have reached a higher standard than they had previously attained, they have a better knowledge now of what they ought to be. It may be that, before, their ideal was a low one, and they thought that they had reached it. Now, God has revealed to them greater heights, which they have to climb; and they may as well gird up the loins of their mind to do so by divine help. As they get higher, they perhaps think, "Now we are at the top of the mountain," when they are really only on one of the lower spurs of it. Up they go, climbing again. "If once I can reach that point, I shall soon be at the summit," you think. Yes, and when you have at length got there, you see the mountain still towering far above you. How deceptive is the height of

the Alps to those who have not seen them before! I said to a friend once, "It will take you about thirteen hours to get to the top of that mountain." "Why," he replied, "I can run up in half-an-hour." I let him have a try, and he had not gone far before he had to sit down to pant and rest. So you think of a certain height of grace, "Oh, I can easily reach that!" Yea, just so; but you do not know how high it is; and those who think that they have reached the top do not know anything about the top; for he who knows how high is the holiness to which the believer can attain will go on clambering and climbing, often on his hands and knees, and when he has reached that point which he thought was the summit, he will sit down and say, "I thought I had reached the top, but now I find that I have but begun the ascent." Or he may say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:" (and then I did not know much of thee, or of myself either,) "but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

You see, then, that there are sweet spices lying in Christians, like hidden honey and locked-up perfume within the flowers on a hot day.

II. What is wanted is that **THOSE SWEET ODORS SHOULD BE DIFFUSED**. That is to be our second head. Read the text again: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Observe, first, that until our graces are diffused, it is the same as if they were not there. You may go through a wood, and it may be abounding in game, yet you may scarcely see a hare or notice a pheasant anywhere about. There they lie all quiet and undisturbed; but, by-and-by, the beaters go through the wood making a great noise, and away the pheasants fly, and you may see the timid hares run like hinds let loose, because they are disturbed and wakened up. That is what we sometimes need, to be aroused and stirred from slumber. We may not know that we have any faith till there comes a trial, and then our faith starts boldly up. We can hardly know how much we love our Lord till there comes a test of our love, and then we so behave ourselves that we know that we do love him. Oftentimes, as I have already reminded you, something is needed from without to stir the life that lies hidden within. It is so with these

sweet flowers in the Beloved's garden, they need either the north wind or the south wind to blow upon them that they may shed abroad their sweet odours.

Notice next, that it is very painful to a Christian to be in such a condition that his graces are not stirring. He cannot endure it. We who love the Lord were not born again to waste our time in sinful slumber; our watchword is, "Let us not sleep, as do others." We were not born to inaction; every power that God has put within us was meant to be used in working, and striving, and serving the Lord. So, when our graces are slumbering, we ourselves are in an unhappy state. Then we long for any agency that would set those graces moving. The north wind? Oh, but if it shall blow, then we shall have snow! Well, then, let the snow come, for we must have our graces set in motion, we cannot bear that they should continue to lie quiet and still. "Awake, O north wind!"—a heavy trial, a bleak adversity, a fierce temptation,—anything so long as we do but begin to diffuse our graces. Or if the north wind be dreaded, we say, "Come, thou south!" Let prosperity be granted to us; let sweet fellowship with our brethren rouse us, and holy meditations, full of delight, stir our souls; let a sense of the divine life, like a soft south wind, come to our spirit. We are not particular which it is, let the Lord send which he pleases, or both together, as the text seems to imply, only do let us be aroused. "Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy Word,"—whichever Word thou shalt choose to apply, only do quicken thy servant, and let not the graces within me be as if they were dead!

Remember, however, that the best Quickener is always the Holy Spirit; and that blessed Spirit can come as the north wind, convincing us of sin, and tearing away every rag of our self-confidence, or he may come as the soft south wind, all full of love, revealing Christ, and the covenant of grace, and all the blessings treasured for us therein. Come, Holy Spirit! Come as the Heavenly Dove, or as the rushing mighty wind; but do come! Drop from above, as gently as the dew, or come like rattling hail, but do come, blest Spirit of God! We feel that we must be moved, we must be stirred, our heart's emotions must once again throb, to prove that the life of God is really within us; and if we do not realize this quickening and stirring, we are utterly unhappy.

You see also, dear friends, from this text, that when a child of God sees that his graces are not diffused abroad, then is the time that he should take to prayer. Let no one of us ever think of saying, "I do not feel as if I could pray, and therefore I will not pray." On the contrary, then is the time when you ought to pray more earnestly than ever. When the heart is disinclined for prayer, take that as a danger-signal, and at once go to the Lord with this resolve,—

"I will approach thee—I will force
My way through obstacles to thee:
To thee for strength will have recourse,
To thee for consolation flee!"

When you seem to yourself to have little faith, and little love, and little joy, then cry unto the Lord all the more, "cry aloud, and spare not." Say, "O my Father, I cannot endure this miserable existence! Thou hast made me to be a flower, to shed abroad my perfume, yet I am not doing it. Oh, by some means, stir my flagging spirit, till I shall be full of earnest industry, full of holy anxiety to promote thy glory, O my Lord and Master!" While you are thus crying, you must still believe, however, that God the Holy Spirit can stir your spirit, and make you full of life again. Never permit a doubt about that fact to linger in your bosom, else will you be unnecessarily sad. You, who are the true children of God, cannot ever come into a condition out of which the Holy Spirit cannot uplift you. You know the notable case of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore so nauseous to the great Lord that he threatened to spue her out of his mouth, yet what is the message to the angel of that church?" Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." This is not said to sinners, it is addressed to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Oh, matchless grace! He is sick of these lukewarm professors, yet he promises to sup with them, and that they shall sup with him. That is the only cure for lukewarmness and decline, to renew heart-fellowship with Christ; and he stands and offers it to all his people now. "Only do you open the door, and I will sup with you, and you shall sup with me." O you whose graces

are lying so sinfully dormant, who have to mourn and cry because of "the body of this death"—for death in you seems to have taken to itself a body, and to have become a substantial thing, no mere skeleton now, but a heavy, cumbrous form that bows you down,—cry still to him who is able to deliver you from this lukewarm and sinful state! Let every one of us put up the prayer of our text, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

III. Our third and closing head will help to explain the remaining portion of our text: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." These words speak of THE COMPANY OF CHRIST AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FRUIT BY CHRIST.

I want you, dear friends, specially to notice one expression which is used here. While the spouse was, as it were, shut up and frozen, and the spices of the Lord's garden were not cowing out, she cried to the winds, "Blow upon my garden." She hardly dared to call it her Lord's garden; but now, notice the alteration in the phraseology: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The wind has blown through the garden, and made the sweet odours to flow forth; now it is no longer "my garden," but "his garden." It is wonderful how in increase of grace transfers our properties; while we have but little grace, we cry, "my," but when we get great grace, we cry "his." Wherein you are sinful and infirm, brother, that is yours, you rightly call it "my"; but when you become strong, and joyous, and full of faith, that is not yours, brother, and you rightly call it "his." Let him have all the glory of the change while you take all the shame and confusion of face to yourself that ever you should have been so destitute of grace. As the spouse says, "Let my Beloved come into his garden. Here are all the sweet perfumes flowing out; he will enjoy them, let him come and feel himself at home amongst them. He planted every flower, and gave to each its fragrance; let him come into his garden, and see what wonders his grace has wrought."

Do you not feel, beloved, that the one thing you want to stir your whole soul is that Christ's should come into it? Have you lost his company lately? Oh, do not try to do without it! The true child of God ought not to be willing to bear broken communion for even five minutes; but should

be sighing and crying for its renewal. Our business is to seek to "walk in the light as God is in the light," fully enjoying communion with Christ our Lord; and when that fellowship is broken, then the heart feels that it has cast all its happiness away, and it must robe itself in sackcloth, and sorrowfully fast. If the presence of the Bridegroom shall be taken away from thee, then indeed shalt thou have cause to fast and to be sad. The best condition a heart can be in, if it has lost fellowship with Christ, is to resolve that it will give God no rest till it gets back to communion with him, and to give itself no rest till once more it finds the Well-beloved.

Next observe that, when the Beloved comes into his garden, the heart's humble but earnest entreaty is, "Let him eat his pleasant fruits." Would you keep back anything from Christ? I know you could not if he were to come into his garden. The best things that you have, you would first present to him, and then everything that you have, you would bring to him, and leave all at his dear feet. We do not ask him to come to the garden, that we may lay up our fruits, that we may put them by and store them up for ourselves; we ask him to come and eat them. The greatest joy of a Christian is to give joy to Christ; I do not know whether heaven itself can overmatch this pearl of giving joy to the heart of Jesus Christ on earth. It can match it, but not overmatch it, for it is a superlative joy to give joy to him,—the Man of sorrows, who was emptied of joy for our sakes, and who now is filled up again with joy as each one of us shall come and bring his share, and cause to the heart of Christ a new and fresh delight.

Did you ever reclaim a poor girl from the streets? Did you ever rescue a poor thief who had been in prison? Then I know that, as you have heard of the holy chastity of the one, or of the sacred honesty of the other of those lives that you have been the means of restoring, you have said, "Oh, this is delightful! There is no joy equal to it. The effort cost me money, it cost me time, it cost me thought, it cost me prayer, but I am repaid a thousand times." Then, as you see them growing up so bright, so transparent, so holy, so useful, you say, "This work is worth living for, it is a delight beyond measure." Often, persons come to me, and tell me of souls that were saved through my ministry twenty years ago. I heard, the other day, of one who was brought to Christ by a sermon of mine nearly

thirty years ago, and I said to the friend who told me, "Thank you, thank you; you could not tell me anything that would give my heart such joy as this good news that God has made me the instrument of a soul's conversion." But what must be the joy of Christ who does all the work of salvation, who redeems us from sin, and death, and hell, when he sees such creatures as we are, made to be like himself, and knows the divine possibilities of glory and immortality that lie within us?

What are we going to be, brothers and sisters, we who are in Christ? We have not any idea of what holiness, and glory, and bliss, shall yet be ours. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We may rise even while on earth to great heights of holiness,—and the higher the better; but there is something better for us than mortal eye has ever seen or mortal ear has ever heard. There is more grace to be in the saints than we have ever seen in them, the saintliest saint on earth was never such a saint as they are yonder who are before the throne of the Most High; and I know not but that, even when they get there, there shall be a something yet beyond for them, and that through the eternal ages they shall still take for their motto, "Onward and upward!" In heaven, there will be no "Finis." We shall still continue to develop, and to become something more than we have ever been before; not fuller, but yet capable of holding more, ever growing in the possibility of reflecting Christ, and being filled with his love; and all the while our Lord Jesus Christ will be charmed and delighted with us. As he hears our lofty songs of praise, as he sees the bliss which will ever be flashing from each one of us, as he perceives the divine ecstasy which shall be ours for ever, he will take supreme delight in it all. "My redeemed," he will say, "the sheep of my pasture, the purchase of my blood, borne on my shoulders, my very heart pierced for them, oh, how I delight to see them in the heavenly fold! These my redeemed people are joint heirs with me in the boundless heritage that shall be theirs for ever; oh, how I do delight in them!"

"Wherefore, comfort one another with these words," beloved, and cry mightily that, on this church, and on all the churches, God's Spirit may blow, to make the spices flow. Pray, dear friends, all of you, for the churches to which you belong; and if you, my brother, are a pastor, be asking especially for this divine wind to blow through the garden which

you have to cultivate, as I also pray for this portion of the garden of the Lord: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The Lord be with each one of you, beloved, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

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My Times Are In Thy Hand

My times are in thy hand. - Psalm 31:15

David was sad: his life was spent with grief, and his years with sighing. His sorrow had wasted his strength, and even his bones were consumed within him. Cruel enemies pursued him with malicious craft, even seeking his life. At such a time he used the best resource of grief; for he says in verse 14, "But I trusted in thee, O Lord." He had no other refuge but that which he found in faith in the Lord his God. If enemies slandered him, he did not render railing for railing; if they devised to take away his life, he did not meet violence with violence; but he calmly trusted in the Lord. They ran hither and thither, using all kinds of nets and traps to make the man of God their victim; but he met all their inventions with the one simple defense of trust in God. Many are the fiery darts of the wicked one; but our shield is one. The shield of faith not only quenches fiery darts, but it breaks arrows of steel. Though the javelins of the foe were dipped in the venom of hell, yet our one shield of faith would hold us harmless, casting them off from us. Thus David had the grand resource of faith in the hour of danger. Note well that he uttered a glorious claim, the greatest claim that man has ever made: "I said, Thou art my God." He that can say, "This kingdom is mine," makes a royal claim; he that can say, "This mountain of silver is mine," makes a wealthy claim; but he that can say to the Lord, "Thou art my God," hath said more than all monarchs and millionaires can reach. If this God is your God by his gift of himself to you, what can you have more? If Jehovah has been made your own by an act of appropriating faith, what more can be conceived of? You

have not the world, but you have the Maker of the world; and that is far more. There is no measuring the greatness of his treasure who hath God to be his all in all.

Having thus taken to the best resource by trusting in Jehovah, and having made the grandest claim possible by saying, "Thou art my God", the Psalmist now stays himself upon a grand old doctrine, one of the most wonderful that was ever revealed to men. He sings, "My times are in thy hand." This to him was a most cheering fact: he had no fear as to his circumstances, since all things were in the divine hand. He was not shut up unto the hand of the enemy; but his feet stood in a large room, for he was in a space large enough for the ocean, seeing the Lord had placed him in the hollow of his hand. To be entirely at the disposal of God is life and liberty for us.

The great truth is this—all that concerns the believer is in the hands of the Almighty God. "My times", these change and shift; but they change only in accordance with unchanging love, and they shift only according to the purpose of One with whom is no variableness nor shadow of a turning. "My times", that is to say, my ups and my downs, my health and my sickness, my poverty and my wealth—all those are in the hand of the Lord, who arranges and appoints according to his holy will the length of my days, and the darkness of my nights. Storms and calms vary the seasons at the divine appointment. Whether times are reviving or depressing remains with him who is Lord both of time and of eternity; and we are glad it is so.

We assent to the statement, "My times are in thy hand," as to their result. Whatever is to come out of our life, is in our heavenly Father's hand. He guards the vine of life, and he also protects the clusters which shall be produced thereby. If life be as a field, the field is under the hand of the great Husbandman, and the harvest of that field is with him also. The ultimate results of his work of grace upon us, and of his education of us in this life, are in the highest hand. We are not in our own hands, nor in the hands of earthly teachers; but we are under the skillful operation of hands which make nothing in vain. The close of life is not decided by the sharp knife of the fates; but by the hand of love. We shall not die before

our time, neither shall we be forgotten and left upon the stage too long.

Not only are we ourselves in the hand of the Lord, but all that surrounds us. Our times make up a kind of atmosphere of existence; and all this is under divine arrangement. We dwell within the palm of God's hand. We are absolutely at his disposal, and all our circumstances are arranged by him in all their details. We are comforted to have it so.

How came the Psalmist's times to be thus in God's hand? I should answer, first, that they were there in the order of nature, according to the eternal purpose and decree of God. All things are ordained of God, and are settled by him, according to his wise and holy predestination. Whatsoever happeneth here happeneth not by chance, but according to the counsel of the Most High. The acts and deeds of men below, though left wholly to their own wills, are the counterpart of that which is written in the purpose of heaven. The open acts of Providence below tally exactly with that which is written in the secret book, which no eye of man or angel as yet has scanned. This eternal purpose superintended our birth. "In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." In thy book, every footstep of every creature is recorded before the creature is made. God has mapped out the pathway of every man who traverses the plains of life. Some may doubt this; but all agree that God foresees all things; and how can they be certainly foreseen unless they are certain to be? It is no mean comfort to a man of God that he feels that, by divine arrangement and sacred predestination, his times are in the hand of God.

But David's times were in God's hand in another sense; namely, that he had by faith committed them all to God. Observe carefully the fifth verse: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." In life we use the words which our Lord so patiently used in death: we hand over our spirits to the hand of God. If our lives were not appointed of heaven, we should wish they were. If there were no overruling Providence, we would crave for one. We would merge our own wills in the will of the great God, and cry, "Not as we will, but as thou wilt." It would be a hideous thought to us if any one point of our life-story were left to chance, or to the frivolities of our own fancy; but with joyful

hope we fall back upon the eternal foresight and the infallible wisdom of God, and cry, "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us." We would beg him to take our times into his hand, even if they were not there.

Moreover, beloved brethren, our times are in the Lord's hands, because we are one with Christ Jesus. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Everything that concerns Christ touches the great Father's heart. He thinks more of Jesus than of all the world. Hence it follows that when we become one with Jesus, we become conspicuous objects of the Father's care. He takes us in hand for the sake of his dear Son. He that loves the Head loves all the members of the mystical body. We cannot conceive of the dear Redeemer as ever being out of the Father's mind; neither can any of us who are in Christ be away from the Father's active, loving care: our times are ever in his hand. All his eternal purposes work towards the glorifying of the Son, and quite as surely they work together for the good of those who are in his Son. The purposes which concern our Lord and ourselves are so intertwined as never to be separated.

To have our times in God's hand must mean not only that they are at God's disposal, but that they are arranged by the highest wisdom. God's hand never errs; and if our times are in his hand, those times are ordered rightly. We need not puzzle our brains to understand the dispensations of Providence: a much easier and wiser course is open to us; namely, to believe the hand of the Lord works all things for the best. Sit thou still, O child, at thy great Father's feet, and let him do as seemeth him good! When thou canst not comprehend him, know that a babe cannot understand the wisdom of its sire. Thy Father comprehends all things, though thou dost not: let his wisdom be enough for thee. Everything in the hand of God is where it may be left without anxiety; and it is where it will be carried through to a prosperous issue. Things prosper which are in his hand. "My times are in thy hand," is an assurance that none can disturb, or pervert, or poison them. In that hand we rest as securely as rests a babe upon its mother's breast. Where could our interests be so well secured as in the eternal hand? What a blessing it is to see by the eye of faith all things that concern you grasped in the hand of God! What peace as to every matter which could cause anxiety flows into the soul

when we see all our hopes built upon so stable a foundation, and preserved by such supreme power! "My times are in thy hand!"

Before I go into this subject, to show the sweetness of this confidence, I pray every Christian here to read the text, and take it in the singular, and not as we sang it just now -

"Our times are in thy hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to thee."

We find it in the psalm, "My times are in thy hand." This does not exclude the whole body of the saints enjoying this safety together; but, after all, truth is sweetest when each man tastes the flavour of it for himself. Come, let each man take to himself this doctrine of the supreme appointment of God, and believe that it stands true as to his own case, "My times are in thy hand." The wings of the cherubim cover me. The Lord Jesus loved me, and gave himself for me, and my times are in those hands which were nailed to the cross for my redemption. What will be the effect of such a faith, if it be clear, personal, and enduring? This shall be our subject at this season. May the Holy Spirit help us!

I. A clear conviction that our times are in the hand of God WILL CREATE WITHIN US A SENSE OF THE NEARNESS OF GOD. If the hand of God is laid upon all our surroundings, God himself is near us. Our Puritanic fathers walked with God the more readily because they believed in God as arranging everything in their daily business and domestic life; and they saw him in the history of the nation, and in all the events which transpired. The tendency of this age is to get further and further from God. Men will scarcely tolerate a Creator now, but everything must be evolved. To get God one stage further back is the ambition of modern philosophy; whereas, if we were wise, we should labor to clear out all obstacles, and leave a clear channel for drawing near to God, and for God to draw near to us. When we see that in his hand are all our ways, we feel that God is real and near.

"My times are in thy hand." Then there is nothing left to chance. Events happen not to man by a fortune which has no order or purpose in it. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Chance is a heathenish idea which the teaching of the Word has cast down, even as the ark threw down Dagon, and brake him in pieces. Blessed is that man who has done with chance, who never speaks of luck; but believes that, from the least even to the greatest, all things are ordained of the Lord. We dare not leave out the least event. The creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud, is as surely arranged by the decree of Providence, as the march of a pestilence through a nation. Believe ye this; for if the least be omitted from the supreme government, so may the next be, and the next, till nothing is left in the divine hand. There is no place for chance, since God filleth all things.

"My times are in thy hand" is an assurance which also puts an end to the grim idea of an iron fate compelling all things. Have you the notion that fate grinds on like an enormous wheel, ruthlessly crushing everything that lies in its way, not pausing for pity, nor turning aside for mercy? Remember that, if you liken Providence to a wheel, it must be a wheel which is full of eyes. Its every revolution is in wisdom and goodness. God's eye leaves nothing in providence blind; but fills all things with sight. God works all things according to his purpose; but then He himself works them. There is all the difference between the lone machinery of fixed fate, and the presence of a gracious, loving Spirit ruling all things. Things do happen as he plans them; but he himself is there to make them happen, and to moderate, and guide, and secure results. Our great joy is not, "My times are in the wheel of destiny"; but, "My times are in thy hand." With a living, loving God to superintend all things, we feel ourselves at home, resting near our Father's heart.

"My times are in thy hand." Does not this reveal the condescension of the Lord? He has all heaven to worship him, and all worlds to govern; and yet "my times"—the times of such an inconsiderable and unworthy person as I am—are in his hand. Now, what is man that it should be so? Wonder of wonders, that God should not only think of me, but should make my concerns his concerns, and take my matters into his hand! He has the stars in his hand, and yet he puts us there. He deigns to take in hand the

passing interests of obscure men and lowly women.

Beloved, God is near his people with all his attributes; his wisdom, his power, his faithfulness, his immutability; and these are under oath to work for the good of those who put their trust in him. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Yes, God considers our times, and thinks them over; with his heart and soul planning to do us good. That august mind, out of which all things spring, bows itself to us; and those eternal wings, which cover the universe, also brood over us and our household, and our daily wants and woes. Our God sits not still as a listless spectator of our griefs, suffering us to be drifted like waifs upon the waters of circumstance; but is busily occupying himself at all times for the defense and perfecting of his children. He leads us that he may bring us home to the place where his flock shall rest for ever.

What a bliss this is! Our times, in all their needs and aspects, are in God's hand, and therefore God is always caring for us. How near it brings God to us, and us to God! Child of God, go not thou tomorrow into the field, lamenting that God is not there! He will bless thy going out. Come not home to thy chamber, crying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" He will bless thy coming in. Go not to thy bed, dreaming that thou art left an orphan; neither wake up in the morning with a sense of loneliness upon thee: thou art not alone, for the Father is with thee.

Wilt thou not feel how good it is that God should come so close to thee, and handle thy bread and thy water, and bless thy bed and thy board? Art thou not happy to be allowed to come so close to God, as to say, "My times are in thy hand"? There is a great deal in this first point as to the nearness of the Lord; and if you will turn it over, you will see more and more that a conviction that our times are in God's hand tends to create a happy and holy sense of the nearness of God to us.

II. THIS TRUTH IS A COMPLETE ANSWER TO MANY A TEMPTATION. You know how craftily Satan will urge a temptation. He says, "Now you have a large family, and your chief duty is to provide for them. Your position brings with it many wants. Here is a plan of making

money; others follow it. It may not be quite straight, but you must not be particular in such a world as this, for nobody else is." How will you meet this? If you can say to Satan, "It is not my business to provide for myself or for my family: my times are in God's hand; and his name is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide; and I will not do a questionable thing, though it would fill my house with silver and gold from the cellar to the chimney-pot. I shall not meddle with my Lord's business. It is his to provide for me: it is mine to walk uprightly, and obey his Word." This is a noble answer to the arch-enemy. But supposing he says, "Well, but you are already in difficulties, and you cannot extricate yourself if you are too precise. A poor man cannot afford to keep a conscience: it is an expensive luxury in these days. Give your conscience a holiday, and you can soon get out of your trouble." Let your reply be, "O prince of darkness, it is no business of mine to extricate myself! My times are in God's hand. I have taken my case to him, and he will work for me in this matter better than I can do for myself! He does not wish me to do a wrong thing, that I may do for myself what he has promised to do for me." We are not called upon to eke out God's wisdom with a bit of our own wickedness. God forbid! Do the right, even if the heavens should fall. The Lord who has taken your business into his hand will bear you through.

"Well", says one, "we may use a little discreet policy in religious matters, and keep the peace by wise compromise. We may accomplish our end all the sooner by going a little roundabout. If you can just let truth wait for a little until the fine weather comes, and the silver slippers are in season, then she will be saved a good deal of annoyance!" Brethren, it is not for us to pick and plan times in this fashion. God's cause is in God's hand, and God would not have us help his cause by a compromising hand being laid on his ark. Remember what the hand of Uzzah brought on him, though he meant it well. Let us continue steadfast in the integrity of our walk, and we shall find our times are in God's hand, and that they are well ordered, and need no hasty and unholy interposition on our part.

Brethren, is it not a delightful thing for us to know that though we are on a stormy voyage, the Lord himself is at the helm? The course we do not know; nor even our present latitude and longitude; but the Pilot knows all about us, and about the sea also. It will be our wisdom not to interfere

with our Captain's orders. They put up a notice on the steamboats, "Do not speak to the man at the wheel." We are very apt, in our unbelief, to dispute with him to whom the steering of our vessel is entrusted. We shall not confuse him, thank God; but we often confound and confuse ourselves by our idle complaining against the living Lord. No, when you are tempted to presume, or to act in a despairing haste, or to hide your principles, or to do something which is not defensible, in order that you may arrange your times more comfortably, answer with a decided "No," and say, "My times are in God's hand," and there I will leave them.

When the devil comes with his subtle questions and insinuations, refer him to your Lord, in whose hand your times are placed. \When you have a lawsuit, the opposite side will like to come and talk with you, to see if they can get something out of you. It will be your wisdom to reply, "If you have anything to say, say it to my solicitor." If the devil comes to you, and you get into an argument with him, he will beat you; for he is a very ancient lawyer, and he has been at the business for so many ages that you cannot match him. Send him to your Advocate. Refer him to the Wonderful, the Counsellor. Ever shelter beneath this fact, "My times are in his hand. I have left the whole business to another, and I cannot dishonor him by intermeddling." Satan knows the Christ too well to go to him; he knows the taste of his broadsword, of "It is written." He will not contest with Jesus, if we leave him to plead the causes of our soul.

III. In the third place, THIS CONVICTION IS A SUFFICIENT SUPPORT AGAINST THE FEAR OF MEN. We may say to ourselves, when our enemies bear very hard upon us, "I am not in their hands. My times are in thy hand." Here are gentlemen judging and condemning us with great rapidity. They say, "He has made a great mistake: he is an old bigot; he has snuffed himself out." This is easier said than done. The candle shines still. They say of you, "He is foolish and headstrong, and on religious matters he is as obstinate as a mule; and he will come to grief." You have not come to grief yet in the way they predict, and they had better not prophesy till they know. The godly are not in the hands of those who mock them. The wicked may gnash their teeth at believers, but they cannot destroy them. Here is their comfort, they have committed their spirit to the hand of God, and he will sacredly preserve the precious

deposit. Fear not the judgments of men. Appeal to a higher court. Take the case to the King's Bench. Go to God himself with the matter, and he will bring forth your judgment as the light, and your righteousness as the noonday.

Do the malicious resolve to crush you? They will use to the utmost their little power; but there is a higher power which will hold them in. Rejoicingly say, "My times are in thy hand." Do they treat you with contempt? Do they sneer at you? What does that matter? Your honor comes not from men. Their contempt is the highest compliment the wicked can pay you.

Alas, many professors place their times in the hands of the world! If they prosper and grow rich, they see an opportunity of social advantage, and they quit their humbler friends to join a more respectable sect. How many are lost to fidelity because their prosperous times are not in God's hand, but in their own! Some, on the other hand, when they are in adversity, get away from the Lord. The excuse is, "I cannot go to the house of God any more; for my clothes are not so respectable as they used to be." Is your poverty to take you out of your Lord's hands? Never let it be so; but say, "My times are in thy hand." Cleave to the Lord in losses as well as in gains, and so let all your times be with him.

How often we meet with people who are staggered by slander! It is impossible to stop malicious tongues. They wound, and even slay, the characters of the godly. The tried one cries, "I cannot bear it: I shall give all up." Why? Why yield to mere talk? Even these cruel tongues are in God's hand. Can you not brave their attacks? They cannot utter a single whisper more than God permits. Go on thy way, O righteous man, and let false tongues pour forth their poison as they will. "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." If my times are in God's hand, no man can do me harm unless God permit. Though my soul is among lions, yet no lion can bite me while Jehovah's angel is my guard.

This feeling, that our interests are safe in the highest keeping, breeds an independent spirit. It prevents cringing before the great, and flattering the strong. At the same time, it removes all tendency to envy; so that you

do not wish for the prosperity of the wicked, nor fret yourself because of evil-doers. When one knows that his times are in God's hand, he would not change places with a king; nay, nor with an angel.

IV. A full belief in the statement of our text is A CURE FOR PRESENT WORRY. O Lord, if my times are in thy hand, I have cast my care on thee, and I trust and am not afraid! Why is it, my sister—for this habit of worrying abounds among the gracious sisterhood—why do you vex yourself about a matter which is in the hand of God? If he has undertaken for you, what cause have you for anxiety? And you, my brother—for there are plenty of men who are nervous and fretful—why do you want to interfere with the Lord's business? If the case is in his hand, what need can there be for you to be prying and crying? You were worrying this morning, and fretting last night, and you are distressed now, and will be worse to-morrow morning. May I ask you a question? Did you ever get any good by fretting? When there was not rain enough for your farm, did you ever fret a shower down? When there was too much wet, or you thought so, did you ever worry the clouds away? Tell me, did you ever make a sixpence by worrying? It is a very unprofitable business. Do you answer, "What, then, are we to do in troublous times"? Why, go to him into whose hand you have committed yourself and your times. Consult with infinite wisdom by prayer; console yourself with infinite love by fellowship with God. Tell the Lord what you feel, and what you fear. Ten minutes' praying is better than a year's murmuring. He that waits upon God, and casts his burden upon him, may lead a royal life: indeed, he will be far happier than a king.

To leave our times with God is to live as free from care as the birds upon the bough. If we fret, we shall not glorify God; and we shall not constrain others to see what true religion can do for us in the hour of tribulation. Fret and worry put it out of our power to act wisely; but if we can leave everything with God because everything is really in his hand, we shall be peaceful, and our action will be deliberate; and for that very reason it will be more likely to be wise. He that rolls his burden upon the Lord will be strong to do or to suffer; and his days shall be as the days of heaven upon the earth. I admire the serenity of Abraham. He never seems to be in a fluster; but he moves grandly, like a prince among men. He is much more

than the equal of the greatest man he meets: we can hardly see Lot with a microscope when we have once seen Abraham. Why was that? Because he believed in God, and staggered not.

Half the joy of life lies in expectation. Our children get greater pleasure out of expecting the holiday than they do out of the day itself. It is much the same with ourselves. If we believe that all our times are in God's hand, we shall be expecting great things from our heavenly Father. When we get into a difficulty we shall say, "I am now going to see the wonders of God, and to learn again how surely he delivers them that trust in him." I thank God I have learned at times to glory in necessities, as opening a window into heaven for me, out of which the Lord would abundantly pour forth his supplies. It has been to me so unspeakable a delight to see how the Lord has supplied my needs for the Orphanage, the College, and other works, that I have half wished to be in straits, that I might see how the Lord would appear for me. I remember, some time ago, when year after year all the money came in for the various enterprises, I began to look back with regret upon those grand days when the Lord permitted the brook Cherith to dry up, and called off the ravens with their bread and meat, and then found some other way of supplying the orphans' needs. In those days, the Lord used to come to me, as it were, walking on the tops of the mountains, stepping from peak to peak, and by marvellous deeds supplying all my needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Do you know, I almost wished that the Lord would stop the streams, and then let me see how he can fetch water out of the rock. He did so, not very long ago. Funds ran very low, and then I cried to him, and he heard me out of his holy hill. How glad was I to hear the footfall of the ever-present Lord, answering to his child's prayer, and letting him know that his times were still in his Father's hand! Surely it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is a joy worth worlds to be driven where none but the Lord can help you, and then to see his mighty hand pulling you out of the net. The joy lies mainly in the fact that you are sure it is the Lord, and sure that he is near you. This blessed realization of the Lord's interposition causes us to glory in tribulation. Is not that a cure for worry, a blessed cure for anxiety?

V. Fifthly, a firm conviction of this truth is A QUIETUS AS TO FUTURE

DREAD. "My times are in thy hand." Do you wish to know what is going to happen to you in a short time? Would you look between the folded leaves of the future? You can buy a penny newspaper which will tell you the fate of nations this very year. You may be well-nigh sure that nothing will happen which is thus predicted, and thus it may be of some little use to you. Be you content with the prophecies of Scripture, but follow not every interpreter of them. Many people would pay largely to have the future made known to them. If they were wise, they would rather desire to have it concealed. Do not want to know; such knowledge would answer no useful purpose. The future is intended to be a sealed book. The present is all we need to have before us. Do thy day's work in its day, and leave tomorrow with thy God. If there were ways of reading the future, it would be wise to decline to use them. The knowledge would create responsibility, arouse fear, and diminish present enjoyment; why seek after it? Famish idle curiosity, and give your strength to believing obedience. Of this you may be quite sure, that there is nothing in the book of the future which should cause distrust to a believer. Your times are in God's hand; and this secures them.

The very word "times" supposes change for you; but as there are no changes with God, all is well. Things will happen which you cannot foresee; but your Lord has foreseen all, and provided for all. Nothing can occur without his divine allowance, and he will not permit that which would be for your real or permanent injury. "I should like to know", says one, "whether I shall die soon." Have no desire in that direction: your time will come when it should. The best way to live above all fear of death is to die every morning before you leave your bedroom. The apostle Paul said, "I die daily." When you have got into the holy habit of daily dying, it will come easy to you to die for the last time. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our last hours. As you take off your garments at night, rehearse the solemn scene when you shall lay aside your robe of flesh. When you put on your garments in the morning, anticipate the being clothed upon with your house which is from heaven in the day of resurrection. To be fearful of death is often the height of folly. A great prophet once ran away many miles to escape from death by an imperious queen. He was one of the bravest of the brave, and yet he hurried into solitude to escape a woman's threat. When he had finished his weary

walk, he sat down, and actually prayed, "Let me die." It was a singular thing to do, to run for his life, and then to cry, "Let me die." That man never did die; for we speak of Elijah, who rode to heaven in a chariot of fire. God does not answer all his people's prayers, for he has better things for them than they ask. Do not tremble about what may never happen. Even we may never die; for it is written, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." Some of us may be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. Who knows? Behold, he comes quickly. At any rate, do not let us worry about death, for it is in his hands.

VI. Again, a full conviction that our times are in his hand will be A REASON FOR CONSECRATED SERVICE. If God has undertaken my business for me, then I may most fitly undertake such business for him as he may appoint. Queen Elizabeth wished one of the leading merchants of London to go to Holland to watch her interests there. The honest man told her Majesty that he would obey her commands; but he begged her to remember that it would involve the ruin of his own trade for him to be absent. To this the Queen replied, "If you will see to my business, I will see to your business." With such a royal promise he might willingly let his own business go; for a queen should have it in her power to do more for a subject than he can do for himself. The Lord, in effect, says to the believer, "I will take your affairs in hand, and see them through for you." Will you not at once feel that now it is your joy, your delight, to live to glorify your gracious Lord? To be set free to serve the Lord is the highest freedom. How beautiful it is to read in the book of Isaiah, "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers"! Outsiders shall do the drudgery for you, and set you free for higher service. Read on and see: "But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God." Faith sets us free from the wear and tear of carking care, that we may give ourselves up wholly to the service of the Lord our God. Faith causes us to live exempt from fret, to serve the blessed God alone. Set free from the burden of earthly things by God's kind care of us, we present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord our God. He hath not made us slaves and drudges, but priests and kings unto God.

I am sure, dear friends, if we get this truth fully saturating our souls, that our times are in God's hand, it will make life a grander thing than it has ever seemed to be. Do you believe that God's hand is working with you and for you? Then art thou lifted above the dumb-driven cattle that surround thee; for the God of heaven thinketh upon thee, and puts his hand to thine affairs. This connection with the divine puts heart into a man, and rises him to high endeavor, and great belief. We feel we are immortal till our work is done; we feel that God is with us, and that we are bound to be victorious through the blood of Jesus. We shall not be defeated in the campaign of life, for the Lord of hosts is with us, and we shall tread down our enemies. God will strengthen us, for our times are in his hand; therefore we will serve him with all our heart, and with all our soul, being fully convinced that "our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

VII. Lastly, if our times are in God's hand, here is A GRAND ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. He that takes care of our times, will take care of our eternity. He that has brought us so far, and wrought so graciously for us, will see us safely over the rest of the road. I marvel at some of you older folks, when you begin to doubt. You will say, "Look at yourself." Well, so I do; and I am heartily ashamed that ever a grain of mistrust should get into the eye of my faith. I would weep it out, and keep it out for the future. Still, some of you are older than I am, for you are seventy or eighty years of age. How much longer do you expect to travel in this wilderness? Have you another ten years, think you? God has been gracious to you for seventy years, and will you fret about the last ten, which, indeed, may never come? That will never do. God has delivered some of you out of such great trials, that your present ones are mere flea-bites. Sir Francis Drake, after he had sailed round the world, came up the Thames, and when he had passed Gravesend there came a storm which threatened the ship. The brave commander said, "What! Go round the world safely, and then get drowned in a ditch? Never!" So we ought to say. God has upheld us in great tribulations, and we are not going to be cast down about trials which are common to men. A man of energy, if he takes a work in hand, will push it through and the Lord our God never undertakes what he will not complete. "My times are in thy hand," and therefore the end will be glorious. My Lord, if my times were in my own hand, they would prove a failure; but since they are in thy hand, thou wilt

not fail, nor shall I. The hand of God ensures success all along the line. In that day when we shall see the tapestry which records our lives, we shall see all the scenes therein with wondering eye; we shall see what wisdom, what love, what tenderness, what care was lavished upon them. When once a matter is in God's hand it is never neglected or forgotten, but it is carried out to the end. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

I have not been able to preach on this text as I hoped to do, for I am full of pain, and have a heavy headache; but, thank God, I have no heartache, with such a glorious truth before me. Sweet to my soul are these words—"My times are in thy hand." Take the golden sentence home with you. Keep this truth in your mind. Let it lie on your tongue like a wafer made with honey. Let it dissolve until your whole nature is sweetened by it. Yes, dear old lady, you that have come out of the workhouse this morning to hear this sermon, say to yourself, "My times are in thy hand." Yes, you, dear friend, who cannot find a situation, and have been walking the shoes off your feet in the vain endeavor to seek one: you also may say, "My times are in thy hand." Yes, my dear sister, pining away with consumption, this may be your song: "My times are in thy hand." Yes, young man, you that have just started in business, and have met with a crushing loss, it will be for your benefit after all; therefore say, "My times are in thy hand." This little sentence, to my mind, swells into a hymn: it buds and blossoms into a psalm. Few are the words, but mighty is the sense, and full of rest.

Now, remember, it is not everybody that can find honey in this hive. O sinners, you are in the hands of an angry God; and this is terrible! The God against whom you continually sin, and whom you provoke by refusing his grace, has absolute power over you. Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces. You have provoked, offended, and grieved him; but yet there is hope, for his mercy endureth for ever. Though you have vexed his Holy Spirit, yet return unto him, and he will have mercy upon you, and abundantly pardon you. It is certain that you are in his hands, and that you cannot escape from him. If you should climb to heaven, or dive to hell, you would not be out of his reach. No strength of yours can resist him, no speed can outrun him. Yield yourselves unto God; and then this great power of God, which now surrounds you, shall

become your comfort. At present it ought to be your terror. The eyes of God are fixed upon you; the hand of God is against you; and if you are unsaved, one touch of that hand will mean death and everlasting destruction. That hand which the believer devoutly kisses, is the hand which you may well dread. Oh, that you would flee to Christ Jesus, and find shelter from wrath beneath the crimson canopy of his precious blood! Amen.

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A Mystery - Saints Sorrowing And Jesus Glad

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him - John 11:14-15

There lived in the little village of Bethany a very happy family. There was neither father nor mother in it: the household consisted of the unmarried brother Eleazar, or Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary, who dwelt together in unity so good and pleasant that there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This affectionate trio were all lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and were frequently favoured with His company. They kept open house whenever the Great Teacher came that way. Both for the Master and for the disciples there was always a table, a bed, and a candlestick in the prophet's chamber, and sometimes sumptuous feasts were prepared for the whole company. They were very happy, and rejoiced much to think that they could be serviceable to the necessities of one so poor, and yet so honoured as the Lord Jesus. But, alas! affliction cometh everywhere; virtue may sentinel the door, but grief is not to be excluded from the homestead. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" if the fuel be a log of sweet-smelling sandal wood, yet the sparks must rise, and even so the best of families must feel affliction. Lazarus sickens. It is a mortal sickness beyond the power of physicians. What is the first thought of the sisters but to send for their friend Jesus?

They know that one word from His lips will restore their brother: there is no absolute need that He should even risk His safety by a journey to Bethany; He has but to speak the word and their brother shall be made whole. With glowing hopes and moderated anxieties, they send a tender message to Jesus—"Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Jesus hears it, and sends back the answer which had much comfort in it, but could hardly compensate for His own absence: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." There lies poor Lazarus after the message is come; he does not recover; he is a little more cheerful, because he hears that his sickness is not unto death, but his pains do not abate; the clammy death-sweat gathers on his brow; his tongue is dry; he is full of pains and racked with anguish, at last he passes through the iron gate of death, and there lies his corpse before the weeping sisters' eyes. Why was not Jesus there? Why did He not come? Tender hearted as He always was, what could have made Him thus unkind? Why tarrieth He so? Why is He so long in coming? How can His words be true? He said, "This sickness is not unto death"; and there lies the good man cold in death, and the mourners are gathering for the funeral. Look at Martha! She has been sitting up every night watching her poor brother; no care could have been more constant, no tenderness more excessive. There is no potion in the range of her housewifery which she has not compounded; this herb and the other she has gathered, and she has administered all sorts of medicinal drinks and nourishing foods; and anxiously has she watched until her eyes are red for want of sleep. Jesus might have spared her all this. Why did He not? He had only to will it, and the flush of health would have returned to the cheek of Lazarus, and there would have been no more need of this weary nursing, and this killing watchfulness. What is Jesus doing? Martha was willing to serve Him, will He not serve her? She has even cumbered herself about much-serving for His sake, giving Him not only necessaries but dainties, and will He not give her what is so desirable to her heart, so essential to her happiness—her brother's life? How is it He can send her a promise which He doth not seem to keep, and tantalize her with hope, and cast down her faith? As for Mary, she has been sitting still at her brother's side, listening to his dying words, repeating in his ear the gracious words of Jesus which she had been wont to hear when she sat at His feet, catching the last accents of her expiring brother, thinking less

about the medicine and about the diet than Martha did, but thinking more about his spiritual health and about his soul's enjoyment. She has endeavoured to stay the sinking spirits of her beloved brother with words like these, "He will come; He may wait, but I know Him, His heart is very kind, He will come at the last; and even if He let thee sleep in death it will be but for a little; He raised the widow's son at the gates of Nain, He will surely raise thee whom He loves far more. Have ye not heard how He wakened the daughter of Jairus? Brother, He will come and quicken thee, and we shall have many happy hours yet, and we shall have this as a special love-token from our Master and our Lord, that He raised thee from the dead." But why, why was she not spared those bitter tears which ran scalding down her cheeks when she saw that her brother was really dead? She could not believe it. She kissed his forehead, and oh! how cold was that marble brow! She lifted up his hand—"He cannot be dead," said she, "for Jesus said this sickness was not unto death;" but the hand fell nerveless by her side: her brother was really a corpse, and putrefaction soon set in, and then she knew that the beloved clay was not exempt from all the dishonour which decay brings to the human body. Poor Mary! Jesus loved thee, it is said, but this is a strange way of showing His love. Where is He? Miles away He lingers. He knows thy brother is sick; yea, He knows that he is dead, and yet He abides still where He is. Oh! sorrowful mystery that the pity of such a tender Saviour should sink so far below their plumb-line to gauge, or His mercy should range so high beyond their power to reach.

Jesus is talking of the death of His friend, let us listen to His words; perhaps we may find the key to His actions in the words of His lips. How surprising! He does not say, "I regret that I have tarried so long." He does not say, "I ought to have hastened, but even now it is not too late." Hear, and marvel! Wonder of wonders, He says, "I am glad that I was not there." Glad! the word is out of place? Lazarus, by this time, stinketh in his tomb, and here is the Saviour glad! Martha and Mary are weeping their eyes out for sorrow, and yet their friend Jesus is glad! It is strange, it is passing strange! However, we may rest assured that Jesus knoweth better than we do, and our faith may therefore sit still and try to spell out His meaning, where our reason cannot find it at the first glance. "I am glad," saith He, "for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may

believe." Ah! we see it now: Christ is not glad because of sorrow, but only on account of the result of it. He knew that this temporary trial would help His disciples to a greater faith, and He so prizes their growth in faith that He is even glad of the sorrow which occasions it. He does as good as say, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to prevent the trouble, for now that it is come, it will teach you to believe in me, and this shall be much better for you than to have been spared the affliction."

We have thus plainly before us the principle, that our Lord in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people's faith, that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. Let us try to press the wine of consolation from the cluster of the text. In three cups we will preserve the goodly juice as it flows forth from the winepress of meditation. First of all, brethren, Jesus Christ was glad that the trial had come, for the strengthening of the faith of the apostles; secondly, for strengthening the faith of the family; and thirdly, for giving faith to others; for you find by the forty-fifth verse that the goblet passed round to sympathizing friends—"Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him."

I. Jesus Christ designed the death of Lazarus and his after-resurrection FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES. This acted two ways: not only would the trial itself tend to strengthen their faith; but the remarkable deliverance which Christ gave to them out of it would certainly minister to the growth of their confidence in Him.

1. Let us at once observe that the trial itself would certainly tend to increase the apostle's faith. Faith untried may be true faith, but it is sure to be little faith. I believe in the existence of faith in men who have no trials, but that is as far as I can go. I am persuaded, brethren, that where there is no trial faith just draws breath enough to live, but that is all; for faith, like the fabled salamander, has fire for its native element. Faith never prospers so well as when all things are against her: tempests are trainers, and the lightnings are her illuminators. When a calm reigns on the sea, spread the sails as you will, the ship moves not to its harbour; for on a slumbering ocean the keel sleeps too. Let the winds come howling

forth, and let the waters lift up themselves, then, though the vessel may rock, and her deck may be washed with waves, and her mast may creak under the pressure of the full and swelling sail, yet it is then that she makes headway towards her desired haven. No flowers wear so lovely a blue as those which grow at the foot of the frozen glacier; no stars so bright as those which glisten in the polar sky; no water so sweet as that which springs amid the desert sand; and no faith so precious as that which lives and triumphs in adversity. Thus saith the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Now, why afflicted and poor? Because there is an adaptation in the afflicted and poor among the Lord's people, to trust in the Lord. He does not say, "I will leave in the midst of thee a prosperous and rich people, and they shall trust." No! these scarcely seem to have such capacity for faith as the afflicted ones have. Rather I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they, by reason of their very affliction and poverty, shall be the more graciously disposed to repose their faith in the Lord. Untried faith is always small in stature; and it is likely to remain dwarfish so long as it is without trials. There is no room in the placid pools of ease for faith to gain leviathan proportions, she must dwell in the stormy sea if she would be one of the chief of the ways of God. Tried faith brings experience; and every one of you who are men and women of experience, must know that experience makes religion become more real to you. You never know either the bitterness of sin or the sweetness of pardon, till you have felt both. You never know your own weakness till you have been compelled to go through the rivers, and you would never have known God's strength had you not been supported amid the water-floods. All the talk about religion which is not based upon an experience of it, is mere talk. If we have little experience, we cannot speak so positively as those can whose experience has been more deep and profound. Once when I was preaching upon the faithfulness of God in time of trial in the earlier days of my ministry, my venerable grandfather was sitting in the pulpit behind me; he suddenly rose up and took my place, and coming to the front of the pulpit, said, "My grandson can preach this as a matter of theory, but I can tell you it as a matter of experience, for I have done business upon the great waters, and have seen the works of the Lord for myself." There is an accumulation of force in the testimony of one who has personally passed

through the things whereof others can only speak as though they had seen them in a map or in a picture. Travellers who write from their easy chairs what they have seen from their bedchambers, may indite books to beguile the idle hours of those who stay at home; but he who is about to traverse regions full of danger, seeks a guide who has really trodden the road, The writer may excel in florid words, the veritable traveller has real and valuable wisdom. Faith increases in solidity, assurance, and intensity, the more she is exercised with tribulation, and the more she hath been cast down, and lifted up again. Let not this, however, discourage those who are young in faith. You will have trials enough without your seeking for them; the full portion will be measured out to you in due season. Meanwhile, if you cannot yet claim the result of long experience, thank God for what grace you have. Praise Him for that whereunto you have attained; walk according to that rule, and you shall yet have more and more of the blessing of God, till your faith shall remove mountains, and conquer impossibilities.

It may be asked, what is the method by which trial strengthens faith? We might answer in various ways. Trial takes away many of the impediments of faith. Carnal security is the worst foe to confidence in God. If I sit down and say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" faith's road is barricaded, but adversity sets the barn on a blaze, and "the much goods laid up for many years," cease to block up the path of faith. Oh, blessed axe of sorrow, which clears a pathway for me to my God by cutting down the thick trees of my earthly comforts! When I say, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved," the visible fortification, rather than the invisible protector, engages my attention; but when the great earthquake shakes the rocks, and the mountain is swallowed up, I fly to the immovable Rock of Ages to build my confidence on high. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valour, and snaps the sinews of scared courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut: affliction doth this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortable in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting-place before its value can be known. Trial plucks the arrow of faith from the repose of the quiver, and shoots it against the foe.

Nor is affliction of small service to faith, when it exposes the weakness of the creature. This trial would show the apostles that they must not depend upon the bounty of any one man, for though Lazarus may have entertained them and filled their little bag with food, yet Lazarus dies, and Mary may die, and Martha may die, and all friends must die, and this would teach them not to look to broken cisterns, but to fly to the ever-flowing fountain. Oh, dear friends, we are in much danger of making idols of our mercies! God gives us his temporal favours as refreshments by the way, and then straightway we kneel down and cry, "These by thy gods, O Israel." It is of the Lord's mercy that these idol-gods be broken in pieces. He blasts the gourds under which we sat in ample shade, in order that we may lift up our cry to Him, and trust in Him alone. The emptiness of the creature is a lesson we are so slow to learn, and we must have it whipped into us by the rod of affliction; but learned it must be, or else faith can never attain to eminence.

Furthermore, trial is of special service to faith when it drives her to her God. I make a sad confession, over which I mourn, that when my soul is happy and things prosper, I do not as a rule live so near to God as I do in the midst of shame and contempt, and casting down of spirit. O my God, how dear Thou art to my soul in the night; when the sun goeth down, Thou Bright and Morning Star, how sweetly dost Thou shine. When the world's bread is sugared and buttered, then we devour it till we grow sick; but when the world changes our diet, fills our mouth with vinegar, and makes our drink gall and wormwood, then we cry for the breasts of our dear God again. When the world's wells are full of sweet but poisonous water, we pitch our tents at the well's mouth, and drink again and again and forget the well of Bethlehem which is within the gate; but when earth's water becomes bitter like the stream of Marah, then we turn away all sick and faint, and cry after the water of life, "Spring up, O well!" Thus afflictions fetch us to our God, as the barking dog drives the wandering sheep to the shepherd's hand.

And then trial has a hardening effect upon faith. As the Spartan lads were prepared for fighting by the sharp discipline of their boyish days, so are God's servants trained for war by the afflictions which He sends upon them in the early days of their spiritual life. We must run with footmen,

or we shall never be able to contend with horses; we must be thrown into the water, or we shall never learn to swim; we must hear the whizzing of the bullets, or we shall never become veteran soldiers. The gardener knows that if his flowers were kept always under glass and fostered in a great temperature, when he might put them out, should there come a cold night they would quickly die; so he does not give them too much heat, but exposes them by degrees and gets them used to the cold, that they may stand in the open air; and thus the only wise God does not put His servants in hothouses and rear them delicately, but He exposes them to trial that they may know how to bear it when it comes. If you want to ruin your son, never let him know a hardship. When he is a child carry him in your arms, when he becomes a youth still dandle him, and when he becomes a man still dry-nurse him, and you will succeed in producing an arrant fool. If you want to prevent his being made useful in the world, guard him from every kind of toil. Do not suffer him to struggle. Wipe the sweat from his dainty brow and say, "Dear child, thou shalt never have another task so arduous." Pity him when he ought to be punished; supply all his wishes, avert all disappointments, prevent all troubles, and you will surely tutor him to be a reprobate and to break your heart. But put him where he must work, expose him to difficulties, purposely throw him into peril, and in this way you shall make him a man, and when he comes to do man's work and to bear man's trial, he shall be fit for either. My Master does not daintily cradle His children when they ought to run alone; and when they begin to run He is not always putting out His finger for them to lean upon, but He lets them tumble down to the cutting of their knees, because then they will walk more carefully by-and-by, and learn to stand upright by the strength which faith confers upon them.

You see, dear friends, that Jesus Christ was glad—glad that His disciples were blessed by trouble. Will you think of this, you who are so troubled this morning, Jesus Christ does sympathize with you, but still He does it wisely, and He says, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." He is glad that your business does not prosper; He is glad that you have those pains and aches, and that you have so weak a body, to the intent that you may believe. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked

you to and fro, and made you to take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant of grace.

2. But not to tarry here, let us notice that the deliverance which Christ wrought by the resurrection of Lazarus, was calculated also to strengthen the faith of the apostles. At the worst Christ can work. Why, what a plight were they now in! Here was a case which had come to the very worst. Lazarus is not merely dead—he has been buried; the stone has been rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre—worse than that, he had become putrid. Here are miracles so many, that I must describe the resurrection of Lazarus not as one miracle, but as a mass of wonders. We will not go into detail, but suffice it to say, we cannot suppose anything to be a more prodigious exhibition of the divine strength, than the restoration of health and life to a body through which the worms did creep and crawl; and yet in the very worst case Christ is not brought to a nonplus. Here was a case where human power evidently could do nothing. Now bring the viol and the harp, and let music try its charms. Bring here, physician, thy most potent draught, now, for the true aqua vitoe! Now see what thou canst do. What! does the elixir fail? The physician turns away disgusted, for the stench may sooner destroy the physician's life, than he restore the corpse. Now, seek ye round the world and ask all men that are—Herod and his men-at-arms, and Caesar on the imperial throne—"Can you do anything here?" Nay, death sits with ghastly smile laughing at them all. "I have Lazarus," says he, "beyond your reach." Yet Jesus Christ wins the day.

Here divine sympathy became most manifest. Jesus wept when He thought of Lazarus and his weeping sisters. We do not find it often said that He wept. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but those were precious and rare drops which He shed over that dead body. He could do no more when He thought of Jerusalem: He doth no less now that He thinks of Lazarus.

What an exhibition these disciples had of the divine power as well as the divine sympathy, for Christ does but say, "Lazarus, come forth," and death can hold his captive no longer. Forth from the charnel house he comes, restored to perfect health.

Do you not think that all this must tend to confirm the apostles' faith? It seems to me to be a part of the best education they could possibly receive for their future ministry. I think I see the apostles in after-time shut up in prison: they are condemned to die, but Peter comforts John by saying, "He can bring us out of prison: do you not remember how He brought Lazarus out of his grave? He can certainly appear for us and set us free." When they went forth to preach to sinners, how would they be strengthened by remembering these cases! Their hearers were debauched, depraved, immoral—the apostles went into the midst of the worst conditions of human nature, and yet they feared not for the result, for they knew that putrid Lazarus revived at Christ's word. Peter would argue, "Did not Christ restore Lazarus when his body was stinking and decayed? He can certainly bring the most reprobate hearts to the obedience of the truth, and raise the vilest of the vile to new life."

Many of the apostolic Churches were far gone; they had in them unworthy members; but this would not too much buffet the faith of the apostles, for they would say, "That same Christ Who raised up Lazarus, can make Sardis, and Pergamos, and Thyatira, yet to be a praise in the earth, and Churches which seem to be corrupt and foul in the nostrils of the Most High, may yet be made a brightness and glory, and a sweet-smelling savour unto him." I am persuaded that very often such a miracle as this would recur to them, and strengthen them in the times of their suffering and labour and make them able to bear afflictions, and even martyrdom itself, in confidence in Christ.

I will not, however, say more, because the thing seems obvious enough; only you must not forget the principle we are trying to bring out, that in the case of the apostles, Christ considered that for them to have strong faith was worth any cost. No matter what pangs it cost Mary and Martha, or in what grief it might involve Himself or His apostles, they must bear it, because the result was so exceedingly beneficial. The surgeon handles the knife without tears, sharp is the cut, but he knows it will cure. The mother puts the draught to the child's mouth, and the child cries, and heaves, and loathes the bitterness, but the mother says, "Drink it all up, my child," because she knows there is life in every drop. So Christ is glad

for the apostles' sake that He is not there, to the intent that they may believe.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye also to THE GOOD OF THE FAMILY. Mary and Martha had faith, but it was not very strong, for they suspected Christ's love when they said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." There was a sort of under whisper—"Why wast Thou not here? Dost Thou love us? Wherefore then didst Thou tarry?" They certainly doubted His power. Martha, when she could believe in the resurrection, but could not believe in the present resurrection for her brother; and when again she said, "He has been dead four days," had faith, but it was very weak. Christ therefore sent the trial to Mary and Martha for their sakes, and was glad to send it, to the intent that they might believe.

Observe, dear friends, that these were choice favourites of the Lord Jesus Christ. He loves all the elect. They were three special favourites upon whom very distinguishing regard was set, and therefore it was that He sent them a special trial. The lapidary, if he takes up a stone and finds that it is not very precious, will not spend much care in cutting it; but when he gets a rare diamond of the first water, then he will be sure to cut, and cut, and cut again. When the Lord finds a saint whom He loves—loves much—He may spare other men trials and troubles, but He certainly will not this well-beloved one. It is an awful thing to be a favourite of heaven. It is a thing to be sought after and to be rejoiced in; but remember, to be of the King's council-chamber is a thing involving such work for faith that flesh and blood might shrink from the painful blessing. The gardener gets a tree, and if it is but of a poor sort he will let it grow as it wills, and take what fruit comes from it naturally; but if it be of a very rare sort, he likes to have every bough in its proper place, so that it may bear well; and he often takes out his knife and cuts here and there, because, says he, "That is a favourite tree, and it is one which bears such fruit that I would have much from it, and would leave nothing whatever that would cause it detriment." You who are God's favourites must not marvel at trials, but rather keep your door wide open for them, and when they come in, say, "Hail, messenger of the King! the sound of thy Master's feet is behind thee; thou art welcome here, for thy Master sent thee."

Special trial was attended with a special visit. It may be that Christ would not have come to Bethany if Lazarus had not been dead; but as soon as there is a corpse in the house, there is Christ in the house too. O Christian, it shall be much for your comfort, and for the strengthening of your faith, if Christ comes to you in your troubles. I tell you, if you see no smiles in His face in your prosperity, you shall not be without them in your adversity. The Lord Jesus will go out of His way to see you. You know when a mother is most kind to her child: she lets it run about, and scarcely notices it when it is well; but when it cries. "My head, my head!" and when they take it to the mother and tell her it is ill, how tender she is over it! How all the blandishments of love and the caresses of affection are lavished upon the little sick one! It shall be so with you, and in receiving these special visits, you shall know yourself to be highly favoured above the rest.

This special visit was attended with special fellowship. Jesus wept—wept with them that wept. Ah! you shall have Jesus sitting by the bedside, and weeping with you when you are sick. You may be well, and strong, and have but little fellowship with Christ, but He shall make all your bed in your sickness. Though you might walk along the green sward without the Saviour, when you come into the midst of the fire, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you shall not be without Him then. I witness that there is no fellowship with Christ so near and sweet, as that which comes to us when we are in deep trials. Then the Master unbosoms Himself, and takes His child, not upon His knee, but to His very heart, and bids him lay his head upon His beating bosom. Christ will reveal His secrets to you when the world is against you, and trials surround you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant;" but they shall never have such discoveries of that secret and that covenant, as when they most need it, in the darkest and most trying times. There are special loves, special trials, special visits, and special fellowship.

And soon you shall have special deliverance. In days to come you will talk about these trials. You will say, I fretted myself, and worried over it, but oh, if I could have seen the end as well as the beginning, I should have

said—

"Sweet affliction! sweet affliction!
Thus to bring my Saviour near."

I tell you, you will sit yet under your own vine, and under your own fig-tree, and talk to the poor tried saints, and say, "Do not be cast down, for I cried unto the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Perhaps in heaven this will help to make a part of your happiness, to remember God's love to you in your tribulations—

"There on a green and flowery mount
Our weary souls shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount,
The labours of our feet."

Shall we not tell to angels, and principalities, and powers, the faithfulness of Christ? We will tell all heaven that "His love was strong as death, and His jealousy as cruel as the grave" "many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it." What sayest thou, my friend, thou who are under the smarting rod? Wilt thou murmur any more? Wilt thou repine against it any more? I beseech you, rather take my text, and read it the other way say—God help thee to say it—"I am glad that my God did not deliver me, because the trial has strengthened my faith. I thank His name that He has done me the great favour to permit me to carry the heavy end of His cross. I thank my Father that He hath not left me unchastised, for 'Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word.' 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' " I tell you, this is the shortest way out of your troubles, as well as the most profitable spirit while you are in them. The Lord generally stays the rod when He finds His child receiving it as a favour. When thou art agreed with God's rod, then that rod will have no further quarrel with thee. When thou canst look into the Father's eyes, and say, "Thy will be done," then His afflicting hand has done its work.

III. Now I come to the third point, and here may God the Holy Spirit bless the word. This trouble was permitted for GIVING FAITH TO OTHERS.

I shall address myself chiefly to those who cannot say they are God's people, but who have some desire towards Christ. It is very likely you have had some great trouble in your life, and looking back, you wish you had never had it; but my Lord, who knows better than you do, says "I am glad for your sakes that I did not spare you that trouble, to the intent that you may be led to believe." Know assuredly that afflictions often lead men to faith in Christ because they give space for thought. The man was strong and hale and hearty, and went on working from day to day, and never had a thought about God. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" but he did not know, he did not care. He left all thoughts of eternity to those who were silly enough to be religious, but for him—what did it matter to him? Death was a long way off, and besides, if it were not, he had not the time to think about it. An accident occurred; he had to lie upon his bed, and at first he fretted and fumed, but it could not be altered, and there in the ward of the hospital he groaned through many a weary hour at night. What could he think of? Why then the man began to think of himself, of his condition before God, of what would be his lot if he should die. When his life trembled like the even balance, and not one could tell which way it would turn, the man was forced to consider. Many a soul has been ploughed in the hospital, and then has been sown in the sanctuary. Many a man has been first brought to God by the loss of a limb, or by long sickness, or by deep poverty.

Afflictions lead men to faith full often by preventing sin. A young man had resolved to climb a mountain: he had determined against good advice to reach the summit, though one far older than himself had warned him of the danger. He had not proceeded far up the mountain-side before a thick mist surrounded him. He was alarmed. The mist was so thick he could scarcely see his own hand. He retraced his steps following the way by which he came, and returned sorrowfully to his father's house, telling him that he had been in great peril. His father said he was glad of it; for if he had not met with that peril, he might have advanced a little farther, and fallen, never to rise again. Often trouble puts men out of temptation. They would have gone into bad company, to drunkenness, or lust, but they could not. The appointment was made—ah! the very night was set apart, but the black hand of God's kind angel came—I said a black hand,

for so it seemed, and the man could not do what he had wished to do, and so his course was checked, and this in the hand of God was the means of bringing him to faith.

Troubles, again, often bring men to believe in Jesus because they compel them to stand face to face with stern realities. Did you ever lie upon the edge of death for a week? Did you ever lie with your body racked with pains, listening for the physician's whispers, and knowing that they amounted to this, that there were ninety-nine chances to one that you could not possibly recover? Did you ever feel that death was near? Did you ever peer into eternity with anxious eyes? Did you ever picture hell and think yourself there? Did you ever lie awake, and think of heaven and yourself shut out of it? Ah! it is in such times as these that God's Holy Spirit works great things for the sons of men. Hence Christ is glad when they are brought very low, when their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they cry unto God in their trouble. He is glad because this is the stepping-stone to real and genuine trust in Him, and so to eternal life. It is much better to lose an eye or a hand than to lose your soul—better to go to heaven poor and ragged, than to go to hell rich—better to melt into heaven by the process of consumption than it were to go down to hell with bones filled with marrow, and sinews full of strength. Glory be to God for the trials and troubles some of us have had, if they have been the means of bringing us to Christ.

Trials tend to make men believe in Christ when they are followed by deliverances. Perhaps some of you have been raised from a sick bed, or you have been helped over a time of temporal distress. Well, have you no gratitude? Do you not love God for His goodness? Does not your heart melt towards the Lord, for the kind deeds He has done to you? Have you no song of praise for His name? I have known many who have said, "Now that God has been pleased to raise me up and help me in this way, I will give Him my heart; what can I do for Him who has done so much for me?" Gratitude, I doubt not, has led many to put their trust in Christ. Besides, if you sought God and asked for help in time of trouble, and He did help you, this will tend to encourage you to pray again. If He helped you then, He will help you now; if He spared your life, why will He not spare your soul? If God has been pleased to lift you up from the grave,

why may He not also deliver you from the pit of hell? I bless God there are many in this Church who were led to seek the Lord through answers to prayer. God was gracious to them in their distress; His mercy listened to their prayer; the blessing came, and the result is, that they cry unto Him, and will cry as long as they live.

If once we have prevailed with God, and believing in God we have had some deliverance, this I hope will be overruled to make us trust God for everything in the future. Remember that the one thing needful for eternal life is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I know you will tell me you cannot be perfect. No, I know you cannot. You will say, "I have many sins; I have done much that is wrong." It is true, most true, but he who believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ has his sins forgiven. You know the story—Christ came down from heaven and took His people's sins upon His own shoulders. When God came forth to smite the sinner, Justice said, "Where is he?" and Christ came and stood in the sinner's place, and God's sword went through the Saviour's heart. Why? That it might never cut nor wound the heart of those for whom Jesus died. Did He die for you? He did, if you believe in Him; your faith will be to you the evidence that Christ was substitute for you, and oh! if Christ suffered for you, you cannot suffer. If God punished Christ He will never punish you. If Jesus Christ paid your debts, you are free. Before God's throne today, if thou believest, thou art as clear as the angels in heaven. Thou are a saved soul if thou art resting upon the atonement of Christ, and thou mayst go thy way and sing—

"Now, freed from sin, I walk at large,
The Saviour's blood's my full discharge;
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

If this be the result of your affliction, Christ may well say, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to stop the trouble, to the intent that ye may believe." May God bring you to faith for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Mysteries Of The Brazen Serpent

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. - John 3:14

We are told by wise men that all languages are based upon figures, that the speech of men who are uncivilized is mainly composed of figures; and that indeed the language of the most civilized, when cleaved so as to bring it to its natural foundation, is based upon a set of metaphors perceived by the mind, and then used in language. This much I know, that when we would teach children to speak, we are accustomed to call things, not exactly by the names by which they are known to us, but by some name which represents, for instance, the kind of noise which is uttered by some animal; but which in some way or other, by a species of figure, is easily understood by the child to represent the things. But certain it is that among savage nations, the speech is almost entirely composed of metaphors. Hear an Indian warrior addressing the chiefs, and inflaming them for war; he gathers together all the metaphors of heaven and earth to make his speech. And you will note the same thing is true even in the names which the Indian warriors bear. Those of you who are acquainted with their nomenclature will remember, that the strangest names are given to their great men, by way of figure and metaphor to set forth the qualities of their mind.

Now, beloved, it is the same in spiritual language as it is in natural speech Nicodemus was but a child in grace: when Jesus Christ would teach him to speak concerning things of the kingdom, he did not talk to him in abstract words, but he gave him metaphorical words whereby he might understand the essence of the thing better than by giving him a mere abstract term. When he talked to Nicodemus, he did not say anything about sanctification; but he said, "Except a man be born of water." He did not talk anything to him about the great change of the heart; but he said,

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." He would not tell him much about the Spirit when he began, but he said "The wind bloweth where it listeth." And when he wanted to teach him faith he did not begin by saying, "By faith we are allied to Christ, and derive salvation from our living head;" but he said--;"Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." And so the first religious talk of converted men must always be in figures. Not the epistles of Paul, which are pure didactic teaching, but the words of Jesus, must first be applied to the sinner, before he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and understands the mysteries of the kingdom. And I believe I have hit upon the reason why our Master used this figure, and talked to Nicodemus with metaphor after metaphor, and figure after figure, because the root of all language must be in figures.

And now, to-day, I am about to address the mass of my congregation concerning that simple subject of faith in the Lord Jesus, whereby men are saved. And instead of addressing them in a didactic and doctrinal manner, I shall adopt the parable of my text, and endeavour to imitate the example of my Lord, in trying to make faith plain to those who are but children in grace.

Allow me, then, dear friends, to describe first, *the people in the wilderness*—the representatives of men who are sinners. Let me describe next, *the brazen serpent*—the type of Jesus Christ crucified. Let me then note what was to be *done with the brazen serpent*—it was to be lifted up; and so was Christ to be lifted up. And then let us notice what was to be *done by the people who were bitten*—they were to look at the serpent; and so sinners must believe in Christ.

I. Our first figure represents MEN IN THE ESTATE OF SIN; and the figure is borrowed from the children of Israel in the wilderness, when they were invaded by the fiery serpents. Can you imagine the horror and dismay depicted upon the countenances of the Israelites, when, for the first time, they saw themselves invaded by an army of fiery flying serpents? They had stood valiantly in fight against Amalek; but these were things that trembled not at the sword. Moses had taught them the use of the bow, as it is written in the book of Jasher, but these were thing,

against which the arrow could not prevail. They had endured weariness, and thirst and hunger; the sun had sometimes smitten them by day, and the frost by night, and but for God's preservation, the hardships of the wilderness would have cut them off. All these they had endured and were inured to them; but these fiery serpents were novelties; and all new terrors are terrible from their very novelty. Can you imagine how they began to tell one another of the awful visitants which they had beheld! and can you. imagine how their terror spread like wildfire through the camp, and ere the rumour had spread the serpents were devouring them?

And now, dear friends, if we could all of us see our position in this world, we should this day feel as Israel did when they saw the serpents coming upon them. When our children are born into this world, we believe there is sin in them; but it is a terrible thing for us to reflect that even if the serpent had not bitten them in the birth, yet they are surrounded everywhere by innumerable evils! Can a father send his son into this wicked world with a consciousness of all the evils that will surround him, without a sense of terror? And can a Christian man trust himself to walk in the midst of this ungodly and libidinous generation, without feeling that he is surrounded with temptations, which, if he were left to himself, would be a thousand times more dangerous to him than the most destroying of serpents?

But the picture blackens; we must have deeper shades to paint it. Behold the people after they were bitten! Can you picture their writhings and contortions when the poison of the serpent had infected their veins? We are told by the old writers that these serpents when they bit caused vehement heat, so that there was a pain throughout the body, as if a hot iron had been sent along the veins. Those who had been bitten had a great thirst; they drank incessantly, and still cried for water to quench the burnings within. It was a hot fire which was lit in the fountain, and which ran through every nerve and every sinew of the man; they were racked in pain, and died in most fearful convulsions. Now my brethren, we cannot say that sin instantly produces such an effect as this upon the men who are the subjects of it; but we do affirm, that, let sin alone, and it will develop itself in miseries far more extreme than ever the bite of the serpent could have caused. It is true the young man who quaffs the

poisoned cup of intoxication, wots not that there is a serpent there; for there is no serpent except in the dregs thereof. It is sure that the woman who boasts herself of her riches, and arrays herself right gaudily in her pride, wots not that a serpent binds the zone of her waist; for there is no serpent there as she knoweth, but she shall know it when the days of her frivolity are ended. It is true he that curseth God knows not that a viper hath infused the poison which he speaks out against his Maker; but he shall know it in days to come. Look ye at a bloated drunkard; see him after years of intoxication have defaced all that was manlike in him, as he totters to his grave a poor feeble creature; the pillars of his house are shaken, his strength has failed him, and that which God had meant to be his own image hath become the image of misery incarnate! See the lascivious debauchee after his brief day of pleasure has closed!—No, it is too loathsome for me to paint; my lips refuse to depict the miseries which our hospitals see every day; the awful loathsomeness, the accursed disease which eats up the very bones of those who indulge in sin. Fiery serpents, ye are nothing when compared with fiery lusts! ye may infuse poison into the blood; but lusts do that, and do something more, for they infuse damnation into the soul! When sin has had its perfect work; when its last fair conception has been brought forth, and hath developed itself in the dire crime and the loathsome iniquity—then we have a picture which serpent-bitten Israel would not set forth to us in all its horrors!

And the shades thicken yet again; the darkness lowers, and the clouds are heavier! How awful must have been the death of those who died by the serpents! There are some deaths which are sweet to think upon. The death of the late eminent preacher, Dr. Beaumont, who died in his pulpit, was a death which all of us might envy; whose released spirit, whilst the singing of God's praise was ascending up to heaven, left his body, and was forthwith raised to the throne of God. The death of him, who having served his Master, sinks like a shock of corn fully ripe, or like a sun that hath run its race, is something to be noted and remembered with delight. But the death of the sinner, who hath been bitten by his lusts, and hath not been saved by faith in Christ—oh, how terrible! It is not in the power of mortal language to depict the horrors of the death-bed of a man who has lived without God and without Christ. I challenge all the orators that have ever lived, to draw forth from their vocabulary, words full enough of

horror and of terror to depict the departing scene of the man who has lived at enmity with God, and who dies with his conscience quickened then. Some men it is true live in sin, and take the last dregs of their infatuation before they die, and sink into the pit blindfolded, without the slightest pang of horror; but other men who have had their consciences awakened, die not so. Oh, the shrieks, the yells, the screams! oh, the face of anguish, the contortions, the misery. Have you never heard how men do bend their fists and swear they will not die; and how they start forth, and declare—" I cannot, and I must not die; I am unprepared!" Starting back from the fiery gulph they clutch the physician, and desire him, if possible, to lengthen out the thread of their existence! Ay, many a nurse has vowed that she would never nurse such a man again, for the horrors would be with her till she died.

And now, my dear hearers, you are not dying now; but you will be dying soon. None of you have taken a lease of your lives; it is impossible for you to guarantee to yourselves existence for another hour. And if you are Godless and Christless, ye have all in your veins the venom of that death unutterable which will make your departure doleful beyond expression! I would to God I could cut the cords of my stammering tongue so as to address you with vehemence and passion upon this subject. Men are dying every day around us; at this very hour there are thousands departing into the world of spirits. In upper chambers, where mourning relatives are pouring floods of tears upon their burning brows; far away on the wild sea, where the sea-gull utters the only scream over the shipwrecked mariner; down, deep, deep, deep, in the lowest valley, and high upon the loftiest hills, men are dying now, and dying in all the agonies I have sought to describe, but have failed to do. Ah, and ye must die also! and will ye march on heedlessly; will ye go on step after step, singing merrily all the way, and dreaming not of that which is to come! Oh, will ye be like the silly bullock that goeth easily to the slaughter, or will ye be like the lamb that licks the butcher's knife! Mad, mad O man, that thou shouldst go to eternal wrath and to the chambers of fell destruction, and yet no sigh comes from thy heart; no groan is uttered by thy lips! Thou diest every day, but groanest never, till the last day of thy death, which is the beginning of thy misery. Yes, the condition of the mass of men is just like the condition of the children of Israel when they

were bitten by the serpents.

II. And now comes THE REMEDY. The remedy of the bitten Israelites was a brazen serpent; and the remedy for sinners is Christ crucified. "Stuff, nonsense," said some of the children of Israel, when they heard that a brazen serpent lifted up on a pole was to be the means of their cure. Many of them laughed in the jollity of unbelief—absurd, ridiculous; who ever heard of such a thing, how can it be? A serpent of brass lifted up upon a pole, to cure us of these wounds, by being looked Upon! why all the skill of the physicians cannot do it; will a glance at a brazen Serpent do it? It is impossible!" This much I know, if they did not despise the brazen serpent, there be many that despise Christ crucified. Shall I tell you what they say of him? They say of him as they did of the brazen serpent. Some Wise one said—" Why it was a serpent that did the mischief; how can a serpent Undo it?" Yes, and men will say, "It was by man that sin and death came into the World, and can a man be the means of our salvation?" "Ah," says another, having the prejudice of a Jew about him, "and what a man he was! No king, no prince, no mighty conqueror; he was but a poor peasant, and he died upon a cross." Ah, so said some in the camp; they said it was only a brazen serpent, not a golden one, and how could a brazen serpent be of any use to them? It would not sell for much if it were broken up. What was the use of it? And so men say of Christ. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and they hide their faces from him because they cannot see how he is adapted for their cure.

But some will have it that the preaching of the cross not only cannot save, but will increase the evil. Old physicians tell us that brass was the most likely thing in the world to make people die the quicker; the sight of anything that is bright would have the effect of making the poison yet more strong in its effects, so that it would be death at once to look upon brass. And yet strange to say, to look at the brazen serpent saved them. "Now," says the infidel, "I cannot see how men are to be saved from sin by the preaching of Christ." "Truly, sir," he says, "you go and tell men that though they have sinned never so much, if they do but believe, their sins shall all be washed away! Why they will take advantage of that, and they will be more wicked than ever they were. You tell men that their good

works are of no avail whatever, that they must rest on Christ alone!" "Why," says the sceptic, "my dear fellow, it will be the destruction of all morality; instead of a cure, it will be a death. Why preach it?" Ah, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. I cannot, myself, but admit, that at first sight the brazen serpent seems to be the most absurd invention, in itself, for curing those who were bitten, that ever mind of man could have invented; and yet I see in the brazen serpent, when I come to study it, the highest wisdom that even God himself could develop. I grant you that the cross of Christ also does in its outward appearance seem to be the simplicity of simplicities; something which any one might have thought of, but which would have been beneath their thought. But when you come to study and understand the marvellous scheme of God's justice vindicated, and man pardoned through the atoning blood of the cross, I say, that not even the mighty intellect of God could have conceived a wiser plan, than the wisdom of God displayed in Christ Jesus crucified.

But remember, that much as those who heard of the brazen serpent might have despised it, yet there was no other means of cure. And, now hear me for one moment, while I tell the whole story of salvation. Men, brethren, and fathers, we are born of a sinful generation, and we have ourselves increased our guilt, for us there is no hope; do what we may, we cannot save ourselves.

"Could our zeal no respite know,
Could our tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone."

But brethren, Christ Jesus, God's eternal Son, came into this world, and was born of the virgin Mary, he lived a doleful life of misery, and at last he died a death accompanied by unutterable pangs—that was the punishment of the sins of those who, as penitents, come to Christ. If you this day so repent, and put your trust in Jesus, you have in your trust and repentance a sure proof that Christ was punished for you.

III. And now WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH THE BRAZEN

SERPENT? The text says, "Moses lifted it up;" and we read he was to lift it up upon a pole. Ah, dear friends, and Christ Jesus must be lifted up. He has been lifted up; wicked men lifted him up, when, with nails on an accursed tree, they crucified him! God the Father hath lifted him up; for he hath highly exalted him, far above principalities and powers. But the minister's business is to lift him up. There are some ministers who forget that their errand in the world is to lift up Christ. Suppose Moses, when God told him to lift up the brazen serpent, had said in himself, "It is becoming in me, before I lift it up, that I should give some explanatory remarks. And instead of lifting it up before the vulgar crowd, I will initiate a proved few, so that they may understand about it. I will arrange around this serpent a few golden cloths, I will garnish it with silver tapestry, so that it may not be looked upon by vulgar eyes, and I will endeavour to explain it to them." Now this is what many priestly persons in this age and in ages past have tried to do. The gospel! oh, that must not be preached to the poor! "The Bible," says the Church of Rome, "must not be read by the vulgar crowd! How can they understand it? It is a thing too sacred for the common people to see! No, wrap up the brazen serpent; wrap it up in a cloth, do not let it be exhibited." "No," say our Protestant ministers, many of them, "the Bible must be given, but we must never alter the translation of it!" There are some passages in the present translation that are so dark, that no man can understand them without an explanation. "But no," say the divines of this age, "we will not have the Bible translated properly, the people must always put up with a faulty translation. The brazen serpent must be wrapped up, because it would a little unsettle matters, if we were to have a new translation!" "No," say others, "we will have a new translation, if need be; but there are some parts of the truth that ought not to be preached!" I am not now misrepresenting some of my brethren in the ministry. I know they hold that some doctrines of God's Word ought not to be preached—every day at least. They say Election is true; but they never mention it. They say Predestination is no doubt a godly doctrine, but it ought to be kept from the people. It must be in their creed, or else they would not be sound; but in the pulpit it must not be mentioned at all. "No," says the Church of Rome, "if we have a brazen serpent, we will put it in the sanctum, where it cannot be seen, and we will have the smoke of incense before it, so that it shall not be plainly discerned; the pomp, and ceremony, and trappings of

formality, shall shield it from the vulgar gaze of the people; we will have it girt all round with a thousand ceremonies, which will abstract the gospel, and leave the people to be content with the ceremonies!" Now in these days there are great tendencies to that. The Puseyites are trying, instead of preaching the simplicity of the gospel, to give us figures. "Oh," they say, "what an elevating thing is a Gothic church; how it lifts the soul to heaven to sit in a place where there is a forest of Gothic pillars! oh, what a sweet influence a well played organ has on the mind!" They tell us there is a kind of heavenly influence poured forth from vestments when well worn; and that to see the priest discharge his functions in a holy and reverent manner, is a most excellent way of impressing souls. They will have us believe that holly at Christmas time is a most heavenly and spiritual thing. They teach us that our passions will be carried to heaven by these little sprigs of green; that putting flowers now and then where the gas lamps should be, has a most extraordinary influence in carrying away our souls to paradise; that burning candles in the daylight is just the most splendid way in all the world of showing forth the sun of righteousness! Now, we do not exactly fall in with their views. We believe that these places are good for children; they are not so liable to cry there, for there are more things to amuse them. But we never could see how a man—who was a man—could ever sit down to a thing so infamously namby-pamby as the religion of a Puseyite. There is nothing in it but pure nonsense, and all that the gospel may not be seen. It is as if Aaron had filled his censer full of incense and waved it before the brazen serpent, and made a great smoke, so that the people could not see; and then poor Moses tarried behind and tried to look, but none of the poor souls could see because there was the smoke before them. No, the only thing we have to do with Christ Jesus crucified is, just to lift him up and preach him. There is many a man who could only speak in a ploughman's dialect, who will wear a bright and starry crown in heaven, because he lifted Christ up, and sinners saw and lived. And there is many a learned doctor, who spoke with the brogue of the Egyptian, and, with dark and mysterious language, he talked he knew not what, 'who, after having ended his course, shall enter heaven without a solitary star in his crown, never having lifted up Christ, nor won crowns for his Master. Let each of us who are called to the solemn work of the ministry remember, that we are not called to lift up doctrine, or church governments, or particular denominations; our

business is to lift up Christ Jesus and to preach him fully. There may be times when church government is to be discussed, and peculiar doctrines are to be vindicated. God forbid that we should silence any part of truth: but the main work of the ministry—its every day work—is just exhibiting Christ. and crying out to sinners, "Believe, believe, believe on him who is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

And let it be remembered, that if the minister doth but preach Christ plainly, that is all he has to do; if with affection and prayer he preaches Christ fully, if there were never a soul saved—which I believe would be impossible—he would have done his work, and his Master would say, "Well done." I have gone away from this hall, after preaching upon divers doctrines, and though many have complimented me, foolishly, I have said to myself, "I can but groan that I had such a subject at all." And at another time, when I have been faltering in my delivery, and committed a thousand blunders in my speech, I have gone away as happy as a prince, because I have said, "I did preach Christ." There was enough for sinners to be saved by; and if all the papers in the world should abuse me, and all the men in the world should say 'cry him down;' he will still live and still breathe as long as he feels in himself, "I have preached to sinners, and Christ has been preached to them, so as they could understand and lay hold on him and be saved."

IV. And now, dear friends, I have almost concluded; but I have come to that part of the discourse which needs most of power. WHAT WERE ISRAEL TO DO? What are convinced sinners to do? The Israelites were to look; the convinced sinner must believe. Do you picture Moses with his reverend head standing erect, and boldly crying out with all his might—"Look, look, look!" Do you see him, as with his right hand he grasps the pole, and lifts it up, and marches with it through the camp like a great standard-bearer, pointing with his finger, and speaking with hand, and eye, and lip, and foot, and every part of the body, as he passionately bids poor bitten Israel to look? You can, perhaps, conceive the scene as men roll over one another, and the dying and almost dead behold the brazen serpent. and begin to live. Now note, there may be some in the camp who would not look; they obstinately shut their eyes, and when the pole was brought near them they would not look. Perhaps it was through unbelief;

they said, "What was the use of it? it could do them no good!" There is the wretch, the pole is before him, and yet he will not look. Well what will become of him? Oh, the death-pangs are upon him; see how death is twitching him! How his flesh seems to writhe in agony! He has shut his eyes with all the force and passion he can command, lest they should be opened on that brazen serpent, and he should live I Ah! my hearer, and I have such an one here to-day. I have many here who will not come to Christ that they may be saved—men, who when the gospel is preached to them resist it, despise it, and reject it. Though the reception of the gospel be all of grace, yet the rejection of it is all of man. And I have some here who have often been touched in their conscience; they have often been moved to believe, but they have been desperately set on mischief, and they would not come to Christ. Ah, sinner, thou little knowest how direful thy doom shall be. Thou mayest this day tell me thou dost not believe on the Saviour; thou mayest turn away thine ear from the warning, and say, "What need to make so great a noise about it? I would rather die than believe; for I do not think that Christ can save! What good is there in it?" Ah, sir, you may reject me; but remember there is a greater preacher than I am coming to you soon. He with a skeleton arm, and bony finger, and cold speech, he will freeze, and yet convince! It is one called Death! Look me in the face to-day; and tell me I preach you a lie—you can do that easily! Look death in the face to-morrow, and tell him that, and you will find it harder work. Ay, and if you have the fool-hardiness to do that, you will not look at the face of the Great Judge, when he shall sit upon the throne, and tell him that his gospel was not true; for affrighted and alarmed, you shall rush hither and thither to hide yourselves from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. Perhaps there were some in the camp who said they would look by-and-by. "Oh," said they, "there is no need to look now; the venom has not yet worked its effects: we are not yet dead; a little longer!" And ere they uttered the last word they were stiff and clay-cold! How many do the same? They will not be religious yet; another day, another hour. They believe they can be pious when they like, which is a fallacy; and therefore they will postpone the matter as long as they may. How many have postponed the day of salvation, until the day of damnation has come, before they had repented! Oh, how' many have said, "A little sleep, a little folding of the hands!" and they have been like men on shipboard, when the ship was foundering, who would not escape

while they might, but still tarried on deck; at last a sea swallowed them, and they went down alive into the depths. Take heed of procrastination; delays are dangerous, and some delays are damnable! Look hither, look hither to Christ bleeding on cross. Look now, for the Spirit saith, "*to-day*: if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation."

I doubt not, there were some there who tried physicians: "Look at the brazen serpent?" said they, "not we. Doctor, come hither, bring your balsam; can you not take the caustic and burn out this poison from my arm, and then pour in some cordial that will save me? Physician, have you no antidote that might cool my blood? Ah. I laugh at that brazen serpent; I will not look at it; I trust to your skill. O learned physician!" And how many now do the same? They say, "I will not believe in Christ; I will try and do better; I will reform myself, I will attend to all the ceremonies of the church. Can I not help myself, and so improve myself that I shall have no need of Jesus?" Ah, ye may try; ye may lay that flattering unction to your souls, and film the ulcerous wound, but all the while dark corruption shall sleep within, and shall at last break out in sore flames upon thee; when thou shalt have no time to attempt a cure, but shalt be swept away—not to the hospital of mercy, but like the leper, without the city, thou shalt be cast away from hope of blessedness.

It may be there were some who were so busy looking at their sores, that they did not think of looking at the serpent. Poor creatures, they lay in their misery, and kept looking first at that wound on the foot, and then at that one on the hand; and crying over their sores, and never looked at the serpent. Scores and hundreds perish in that way. ' Oh," says the sinner, "I have been so sinful!" Man, what has that to do with it? Christ is all meritorious, look at him. "No, no," says another, "I cannot look at Christ. Oh, sir, you do not know what crimes I have committed; I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I have been a whore-monger, or what not; how can I be saved!" My dear man, your wounds have nothing to do with it: it is just Christ on the cross. If any poor creature, bitten by the serpent, had said to me—" Now it is no good my looking there; see how often I have been bitten; there is a huge serpent twisting round my loins, there is another devouring my hand, how can I live?" I should say to him,

"My dear fellow, do not take any notice whether you have got one serpent or fifty serpents, one bite or fifty bites; all you have to do is to look. You have nothing to do with these bites, except that you have to feel them, and perish by them unless you look. But just look straight to Christ." And now thou chief of sinners, believe in the Lord Jesus; and be thy sins never so many, he is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. And yet how many perish through those divers delusions, with the gospel before their very eyes, lifted up on the pole so plainly that we wonder they do not see it.

And now I must tell you one or two sweet things for the encouragement of the poor sinner. Oh, you that are guilty this morning, and know that you are so, let me say to you, "Look to Christ." For remember the brazen serpent was lifted up, that every one in the camp who was bitten might live; and now Christ is lifted up to you, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Sinner, the devil says you are shut out; tell him that "whosoever" shuts out none. Oh that precious word, "whosoever." Poor soul, I see thee clutch at it and say, "Then, Sir, if I believe, he will not cast me away." I see the harlot in all her guilt bemoaning her iniquity; she says it is impossible that Christ should save. But she hears it said, "Whosoever," and she looks and lives! Remember, it mattered not how old they were, nor how much bitten they were, nor whereabouts in the camp they lived; they did but look and live. And now ye that have grown grey in iniquity, whose hairs might rather be black than white, if they showed forth your character, for it has been blackened by years of vice. Remember there is the same Christ for big sinners as for little sinners; the same Christ for grey heads as for babes; the same Christ for poor as for rich; the same Christ for chimney sweeps as for monarchs; the same Christ for prostitutes as for saints: "Whosoever." I use broad words that I may take a broad range, and sweep the whole universe of sinners through—whosoever looketh to Christ shall live. And remember it does not say that if they looked but little they should not live. Perhaps there was some of them so bitten that their eyelids were swollen and they could scarcely see. Old Christopher Ness says, "There may have been some of them that had so little sight that they could but squint from one eye." Says he, in his strange language, "If they did but dart a little glance at the brazen serpent, they lived." And you who say you cannot believe; if

God gives you only half a grain of faith, that will carry you to heaven. If you can only say, "O Lord, I would believe, help thou mine unbelief;" if you can but put out your hand with Simon Peter, and say, "Lord save, or I perish," it is enough. If you can only pray that poor publican's prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner," that will do. And if you cannot sing with some of the old experienced saints -

"My name from the palms of his hands,
Eternity cannot erase;

remember it is quite enough, if you can only sing -

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die."

And now poor soul I have almost done. But I cannot let thee go. I see thee with the tear in thine eye; I hear thee confessing thy guilt, and bemoaning thy sin; I bid thee look to my Master and live. Be not afraid to try my Lord and Master. I know what thy bashfulness is; I have felt the same, and thought he never would save me. Come soul, thou art in secret now with thyself; for though there be thou sands around thee, thou thinkest I am speaking alone to thee. And so I am. My brother, my sister, you are weeping to-day on account of sin—look to Jesus. And for your encouragement note these three things. Note first that Jesus Christ was put on the cross on purpose for you to look at. The only reason why he died, was that poor sinners might look at him and be saved. Now, my dear brethren, if that was Christ's purpose in being hung on the tree, you need not think you may not do it. If God sends a river, and sends it for us to drink of, will you disappoint him in not drinking? No, rather you will say. "Did he design me to drink it? Then will I drink it." Now, Jesus hung on the cross on purpose to be looked at. Look at him, look at him, and live. Remember again for your encouragement, he asks you to look; he invites you to believe; he has sent his minister this day, even to command you to do it; he has said to me, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be

saved." Now I need not simply say that my Master's door is wide open for you; I will say something more: he has told me to ask you to come in. Wisdom crieth aloud, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she inviteth you; she saith, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come ye to the supper." Yea, my Master has given instructions to his Holy Spirit that if men will not come of themselves, he should compel them to come in that his house may be filled. Then, poor sinner, you must be welcome, he will have enough sinners to fill his table; and if he has made you feel your sinnership—come and welcome, sinner, come. And my last encouragement is this: Come to my Master and try him, because he promises to save you. The promises of Jesus Christ are all of them as good as oaths; they never fail. He says—"Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, if I had here a man who declared himself to be the vilest wretch on earth, I would say to him—Young man, I am very fond of proving the truthfulness of God's promises; now God says, if you believe you shall not perish. My dear friend, when a common sinner tries, and it does not fail, it is some proof of its truthfulness: but you are an extraordinary sinner. Now, thou extraordinary sinner, venture thyself on this promise; he says thou shalt not perish; come and try him. And remember, God must undeify himself, and cease to be true, before he can ever damn a sinner who has believed in Christ. Come risk it, thou who art so laden with sin that thou staggerest under thy burden; fall down on the simple promise, "He is able to save to the uttermost." Just cast thyself wholly on Christ, and if thou art not saved, God's book is a lie, and God himself has broken his truth. But that cannot be. Come thou and try it. "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

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Natural Or Spiritual?

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. - 1 Corinthians 2:14

The apostle Paul knows of only two classes of men—natural and spiritual. Before his eye all other distinctions are extinguished. Barbarian or Scythian, bond or friar, male or female, circumcision or uncircumcision—all these varieties among men are mere accidents in his esteem. He does not stay to divide men, according to the symptoms of their nature. They may be devout men, such as make a profession of godliness, men of morality, men who have commenced sin, or men who have become adepts in it. He knows better than merely to judge of men by their symptoms; he takes either their diseased state or their healthy state, and so divides them. He lays the axe at the root of the trees, and doing so, he perceives only two classes of men—the natural and the spiritual. Under the term "natural," the apostle includes all those persons who are not partakers of the Spirit of God; it matters not how excellent, how estimable, how intelligent, how instructed they may be. If the Spirit of God hath not given to them a new and higher nature than they ever possessed by their creature birth, he puts them all down at once in the list of natural men. They are what they are by nature. They never professed to have received the Spirit of God. He puts them down, therefore, as natural men. On the other hand, all into whom the Spirit of God has come, breathing into them a new and diviner life, he puts down under the other head of spiritual men. They may be as yet but babes in grace; their faith may be weak; their love may be but in its early bud; as yet their spiritual senses may be little exercised, perhaps their faults may be in excess of their virtues, but inasmuch as the root of the matter is in them, and they have passed from death unto life, out of the region of nature into that which is beyond nature—the kingdom of grace—he puts them down also, all of them in one list, as spiritual men. And then he goes on to affirm concerning natural men,—those who are not partakers of the Spirit,—that the truths of God, which are spiritual, they do not and cannot receive. He teaches that it is utterly impossible that they ever should receive them, unless lifted out of that class of natural men and transformed by the Spirit's work into spiritual men. This change, however, being effected,

they will not only receive the things of the Spirit, but embrace them with delight, feed upon them with intense satisfaction, and rise eventually into that state of glory which is next beyond the state of grace.

This morning I propose—and O that God the Holy Spirit may bear witness in our hearts!—I propose, first of all, to dwell a little while upon the great truth that natural men do not receive the things of the Spirit of God, but count them foolishness; in the second place, I shall show, for a moment only, that the reason of the rejection of the things of God cannot be because they are really foolish, for they are not so; thirdly, we shall come to the inference that the reason why the natural man rejects the things of God, is to be found in himself alone; and then, fourthly, we shall consider the practical lessons which the whole subject teaches.

I. First, then, it is a well-known fact, and one which can be proved by the observation of every day, that **THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVES NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.**

Mark, we lay this down as a rule. We do not say that the drunken or debauched natural man receives not the things of God. That is true; but we also insist upon it that the delicate and the refined natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. I do not pick out some one case, and say the uneducated, illiterate, coarse, low-minded natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things; but all alike, the most intelligent, enlightened, and trained natural men, equally, do not, and cannot, and will not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. Like our apostle, we take a wide range, and do not leave out one. However amiable in natural temperament, however well trained by the best parental associations, however kept in check by the most excellent position in providence, however patriotic, however self-denying, however benevolent, however estimable in an other respects, the natural man does not and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God.

Now look around and search for the facts which prove the truth of this. How many natural men there are, and such as you would call good men too in some ways, who oppose violently the things of the Spirit of God. They do not believe them; nay, they say they are a lie. They cannot

understand how men should be simpletons enough to believe such ridiculous things. Honestly do they imagine that they shall be snapping the chains of priestcraft and unrivetting the fetters of superstition, if they should come forward and attempt to prove that these spiritual things are a mere delusion. There, gentlemen, we have lived to see you, under a profession of religion, actually oppose those spiritual things which this religion teaches. We have lived to see what we scarcely ever dreamed to be possible—clergymen of the Church of England themselves denying the truths which they swore they would defend, and in their "Essays and Reviews" seeking to cast down those spiritual things which once they professed to have understood when they claimed to have received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of their bishop. We have not only in these times opened and avowed infidel lecturers who, like honest men deny everything openly, but we have the hypocritical Christian infidel who, like a dishonest thief and wolf in sheep's clothing, willing always to take the gain of godliness, denies godliness itself. Perhaps it was left for this age to permit wickedness to culminate to the highest, and to see the growth of the vilest hypocrisy that ever appeared among the sons of men. We have had abundant proof that men of the most scientific minds, persons who have been exceedingly inquiring, men who have trod the realms of knowledge, and gone even to the seventh heaven of wisdom, that these have nevertheless proved that they could not receive the things of the kingdom of God, by their determined opposition and enmity against anything like the truth as it is in Jesus. When you hear them blaspheming the holy name of Christ, when you hear them bringing what they call "scientific facts" against the truth of revelation, be not amazed as though it were some new thing, but write this down in your memorandum book—the Holy Ghost said of old, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," and these men live to prove that what the Spirit of God said was very truth.

A greater proportion of persons there are who do not so much oppose violently as more secretly despise and condemn. Well, they tell us, they dare say that the Christian religion is a very good thing for some people, and especially for old women and for persons that are on the borders of the grave, but still no rational being would endorse full all the doctrines of the gospel, and especially that particular form of them which John

Calvin taught; for if there be any doctrines that excite more the spleen of these wise men than any other, it is the doctrines of grace, the doctrine of discriminating, distinguishing love, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of God, being really God, and not man. Against these they have no words too bitter. "Oh," they say, "it is an exploded theory; it has had its day, and it has become effete," and so, without actually persecuting those who hold the truth, or without even setting themselves up by active efforts to put it down they do secretly with a sneer and with a jest, pass it by as a thing utterly unworthy of a rational person, a thing that is not for a moment to be thought of as being one half so important as the wing of a beetle, or as the particular flight of a sparrow, or the period of the migration of a swallow. All the facts of natural history they think valuable and important, but these grander truths which have to do with the kingdom of God they despise utterly, and think they are but the dream of simpletons. Again, I say, my brethren, marvel not at this. Let this be to you another argument that the Spirit of God knew what was in man, and rightly judged of the human heart when he said, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Probably in this assembly there are very few of either of these two classes, but a far more numerous company now claims our attention. The great mass of mankind say, "We dare say it is all well, and good, and true, and it is a proper thing for ministers think about, and the deacons of churches, and so on, no doubt they should see to it: it is very proper that there should be a right creed, and that the articles of the Church should be defended, and of course the Bible Society should spread the Bible, but then, of course, nobody ought to be importuned to read it, it is of no particular importance." Better read the almanack than read the Bible, according to some; and as to the doctrines, "Oh," they say—

"For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

"O yes, no doubt," they say, when they see some zealous brother vindicating a truth, "you are all right, and so is your friend opposite who believes the very reverse; you are both right as far as you go; and as far as I am concerned, I should never interfere with you, for I do not consider

the things to be worth the turning of a hair; I never trouble my head at all about it. I have so much to do with the rise and fall of stocks in the market, of attending to my cattle, or seeing after my shop, that it would not do for me to attempt to be a theologian. The Bible is an excellent book; I have nothing to say against that, certainly; but, at the same time, for a farmer, a book on practical chemistry is more useful, and no doubt, for a person who holds some office in the parish, he had better buy a handy-book of common law than a book on the law of God." I only just give you a sketch of what many say and of what many more think. I know there are many of you here present to-day who say, "O yes, it is a good thing for us to go somewhere on a Sunday; we do not think the Sabbath should be broken; we like to hear a minister, and we like to see him in earnest, but it is of no importance to us; it is not a matter of concern to us." Ah! since, you, too have proved that, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned." These things which are so important, that you should neglect everything else to attend to them, are by you thought folly; these eternal realities, compared with which the world's highest interests are but as unsubstantial shadows, you pass by as being idle dreams and doubtless they are dreams to you, because you, still being in your natural estate, do not, cannot, will not, receive the things of the Spirit of God.

We are not without those persons, also, who even go farther. They say, "Well these things are of no importance to me;" and they think that those are fools who feel that there is any importance in them to them personally. "Oh!" says one, "for a man to sit down and think the doctrine of election, and believe himself to be elect—why the man must be of a very debased intellect." "Oh," says another, "to be always meditating upon the atonement of Christ—why there are other themes more expansive to think thou this." "Ay," says a third, "to be turning over a mere system of divinity, and professing to be able to revel in certain mysterious truths, such persons must be of a weak mind, or else very fanatical or enthusiastic." And so you will often hear persons say, if a man be a little more earnest than usual, "Surely that man is going wild; certainly he is attaching an undue importance to these matters." They will put him down as a Sectarian, perhaps which is one of the most honorable

names by which a true Christian is known in these times. "Ah!" they will say, "a zealot, a bigot!" because a man happens to be honest in what he professes to believe, and thinks that if religion be anything, it would be everything and if it be worth all our thought, it is worth all our thoughts: that if it have any truth in it, it ought to be the master and ruler of all other truths, and governor of all the thoughts and the acts of life. Now, Christian men and women, when ye see any who turn upon their heel and despise you, because with earnestness you would seek the Lord your God, and strive to honor him, think it not some new display of human depravity; think not that you have made a fresh discovery in the awful deep of human departure from God, but say, rather now again, "I know, and once more am I confirmed in the fact, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." It is a great wonder that there is one Christian upon the face of the earth. Some religions teach doctrines palatable to human nature, but the doctrines of Christ are the most unpalatable that could have been suggested. Some religions find that in nature which echoes to their voice, but Christ comes and brings a sword upon the earth to slay the fondest darlings of our fancy, and put to death the proudest favourites of our ambition. Oh! had the religion of Christ taught us that man was a noble being, only a little fallen—had the religion of Christ taught that Christ had taken away by his blood, sin from every man, and that every man by his own free-will, without divine grace, might be saved—it were indeed a most acceptable religion to the mass of men; it would just suit their taste; and as the ox drinks down water, so would they drink it down. But such a religion as that of Christ, so diametrically opposed as it is to all the evil propensities of man, owes its very existence to the might of God: that it has not long ago died from the earth, through the decease of its last admirer, is only due to that supreme power of the Holy Spirit which goeth with the preaching of the gospel wherever Christ is faithfully lifted up.

II. Now, briefly on my second point.—THE NATURAL MAN COUNTS THE THINGS OF GOD TO BE FOOLISH; but there is nothing whatever in the things themselves to justify such an estimation.

Sir, you do not know what you say when you declare that the gospel of Christ is absurd. I am certain you do not understand it, and that you are

talking of something you have never studied. You are generally pretty safe with a man who rails at the Bible, by saying, "Did you ever read it?" You are not often wrong, when you hear a minister of Christ found fault with, by saying to the man, "Did you ever hear him? did you ever read his sermons?" In nine cases out of ten it is, "No, I do not know anything about him, yet I do not like him, I do not know anything about Christ, but I do not like him, I do not know anything about his doctrines, but I do not wish to know." I have heard persons rail at Calvinistic doctrine, who never in their lives have read a word that Calvin wrote. If you were to offer them a small treatise in which that noble system of divinity should be vindicated, they would say, "Oh! it is no doubt so dry, I should not be able to read it." Yet these learned gentlemen know what is inside a book without opening it! They are like some critics of whom I have heard, who, when they meet with a new volume, take the knife and cut the first page, smell it, and then condemn or praise. Many there are who do just the same with the Bible. They have heard some verses of it once or twice, they have got some idea of it, and straightway they are wise. They take to themselves their own degree of Doctor of Divinity, and they have much boldness in their unbelief. Now, of any man who should denounce the system of truth which is taught in Scripture as ridiculous and foolish, I can only say he has never taken the trouble to search it out for himself. Have not the mightiest intellects confessed that the truths of this book were infinitely above their highest flights? Even Newton, who could thread the spheres, and map the march of what else had seemed discordant planets, even he said there were depths here which no mortal could fathom. "O the depths of the wisdom of God!" This has been the exclamation of some of the most glorious minds that have ever enlightened the world. And I can say, and I know it to be a truth, that every man who reads the Word of God, and studies the divinity therein revealed—if he at first thinketh that he understandeth it, when he reads again, finds that he has only begun to know; and when he shall have searched year after year, and have become more than usually prescient in the study of the things of God, he will still say, "Now I begin to know my folly, now I began to discover that God is above me and beneath me, but I cannot grasp him, I cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, his words, his works, his ways, herein revealed to the sons of men, are past finding out." You wise fellows who turn upon your heels, and sneer at things

which have astonished minds infinitely vaster than yours, prove your own folly when you call the things of God folly. With regard to that particular form of divine truth which we hold so dear, currently called Calvinistic doctrines—there is no philosophy propounded by any sage, so profound as that philosophy. There are no truths that were ever taught so wonderful, so worthy of the profoundest research of the most expanded minds, as those doctrines of the eternal love, the discriminating grace, and the infinite power of God, co-working to produce the results which his wisdom had decreed. When every other science shall have been exhausted, when astronomy shall have no wonders left, when geology shall have no secrets to unravel, when natural history and philosophy shall have given up all their infinite treasures, there will still remain a mine without a bottom, there will still remain a sea of wisdom without a shore, in the doctrines of the gospel of the grace of God. The folly, therefore, cannot be in the doctrines themselves.

And as on the one hand, these things of the Spirit of God are wise and profound, so on the other hand, they are most important, and most imperatively necessary to be understood, so that if they be not received, it is not because they are uncongenial with our necessities. There are some speculations which a man need not enter upon. I receive constantly questions upon speculations which never struck my mind before, and certainly never will again. Persons want to know what is the origin of sin; they ask ten thousand questions which, if they could be answered, would not make them a whit the better. But the things of the gospel of God, which are as important as life and death depending upon them, men are content to slur over without making any earnest enquiry, or setting themselves to ascertain their truth. O sirs! the doctrines of God teach you your relationship to your Maker—is not that worth understanding? They teach you your condition before the Most High God—should you not know that? Ought you not to have clear ideas of it? They show you how God can be just to man, and yet be gracious—is not that a riddle that is worthy to have an answer? They reveal to you how you can approach to God, and become his child; how you may be conformed to his image, and made a partaker of his glory—is not that worth understanding? They reveal to you the world to come; they put to your short-sighted eye, a telescope which enables you to pierce the darkness and to see the unseen.

The doctrines of grace put into your hands the keys of heaven, and unveil the secrets of death, and hell—are not these things worth grasping? Are not the secrets of these places worth the discovery? The doctrines of grace put inside your hands powers infinitely greater than ever wizard was conceived to have wielded when he used his magic rod. By their might you can destroy your troubles; you can see your sins swallowed up; you can behold your enemies defeated; you can see death destroyed, the grave swallowed up, and life and immortality brought to light. If you, then, as a natural man, say that the things that are written in this book are foolish, it is not because they are trivial, unimportant, and despicable, for no man can ever over-estimate their value, and no soul can solemnly enough weigh them, and understand how important they are. It argues a high excess of impiety, when a man shall say that that which came from God is foolish. Perhaps blasphemy itself cannot outlive that, and yet how many have been guilty of this constructive blasphemy! Let my finger run around these galleries, and along these seats beneath; are there not many of you who have said the Bible was a dull and uninteresting book? And yet God wrote it! And what have you said? Have you not impugned your Maker? Have you not said, perhaps, that the doctrines of the Gospel were very unimportant? Can you believe that your Maker sat down to write an unimportant book, or that the Holy Ghost inspired men of old to write that which, if not nonsense, is certainly of no importance whatever? Come, bow your head and repent of this your grave offense, for an offense it is, since it is not within the compass of any modest reason to imagine that any word which God has written can be foolish, or unimportant or unworthy to be understood. I suppose it is granted by all who love the Word of God, and to those mainly I must appeal, that the reason why the natural man rejects the sinners of God is not because they are foolish; then there must be some other reason.

III. Thirdly, therefore. I propose to speak of THE REASON FOR THE REJECTION OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL BY NATURAL MEN.

The reasons are to be found in themselves. And what are those reasons? The apostle tells us they cannot receive them, for they are foolishness unto them. I think he means they cannot receive them, first of all, for

want of taste. You have sometimes seen a man standing before a splendid picture. It was painted by Raphael, or Rubens, or Titians, and he stands and admires it. "What a noble countenance!" says he, "How well the colouring has been placed! How excellently he understands his lights and shadows! What a fine conception! I could stand a week and admire that splendid picture." Some country bumpkin, who is walking through the gallery, hears what our friend the artist is saying, and he says, "I should not like to stand a week and look at it, it looks to me to be an old decayed piece of canvas that wants cleaning. "I do not think the world would be much the worse if it should all get cleaned off." He walks through the gallery, and notices that on the wall outside there is a great daub—a picture of an elephant standing on its head, and a clown or two performing in some circus, and he says, "That's beautiful; that's just my taste." Now you blame our country friend because he cannot admire that which is really excellent, but finds a great deal more satisfaction in a common daub plastered on the wall. It would be quite correct to say of him that he cannot receive the beauties of refinement and taste, because he has never been in any way instructed in the matter; he has a want of taste for such things. Just so is it with the natural man. Give him some work of fiction—a daub upon the wall. Give him some fine piece of imagination; (and what is that when compared with the word of him that spake from heaven?) and he is satisfied. But before the book of God, before the revelation of the Most High, of the All-Wise, he stands and he sees nothing; nothing to admire; nothing to enchant his heart; nothing to kindle his imagination; nothing to enlist his faith; nothing to arouse his powers; nothing to excite his hopes. Surely there is a sad want of taste here, and the natural man, for want of taste for such things, loves not the things of God.

But it is not merely for want of taste, it is for want of organs by which to appreciate the third. Here is a blind man, and we have taken him upon a pilgrimage to the summit of a mountain. What a landscape, my friend; what a landscape! What do you think of it? "Not much," says he. Why, look at those lakes there melting into one! Do you not see the mountain yonder across the valley? What a variety of colors upon its sides! Did ever you see such a blending of colors as that which is here produced by the Great Artist? And there, cannot you see yonder clouds how nobly they sail

along? Look downward. What a pleasant sight is that village which seems to have diminished till it looks like a few children's toys put together there in sport. And now turn yonder and see that winding river like a thread of silver going through the emerald fields—what a magnificent view! What do you think of it, my friend? "I do not think much of it," says he. You are astonished. At last you say, "Well, if you do not think something of this, you must be blind." "That is just what I am," says he, "and of course I do not think much of this when I am blind." Now that natural man is blind. The eye of the Christian is his faith; but the natural man, being destitute of a living faith in thy living Saviour, is like a man without eyes. He says it is foolish; it is nothing to him. Do you think you could get a blind man to count down hundreds of pounds for a single picture? It is of no use to him. What would a deaf man give to go where you hear the sweetest singing that ever trilled from human lips? "Oh! no," thinks he, "it is foolish." He can hardly understand why men should spend their money and give the time to listen to the numerous combinations of sound produced by a Handel. Or if blind, he cannot comprehend why men should build long galleries and hang their fortunes out in pictures, or why they should travel to the Alps, or wish to cross the sea to view the mighty wonders of other lands. "No," says he, "it is foolish and trivial; better stop at home; there is nothing in it." So is it with the natural man. He lacks the organs, he has no ear of faith, no eye of faith, and he cannot therefore receive the things of God; they are foolishness to him.

But more than this—not only does he lack taste and lack organs, but he actually lacks the nature which could appreciate these things. I will tell you a fable. There was a certain swine exceedingly learned among its class. It had studied the flavour of all manners of seeds, and fruits, and acorns, and knew right well, by long calculations and experience, the right time when the trough would be full, and when it would be time for it to come forth from its resting place. Greatly respected was this aged swine, and considered by its fellows to be one of the great dignitaries of the sty, and one day it enlightened its fellows by a speech to this effect:—"I saw," said he, "the other night, by the light of the moon, a man—poor simple man that he was, looking through a long tube at the stars. Now I thought within myself that surely he was mad. If he had been scraping up

acorns, there would have been some common sense in it; if he had been getting together husks, why there would have been something practical in it, but for a man with two feet and two hands, to be letting them be still, and only using his eyes to look up at the stars—ah! he must be a fanatic and an enthusiast; he is not as sensible and practical as you and I are, who are content so long as we get our barley meal regularly, and can creep back and lie down again in our straw." And all his audience grunted their approbation. They said at once that this human being was far inferior to the swine in the matter of practical wisdom. Do not smile, perhaps you belong to these gentry yourselves. I heard a human swine say the other day—mark, a human swine—it was one who sometimes could look through a telescope, and this human swine said, "Ah! there you are! You are going to your chapel on Thursday night, and to your prayer-meeting on the Monday, and you spend hours in praying and reading your Bible; it is fanaticism. Now, I am the man for common-sense; I stick to my business, I do. I say, 'Leave these things to take care of themselves.' I am looking out for the present; I am practical, I am." And those that were by, grunted their approval, like human swine, as they were, and if a really spiritual man had been present he would not have wondered, but he would have said, "Every being to its taste; these are natural men, and they set up their own nature; it is a swinish nature, and they act up to their swinish spirit." He would not have been angry with them, but he would have pitied them. Poor things, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "What a degrading simile!" saith one. It is, sir, but not more degrading than human nature is. "Why you make us out to be inferior to Christians then!" "Of course you are. As much as the brute is inferior to a man, so is a mere natural man inferior to a spiritually-minded man, because we rise by three steps of the ladder. There is the animal, he lacks intellect. God gives intellect, and there comes the man; God gives his Spirit, and then comes the Christian, but the Christian is a higher and nobler creature than the mere offspring of Adam. Just as much as the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, exceeds the first Adam, who was but made of the dust of the earth, so do the seed of the second Adam exceed all the offspring of the first Adam; rising to a higher life, to greater dignities, and to a nobler destiny than they.

IV. And now, lastly, I come to THE PRACTICAL TRUTHS WHICH FLOW

FROM THIS GREAT THOUGH SORROWFUL FACT.

Do you not perceive, men and brethren, that if what I have stated be true there is absolute necessity for regeneration, or the work of the Spirit? An absolute necessity, I say, because in no one single instance can it be dispensed with. You may educate a nature till it should attain the highest point, but you cannot educate an old nature into a new one. You may educate a horse, but you cannot educate it into a man. You shall train the bird that sits upon your finger but you cannot train a limpet into an eagle, nor is it possible for you to train by the best instruction the natural man into a spiritual man. Between the two there is still a great gulf fixed. But cannot the natural man, by great efforts long-continued at last come to be spiritual? No, he cannot. Let the fish in the water wish as much as ever it likes, and despite Dr. Darwin's hypothesis, I aver that no pike by all its wishing ever wished itself into an ostrich, and that no single minnow was ever known to make itself into a lark. It may get as high as its own nature can get it but not beyond; it is a transformation which only the Divine Being can effect. So you may by your own efforts make yourselves the best of natural men. You may become the most patriotic of statesmen, you may become the most sober and discreet of moralists, you may become the kindest and most benevolent of philanthropists, but into a spiritual man you cannot bring yourself. Do what you will, and still at your very best there is a division wide as eternity between you and the regenerate man. But cannot another man help us out of such a nature into a state of grace? No, by no means; as man is powerless for himself, so is he powerless for his fellow. The priest may dip his pretentious fingers into the water which he professes to have sanctified, and may put the drops upon the infant's brow but that the child is regenerate is a lie. He may take the child in after-life into the baptismal pool if he will, and there bury him agreeably to the apostle's metaphor, but that by immersion any more than by sprinkling a soul can be regenerate, is a gross and infamous lie. He may put his hand upon his head and bless him in God's name, he may perform divers enchantments over him, and conclude at last with the final sacred greasing, and dispatch his spirit with extreme unction into another world but to regenerate another man is as impossible to our fellow-men as to create a world or to make another heaven, and rival the majesty of Deity. How, then, is it to be done? The Spirit of God alone can

do it. O sirs! this is a great mystery, but you must know it if you would be saved, it is a solemn secret, but it is one which must be known in your consciences, or else shut out from heaven you must be. The Spirit of God must new make you, ye must be born again. "If a man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." The same power which raised Christ Jesus from the dead must he exerted in raising us from the dead, the very same omnipotence, without which angels or worms could not have had a being, must again step forth out of its privy-chamber, and do as great a work as it did at the first creation in making us anew in Christ Jesus our Lord. There have been attempts at all times to get rid of this unpleasant necessity. Constantly the Christian Church itself tries to forget it, but as often as ever this old doctrine of regeneration is brought forward pointedly, God is pleased to favor his Church with a revival. The doctrine which looks at first as though it would hush every exertion with indolence, and make men sit down with listlessness and despair, is really like the trump of God to awake the dead, and where it is fully and faithfully preached, though it grate upon the carnal ear, though it excite enmity in many against the man who dares to proclaim it, yet it is owned of God. Because it honors God, God will honor it. This was the staple preaching of Whitfield, and it was by the preaching of this that he was made as the mighty angel flying through the midst of heaven preaching the everlasting gospel to every creature. He was always great upon that which he called the great R—Regeneration. Whenever you heard him, the three R's came out clearly—Ruin, Regeneration, and Redemption! Man ruined, wholly ruined, hopelessly helplessly, eternally ruined! Man regenerated by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God alone wholly made a new creature in Christ! Man redeemed, redeemed by precious blood from all his sins, not by works of righteousness, not by deeds of the law, not by ceremonies, prayers, or resolutions, but by the precious blood of Christ! Oh! we must be very pointed, and very plain about regeneration, for this is the very pith and marrow of the matter—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Another practical inference. If you and I, or any of us, have received the things of the Spirit of God, we ought to look upon that as comfortable evidence that we have been born again. What say you, my hearer? Does

your faith lay her hand this morning upon the head of Christ, and take him to be your Saviour, your teacher, and your all? If so, blessed art thou, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto thee. Or does thy spirit this morning not only agree to the truth of divine election, of assured redemption, and of the finished work and immutable love of Christ; but dost thou love the truth in thy heart as well as agree to it in the head? If so, the natural man receiveth not these things, therefore thou art no natural man; but the Spirit of God has brought thee into his kingdom, because he has enabled thee to receive his truth. Precious is faith indeed, because it assuredly evidences to us what is beyond the reach of our senses. You can't tell whether you are born again or not, except by your faith. There will be no difference in your face, there will be no difference in your flesh, nor even in your mental characteristics; you may remain to a great extent the same man as far as mind and body are concerned; but faith—that which was not there before—faith is the grand symptom which betokens returning health; it is the flag hung out upon the castle of the soul, showing that the King is the secret tenant in the state-room of the soul, it is the light which shows that the sun has risen; it is the morning star which heralds the full illumination and meridian sunlight of eternal glory. Prize your faith, ask for more of it, but look upon it as being an evidence that you have passed from death unto life.

And, lastly, my dear hearers, how this text shows you the necessity of accompanying all your efforts to do good with earnest prayer to God! "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon." When we first begin to preach, we think that the doctrines that are so sweet to us will be sure to be sweet to other people; and when persons begin to abuse and find fault we are so astonished. Oh! if we had begun to learn the truth a little better, we should not be astonished at all, except when any receive the truth, for that we should always think to be the greatest miracle of all. You have been trying to teach your child, and it is not converted yet. Ah! don't marvel, but take your child in the arms of your prayer to the spirit of God, and say, "O Lord, I cannot put the truth into this child, for it cannot receive it: do thou renew its heart, and then it shall receive the truth indeed! "And specially may I ask your continued and earnest prayers for me. What is the minister of Christ to do? He has to speak to a mountain and bid it be removed. Can his words remove it? He has to speak to fire

and bid it change its nature into water. He has to speak to the dead, and say, "Ye dry bones, live! "Is not his ministry a foolish and a futile thing unless the Spirit of God be with him? I pray you then, be instant in your prayers to God. Strive earnestly at the throne of grace for all the ministers of the New Testament, that power may be bestowed upon them, for we are better at home than here if the Spirit of God be not with us. In vain, O ye unbelievers, ye sound your trumpets! in vain, O ye Gideons, ye break your pitchers that the light may shine in vain, ye Jonahs, ye cry through the midst of the wretched city! in vain, ye Peters, ye preach even to peoples of many nations! If the Spirit come not down from on high like tongues of fire, if God send not life, and energy, and light with the Word, ye shall go back without your sheaves,—ye shall return without success, wearied by disappointment, damaged by fear and ready to lay down and die. But oh! if thou comest forth, O Spirit of God! there is not a preacher in the corner of the streets who shall not win his souls; there is not a minister to-day in the humblest conventicle, in the lowest of back streets, which shall not be made like Peter on the Pentecostal day, there is not one feeble man or woman teaching children in the Sabbath-school who shall not become a winner of souls when the Spirit of God is with him!

Of all that I have taught this morning, this is the sum.—Man is dead in sin, and life is a gift of God. You who have received it should plead with God that that gift should be bestowed on others. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

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The Necessity Of Increased Faith

And the apostle said unto the Lord, increase our faith. - Luke 17:5

Verily if the apostle said this, one and all of us had need take up the prayer. If the twelve mightiest in the army of the Lord of hosts had need of such a supplication, what shall *we* say who are but the interior soldiers

- the feeblest saints? If ye hope to win the day, does it not well become us to pray, "Increase our faith?"

It is a matter of dispute as to the occasion when these words were uttered. Some think that we must look at the connection of the chapter for the explanation. Jesus Christ had been teaching his disciples that if their brother should trespass against them seven times a day, and seven times a day turned again to them, saying, I repent, they were to forgive him, and that constrained the apostle to say "increase our faith." They conceived it to be so hard a duty incessantly to pardon and constantly to forgive, that they felt unable to accomplish it without a large increase of faith. Others think - very possibly with greater truth - that the prayer was offered when the apostles endeavored to cast out the evil spirits from the poor demoniac and failed in the attempt. "And they said to Jesus, why could not we cast him out? And he said, verily, if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." Then they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." However, whatever was the occasion in this particular instance we shall always find good enough occasion for presenting the prayer: and I know not but this morning may be a season when each of us may have special necessity to put it up to God.

"Increase our faith." Proceeding at once to the subject, the first thing we shall consider is *the object of their solicitude*. It was their "faith." Secondly, *the desire of their hearts* - "Increase our faith." And then, thirdly *the person on whom they trusted to strengthen their faith* - "They said to the Lord, increase our faith."

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF THEIR SOLICITUDE WAS THEIR FAITH. Faith is of the utmost importance to a Christian. There is nothing of which we should have a greater and a more earnest concern than our faith. I shall endeavor to show you this from seven or eight reasons, and may God press them to your hearts and send them so home, that every one of us may become deeply anxious as to whether we have a real vital faith which unites us to the Lamb and brings salvation to our souls.

1. We ought; my friends, to be extremely careful of our faith - both of its rightness and of its strength, First of all: when we consider *the position which faith occupies in salvation*. Faith is the salvation-grace. We are not saved by love; but we are saved by grace, and we are saved by faith. We are not saved by courage, we are not saved by patience; but we are saved by faith. That is to say, God gives his salvation to faith and not to any other virtue. It is nowhere written - he that loveth shall be saved. It is nowhere recorded - that a patient sinner shall be saved. But it is said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith is the vital part of salvation. If a man lacks faith he lacks everything. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." If a man has true faith - however little he has of any other virtue - that man is secure. But supposing it possible for a man to possess every virtue in the world, let him be as much a Christian in his exterior; the apostle Paul himself; let him be as earnest as a seraph; let him be as diligent in the service of his Master as you could conceive even an angel on high to be, still "Without faith" - so God's Word declares - "it is impossible to please God." Faith is the saving grace - it is the connecting-link between the soul and Christ. Take that away and all is gone. Remove faith, you have sawn through the ship's keel, and she must sink. Take away faith, you have taken away my shield and I must be slain. Remove faith, and Christian life becomes a nonentity: it is extinct at once, for "the just shall live by faith:" and without faith how could they live at all? Consider then, that since faith is so important in salvation, it becomes each of us more earnestly to inquire whether we have faith or not? O, my brethren, there are a thousand shams in the world - a thousand imitations of faith; but there is only one true vital saving faith. There are scores of notional faiths - a faith which consists in holding a sound creed, a faith which bids men believe a lie, by wrapping them up with assurances of their safety, when they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, a faith which consists in presumptuously trusting to ourselves. There are scores of false faiths; but there is only one true one. Oh! as ye wish to be saved at last; as ye would not be self-deceived and go marching to damnation with your eyes shut, take your faith in your hand this morning and see whether it is genuine sterling coin. We ought to be more careful of our faith than of anything else. True, we ought to examine our conduct, we ought to search our works, we ought to try our love, but, above all, our faith: for if faith be wrong all is

wrong; if faith be right, we may take that as the touchstone of our sincerity. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life abiding in him."

2. Secondly: - Be anxious about your faith, *for all your graces hang upon it*. Faith is the root-grace: all other virtues and graces spring from it, Tell me of love; how can I love him in whom I do not believe. If I do not believe that there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him, how can I possibly love him? Tell me of patience: how can I exercise patience unless I have faith? For faith looks to the recompense of the reward: she says, that "all things are working together for our good," she believes that from our distresses the greater glory shall spring, and therefore she can endure. Tell me of courage: but who can have courage if he has not faith? Take what virtue you will, and you will see that it depends on faith. Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of the graces are to be strung. Break that, and you have broken the string - the pearls lie scattered on the ground, nor can you wear them for your own adornment. Faith is the mother of virtues. Faith is the fire which consumes the sacrifice. Faith is the water which nurtures the root. Faith is the sap which imparts vitality to all the branches. If you have not faith all your graces must die. And in proportion as your faith increases so will all your virtues, not all in the same proportion, but all in some degree. The man of little faith is the man of little love. The man of great faith is the man of great affection. He that has great faith in God could give himself to die for God, but he who has little faith in him would shrink at the stake because his love would be feeble. Have care of your faith, for on that your virtue depends; and if you would cultivate things that are goodly, "things that are lovely, things that are of good repute," things that are honorable to yourself, and pleasing to God, guard well your faith, for on your faith all things must rest.

3. Thirdly: - Take heed of your faith, because *Christ thinks much of it*. There are three things in the New Testament which are called precious: - One of them, you know, is the precious blood of Christ; another is the exceeding great and precious promises; and faith has the honor of being the third thing - "To them that have obtained like precious faith." So that faith is one of God's three precious things, It is one of the things which he

values above all others. I was astonished yesterday, when I met with an idea in an old divine, concerning the honor which God puts on faith: says he, "Christ takes the crown off his own head to put it on to faith's head." Mark you how often he says, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now it is not faith that saves, it is Christ that saves. "Thy faith hath healed thee," says Christ. Now faith did not heal, it was Christ that healed, but Christ did uncrown himself to crown faith. He took the royal diadem of salvation from his own head and placed it on the brow of faith, and therein he made faith "the King of kings" - for it wears the crown which the King of kings alone can wear - "the crown of salvation." Do you not know that we read, "We are justified by faith." Now, in one sense this is not the fact, for the matter of justification is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are justified by Christ, but Christ arrays faith in his own royal garments, and renders it truly illustrious. Jesus Christ always puts faith in the seat of honor. When that poor woman came whose daughter was ill, he said, "O woman great is thy faith!" He might have said, "Woman, great is thy love" for it was great love that made her force her way through the crowd and speak on her daughter's behalf, or, "Great is thy patience," for when he called her "dog," she still stuck to him, and would not depart: or, he might have said, "Great is thy courage;" for she said, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs." Or, he might have said, "Great is thy wisdom;" for she was a wise woman to extract sweets out of the bitters, and to say, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs." But he overlooks all that, and says, "Great is thy faith." Well, if Christ thinks so much of faith ought we not to esteem it most highly. Is it possible to think too highly of that jewel which Christ reckons to be the most valuable? If he sets faith in the forefront of the forehead of virtue, and if he regards it as the choicest gem in the crown of the Christian, oh! will it not awaken us to see whether we have it or not? For if we have it we are rich - rich in faith and promises; but if we possess it not, whatever we have, we are poor - poor in this world, and poor in the next.

4. Next, Christian, take good care of thy faith, for recollect *faith is the only way whereby thou canst obtain blessings*. If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down except faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers from God's throne except it is the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the ladder on which my soul must walk to ascend to

heaven. If I break that ladder how can I ever approach my God? Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul and heaven. Let that angel be withdrawn, I can neither send prayer up nor receive the answers down. Faith is the telegraphic wire which links earth and heaven - on which God's blessings move so fast that before we call he answers, and while we are yet speaking he hears us. But if that telegraphic wire of faith be snapped, how can we receive the promise? Am I in trouble: I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy: my soul on that dear refuge leans by faith. But, take faith away - in vain I call to God. There is no road betwixt my soul and heaven. In the deepest winter time faith is a road on which the horses of prayer may travel - ay, and all the better for the biting frost! But blockade the road, and how can we communicate with our great king? Faith links me with divinity. Faith clothes me with the robes of deity. Faith engages on my side the omnipotence of Jehovah. Faith gives me the might of God; for it ensures that power on my behalf. It gives me to defy the hosts of hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him that wavereth - who is like a wave of the sea - expect that he will receive anything of God! O then, Christians watch well thy faith; for with it thou canst win all things, however poor thou art, but without it thou canst obtain nothing. It is said of Midas, that he had the power to turn everything into gold by the touch of his hand; and it is true of faith - it can turn everything into gold; but destroy faith, we have lost our all; we are miserably poor, because we can hold no fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

5. Next, my friends, take care of your faith perpetually, *because of your enemies*; for if you do not want faith when you are with friends, you will require it when you have to deal with your foes. That good old warrior, Paul, once led the Ephesians into the armoury and after he had shown them the shoes they were to wear, the girdle, the breast plate, the helmet, and the sword, he solemnly said, "Above all take the shield of faith." Even if you forget the helmet, be quite sure of the shield, for if your helmet should be off you may ward off a blow with the shield, and save it from your head. You had better put on the "shoes of peace and the breast-plate of righteousness," but if you omit one of them, take care that you have "the shield of faith, where with you shall be able to quench all the fiery

darts of the wicked one." Well, now, faith makes a man very mighty when he deals with enemies. If a man believes he is right, only taking it in a natural point of view - bring that man before princes and kings, for the sake of truth, how lion-like will he be! He will say, "I cannot yield, I must not, for I have the truth on my side." Ay, though others may style it dogged obstinacy, it is a true nobility of soul which bids a man declare, "I will not yield." Much more strong is true spiritual faith; it has taken the martyr to the stake, and enabled him to sing when the flames have girdled him. It has led another to the sea; and like him of whom we read in the old martyrologies, it has helped even the aged matron to cry, "Christ is all yet." Faith has quenched the violence of the flames, shut the mouth of lions, and out of weakness it has made us strong. It has overcome more enemies than the whole host of conquerors. Tell me not of the victories of Wellington; mention not the battles of Napoleon; tell me of what faith has done! Oh! if we should erect a monument to the honor of faith, what various names should we carve upon the mighty pedestal! We should inscribe, here "The lion's den," there, "The battle of the leopards;" or, here, we should have recorded how faith divided the Red Sea; and there, how faith smote the Midianites; and there, how Jael slew Sisera by faith. What conflicts of faith should we have to engrave? O, faith! thy banner high shall wave! Thine escutcheon is most glorious! Great art thou and full of victories! With thee, O faith, I cast the gauntlet to the world, secure of victory. Give me a child to fight with, and *without faith* - like poor Peter before the little maid, I should tremble and deny my Master. But that same Peter, *with faith*, fears not to stand before a frowning sanhedrim; to speak of his Master amid the scoffings of the high priests. Mary, Queen of Scots, said she was "more afraid of John Knox's prayers and faith than she was of an army of ten thousand men," and a sensible enemy may well tremble when such invincibles are at war with him. I should not like to have a man of faith opposing me. Tell me the world hates me, and I will rejoice at it; but tell me that a man of faith has determined to crush me, and I have need to tremble then, for there is a potency in that man's arm; his blows strike hard; and, when he does smite, he smites home, as with a rod of iron. Tremble, ye foes of God, for faith must overcome. And O ye servants of the living God, guard well your faith, for by this shall ye be victorious; and shall stand like rocks, unmoved amid the storms, unshaken by the tempests of persecution.

6. And now for a sixth reason. Take care of your faith, because *otherwise you cannot well perform your duty*. Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well; but without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot and we drag along heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you will find them the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things. Poor Little Faith could not have fought "Apollyon." No, it wanted "Christian" to do that. Poor Little Faith could not have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Greatheart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little faith can get to heaven very surely, but it often has to run and hide itself in a nutshell; and to lose all but its jewels. If there are great battles and great works to do, there must be great faith. Assurance can carry mountains on its back; little faith stumbles at a mole-hill. Great faith, like Behemoth, can "snuff" up Jordan at a draught:" little faith is drowned in a drop of rain: it beginneth to think of going back at the slightest trouble. Great faith can build temples; she can pile castles; she can preach the gospel; she can proclaim Christ's name before enemies; she can do all things; and if you would be great indeed, and serve your Master much, as I trust you will, you will seek increased faith! for by so doing you will be more diligent in duty. O ye active Christians, be full of faith! ye busy Christians, be sure to guard that I for once let that fall, what will ye do? As Sabbath-school teachers, as preachers, as visitors of the sick, or whatever ye have to do, rest assured that faith must be your strength and confidence. If that fails, where are you then?

Again: take care of your faith; *for only faith can comfort you in your troubles*. Ay, say some, this is about all we think of, the uses of faith to console us in our troubles. Now I never like to laugh at God's people because they desire comfort. I believe that it is a very great proof that they are children that they like sweet things. If they did not, I should fear they were not God's children at all. But I hear ministers saying, "Ah, you are always saying you want comfort, you want comfort." Ay, to be sure, I say,

they do; and they want it because they never get it from you, sir. I believe God's people do need comfort, though, it is true, they want too much of it when they ought not to have it. But they require a promise very often, and they ought to have it. Now faith is the best cordial to the soul. O, how faith will realize a promise at a time when there is great trouble coming! "Ah!" says faith, "God says, 'As thy days so shall thy strength be.'" "Ah!" says faith, "it is a rough road; the thorns are sharp; the flints are strewn about it, but then; thy shoes shall be iron and brass," and faith looks at the strong old shoes, and say, "I will even venture," and off she goes. Little faith sits murmuring in a corner; great faith is singing in the fire. "They shall praise him aloud in their beds, they shall sing his high praise in the fire." Little faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood. Great faith says, "When thou passest through the river, I will be with thee, the flood shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then seek more faith. You will be saved with ever so little faith, but you will not be saved happily. You will be happy hereafter if you believe in the slightest degree; but you will not be happy here unless you fully, habitually, and earnestly believe - believe strongly in the faithful promises of Jehovah, in all the glorious dignity of his person, and in all the faithfulness and immutability of his grace. If ye would be Christian larks, and not Christian owls, seek to have more faith. If ye love darkness, and would fly about in it in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith. But if ye would mount in sunshine, and carol like the bird of day, then seek strong confidence.

One more reason. Take care of your faith, my friends; *for it's very often so weak, that it demands all your attention.* I do not know whether any of you feel that your faith is too strong; but I never feel mine strong enough. It seems to be exactly strong enough to bear the day's troubles, but it would not stand cutting in the least degree with the plane. I could not afford to take the least atom off; it is just enough, and no more. As for some of us, our faith is so weak that the least trouble threatens to devour it. The goat passes and nips its tender shoot, the winter chills and freezes it; it is almost ready to die. And my faith very often hangs upon the

feeblest thread; it appears ready to expire. Take care of your faith, Christian take care of your faith whatever you leave out of doors of a night, do not leave that little child of faith, whatsoever plant is exposed to the frost, be sure to put faith within. Take care of faith, for it is so weak generally, it needs well to have a good preservation.

Thus have I tried, as well as I can, this morning, to set forth the great necessity of looking to our faith; and our prayer must be, as it was that of the apostles, "increase our faith."

II. This brings us, secondly, to consider THE HEART'S DESIRE OF THE APOSTLES. "Increase our faith." They did not say, "Lord keep our faith alive: Lord sustain it as it is at present," but, "Increase our faith." For they knew very well that it is only by increase that the Christian keeps alive at all. Napoleon once said, "I must fight battles, and I must win them: conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." And it is so with the Christian. It is not yesterday's battle that will save me today; I must be going onwards. A wheel will remain erect as long as it moves, but when it begins to stand still it falls. Christian men are saved by progress: constantly going onwards keeps the Christian alive. If it were possible for me to stop, I know not where my life would be. The Christian must be going onward; for the arrow will mount while still it is in progress, but it stalls the moment the power stops that keeps it aloft. So the apostle said unto the Lord, "increase our faith."

First: "Increase our faith," *in its extent*; the extent of what it will receive. Usually, when we commence the Christian life, faith does not grasp much; it only believes a few elementary doctrines. I find that many young converts have not gone much farther than believing that Jesus Christ died for sinners, by-and-bye they get a little advanced, and believe election; but there is something a little beyond that they do not receive, and it is not until after years that they believe the entire gospel. Some of you, my hearers, and a great many that are not my hearers are miserable little cramped souls; you have learned a cast-iron creed, and you will never move out of it. A certain somebody drew up five or six doctrines, and said, "There are the doctrines of the Bible," and ye believe these, but you want to have your faith increased, for you do not believe a great deal more that

is in the Bible. I do not think I differ from any of my hyper-calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not believe any less than they do, but I believe a little more, and think, as we grow we shall have our belief increased; not only are there a few cardinal doctrines that will be enough to steer our ship by, north, south, east, or west, but we shall begin to learn something about the north-west and north-east, and that which lies between the four points. Many people, when they hear something a little contrary to what they have usually heard, say at once, "That is not sound." But who made *you* a judge of what is sound? And there are some little souls who set themselves up for princes in Israel, and think every man must believe as they believe, or else he is decidedly wrong, and will hold no Christian communication or fellowship with him. I am sure I may pray to the Lord for them - "Increase their faith!" Help them to believe a little more; help them to believe there may be Christian Wesleyans; that there are good Church people; and not only that particular Baptists are very good sort of people, but that there are some of God's elect everywhere. I am sure I pray for all bigots, that they may have a little wider heart. I should like to stretch their hearts a little. But, no, they have reached the *ultima thule*, they have come to the last of the fortunate islands, there cannot be any shore beyond. It is dangerous for a mariner to spread his sails on untried seas. "Hitherto," says pious Crisp, and therefore many fancy, "hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." Dr. Gill declares just so much, and who shall venture to say more; or perhaps Calvin is made the standard and what business has any man to think a single thought beyond Calvin? Blessed be God, we have gone a little beyond that; and we can say, "Increase our faith." With all our admiration for these great standard divines, we are not prepared to shut ourselves up in their little iron cages; but we say, "Open the door, and let me fly - let me still feel that I am at liberty. Increase my faith, and help me to believe a little more." I know I can say I have had an increase of faith in one or two respects within the last few months. I could not, for a long time, see anything like the Millenium in the Scriptures; I could not much rejoice in the Second Coming of Christ, though I did believe it; but gradually my faith began to open to that subject, and I find it now a part of my meat and drink, to be looking for, as well as hastening unto, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe I have only just begun to learn the A B C of the Scriptures

yet, and will constantly cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith," that I may know more and believe more, and understand thy Word far better. "Increase my faith," in its extent.

Next, "Increase my faith," *in its intensity*. Faith needs to be increased in its power, as well as in its extent. We do not wish to act as some do with a river, when they break the banks, to let it spread over the pasture, and so make it shallower but we wish, while it increases in surface, that it may increase likewise in its depth. Increase "the intensity of our faith!" Faith at first takes God's mercy with an open palm: as it increases it holds it with his fingers, and not more firmly; but when faith grows strong, ah! she takes it, as with an iron vice, and grasps it, and not death nor hell could rend a promise from faith's hand when faith is strong. The young Christian at first is not constant in his faith a little wind comes, and he shakes, when he gets an old Christian he will take old Boreas, with fifty of his winds, to move him. Do you not feel, my dear friends, that you want faith to be increased in its intensity? Would you not sing with Watts:

"Oh! that I had a *stronger* faith,
To look within the veil;
To credit what my Saviour saith,
Whose word can never fail?"

Your poor little faith cannot see many yards before it, for there are clouds of darkness all around; but strong faith can climb the hill that is called "Clear," and from the top thereof can see the celestial city, and the land that is very far off. Oh! may God increase your faith to such a degree, that you may often have visions of heaven" - that you may sweetly sing, as Moses might have done at the top of Pisgah, -

"Oh! the transporting rapturous scene
That rises to my sight.
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight."

That you may climb up there, bathe your eyes in splendor, plunge your soul in rivers of bliss, and be thoroughly transported and carried away by

visions of that state of beatitude which shortly shall be yours, let me exhort you to cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith "in its power of realizing heaven and in every other way.

III. I have no time to dwell upon this, but must close up by very briefly mentioning THE PERSON TO WHOM THE APOSTLES ADDRESSED THEIR PRAYER. The apostles said to *the Lord*, "Increase our faith!" They went to the right person. They did not say to themselves, "I will increase my faith," they did not cry to the minister, "Preach a comforting sermon, and increase my faith," they did not say, "I will read such-and-such a book, and that will increase my faith." No, they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." Faiths author can alone increase it. I could inflate your faith till it turned into presumption, but I could not make it grow. It is God's work to feed faith, as well as to give it life at first; and if any of you desire to have a growing faith, go and take your burden this morning to God's throne, crying "Lord, increase our faith!" If you feel that your troubles have been increased, go to the Lord, and say, "increase our faith!" If your money is accumulating, go to the Lord, and say, "Increase our faith;" for you will want more faith as you get more prosperity. If your property is diminishing, go to him, and say, "increase our faith," so that what you lose in one scale you may gain in the other. Are you sickly and full; of pain this morning? Go to your Master, and say, "increase my faith,' so that I may not be impatient, but be able to bear it well." Are you tired and weary? Go and supplicate, "Increase our faith!" Have you little faith? Take it to God, and he will turn it into great faith. There is no hot-house for growing tender plants in, like a house that is within the curtains - the tabernacle of God, where the Shekinah dwelleth.

I have been speaking in very great pain; but I would, if possible, close by asking you, who are Christians, whether you do not think this prayer very necessary to your own state. Let each one ask himself, Do not I want more faith? My brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, rest assured, you will never get too much of this precious grace. If you pay all the way to heaven, you will never have a penny to spare when you get to heaven's gate, if you live on faith all your journey through, you will not have a pot of manna left. Pray, then, for an increase of faith. You want this church to stand, do you not? It can stand only in proportion as you

are men of faith. I know I might exhort you to be men of prayer; but faith is the foundation stone; prayer comes next. Prayer without faith would be an empty mockery; it would win nothing of God. Do you want us to stand? Do you know how the world speaks of us - how the enthusiasm of the renting people of Park Street is talked of? How is it to be kept up, except through your faith. How shall your minister's hands be held up, except by your faith and your prayers? Let faith be the Aaron; let prayer be the Ur; and faith and prayer can hold up the hands of Moses, whilst the army below is fighting the enemy. Would ye be kept from falling? Ye must be strong in faith. Little faith falls, strong faith stands. Would ye win the day, and reign in heaven, with a starry crown more brilliant than you might otherwise expect? Then be ye increased in faith. And would ye honor God much, and enter heaven, after having fought a good fight and won a crown? Then I will offer the supplication, "increase the faith of my people," and put up the prayer, "increase my faith."

But there are some of you, dear friends, who could not use this petition, and dare not. What would it avail you if you did so? Seeing you have no faith, how could that be increased which has no existence. Rather, your first need is the possession of the simple germs of faith. Oh! my hearers, I marvel what some of you do without the comforts which faith can alone afford. Some of you are very poor people: how do you manage to endure your toils and troubles without faith? Where is your comfort? I do not wonder at your going to get drunk, or rioting in the ale-house, if you have no other comfort in this world. When I have penetrated some of our back streets and seen the poverty of the people, I have thought, "If these people have no religion, what have they to comfort them? They are not like the rich man, who can indulge himself in every way: what have they got in this world worth living for?" I suppose they have some kind of happiness: what sort of a thing it is I cannot tell: it is to me a source of continual inquiry. And you rich men, what will you do without faith? You know that you must leave all your property behind you; surely this will make the idea of death dreadful to you. I cannot understand even your happiness, if you have any. I know this - that

"I would not change my blest estate
For all the earth calls good or great;

And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

But I want to ask you what would you do in the next world without faith. Remember, you are standing now upon the edge of the vast gulf of an unknown future. Your soul stands quivering on the verge of the dark abyss; each time your pulse heats your soul is brought nearer to eternity. Faith gives wings to the soul; but what will you do without wings? There is a narrow gulf dividing earth from heaven; the Christian flaps his wings, and borne upon them, he flies to heaven; but what will you do without wings? It will be a leap - a leap into perdition, to sink for ever, without the power of ever recovering yourself. If a Christian could sink on his journey to heaven he would not sink far for he would flap his wings and be up again. But there you will be, perpetually descending through that pit that has no bottom - struggling to rise, but you cannot, for you have no wings. Once more, oh! unbeliever, what will you do without faith? For faith gives eyes to the soul; faith gives us to see things that are not seen: it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Christian, when he dies, will enter the land of death with his eyes open; by means of which, goodly hosts of angels shall cheer his vision; but you must die a blind and eyeless spirit. Unhappy is the lot of the blind in this present world, but how infinitely deplorable that eternal blindness which shall prevent a sight of the splendours of paradise, and shut out for ever even the feeblest ray of joy or hope. And, once more; faith is the hand of the soul. The Christian, when he dies, catches hold of Christ's garment, and Christ bears him into heaven. A bright angel descends, - I clasp that angel, and on his wings he wafts me up to bliss. But when the unbeliever dies the angel would have a useless errand, for he has no hands. Suppose, O sinner, Christ is there, but you cannot even touch his garments, for you have no hands to do it with. What will you do in the next world without hands? Do you think God will suffer such deformed souls in heaven, without hands and without eyes? No, not at all. But how could you get in without hands? You could not open the gates of heaven. What would you do? You would call on God for mercy; and if the mercy were held out to you, you have not hands with which to lay hold upon it. I do not understand how some of you are happy without religion, I do not know what you mean to do if you die without faith. Go home and think of what

you will do if you die without religion; whether you intend to brazen it out before the face of the Eternal, or tamely to submit. Sinner! thou canst not enter into heaven without faith, but what hast thou made up thy mind to do? Dost thou intend to rend down the gates of heaven? Dost thou think thou hast omnipotence enough to force thy way through squadrons of cherubim and legions of angels, and so to enter by main force? Or what dost thou design to do? Dost thou intend quietly to lie down in beds of sulphur? Dost thou design to be willingly tossed perpetually in that brimstone lake where there is no bottom; where briny tears for ever fall? Will ye do that? Will ye make your bed in hell? Sirs, are you so besotted that ye are content with such a doom eternally? Is your reason clean gone? Are your senses so benighted that ye can thus cast yourselves away? Surely ye have resolved to do something. What, then, will ye do? Do you fancy that without faith you will enter heaven, when it is written, "Without faith it is impossible to please God?" And when God has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," dost thou think thou canst reverse the decree? Wilt thou mount the throne of Jehovah, and forswear Jehovah's self? Wilt thou change his mandate and admit the unbeliever into heaven? No, thou canst not! Tremble, then, unbeliever, tremble; for there awaits thee nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation." What will ye do in the swellings of Jordan, without faith to keep your heads above the waters? God give faith to those that have none; and as for others, may he increase their faith!

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The Necessity Of The Spirit's Work

And I will put my Spirit within you. - Ezekiel 36:27

The miracles of Christ are remarkable for one fact, namely that they are none of them unnecessary. The pretended miracles of Mahomet, and of the church of Rome, even if they had been miracles, would have been pieces of folly. Suppose that Saint Denis had walked with his head in his

hand after it had been cut off, what practical purpose would have been subserved thereby? He would certainly have been quite as well in his grave, for any practical good he would have conferred on men. The miracles of Christ were never unnecessary. They are not freaks of power; they are displays of power it is true, but they all of them have a practical end. The same thing may be said of the promises of God. We have not one promise in the Scripture which may be regarded as a mere freak of grace. As every miracle was necessary, absolutely necessary, so is every promise that is given in the Word of God. And hence from the text that is before us, may I draw, and I think very conclusively, the argument, that if God in his covenant made with his people has promised to put his Spirit within them, it must be absolutely necessary that this promise should have been made, and it must be absolutely necessary also to our salvation that every one of us should receive the Spirit of God. This shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. I shall not hope to make it very interesting, except to those who are anxiously longing to know the way of salvation.

We start, then, by laying down this proposition - that the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, if we would be saved.

I. In endeavoring to prove this, I would first of all make the remark that this is very manifest if we remember what man is by nature. Some say that man may of himself attain unto salvation - that if he hear the Word, it is in his power to receive it, to believe it, and to have a saving change worked in him by it. To this we reply, you do not know what man is by nature, otherwise you would never have ventured upon such an assertion. Holy Scripture tells us that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. It does not say that he is sick, that he is faint, that he has grown callous, and hardened, and seared, but it says he is absolutely dead. Whatever that term "death" means in connection with the body, that it means in connection with man's soul, viewing it in its relation to spiritual things. When the body is dead it is powerless; it is unable to do any thing for itself; and when the soul of man is dead, in a spiritual sense, it must be, if there is any meaning in the figure, utterly and entirely powerless, and unable to do any thing of itself or for itself. When ye shall see dead men raising themselves from their graves, when ye shall see them unwinding their own sheets, opening their own coffin-lids, and walking down our

streets alive and animate, as the result of their own power, then perhaps ye may believe that souls that are dead in sin may turn to God, may recreate their own natures, and may make themselves heirs of heaven, though before they were heirs of wrath. But mark, not till then. The drift of the gospel is, that man is dead in sin, and that divine life is God's gift; and you must go contrary to the whole of that drift, before you can suppose a man brought to know and love Christ, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit finds men as destitute of spiritual life as Ezekiel's dry bones; he brings bone to bone, and fits the skeleton together, and then he comes from the four winds and breathes into the slain, and they live, and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army, and worship God. But apart from that, apart from the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God, men's souls must lie in the valley of dry bones, dead, and dead for ever.

But Scripture does not only tell us that man is dead in sin; it tells us something worse than this, namely, that he is utterly and entirely averse to every thing that is good and right. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." - Romans 8:7. - Turn you all Scripture through, and you find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God. What said Christ in that text so often quoted by the Arminian to disprove the very doctrine which it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that men would come without divine influence? He said, first, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" but he said something more strong - "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." No man will come. Here lies the deadly mischief; not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong, and that his will is desperately set against every thing that is right. Go, Armenian, and tell your hearers that they will come if they please, but know that your Redeemer looks you in the face, and tells you that you are uttering a lie. Men will not come. They never will come of themselves. You cannot induce them to come; you cannot force them to come by all your thunders, nor can you entice them to come by all your invitations. They will not come unto Christ, that they may have life. Until the Spirit draw them, come they neither will, nor can.

Hence, then, from the fact that man's nature is hostile to the divine Spirit, that he hates grace, that he despises the way in which grace is brought to him, that it is contrary to his own proud nature to stoop to receive salvation by the deeds of another - hence it is necessary that the Spirit of God should operate to change the will, to correct the bias of the heart, to set man in a right track, and then give him strength to run in it. Oh! if ye read man and understand him, ye cannot help being sound on the point of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work. It has been well remarked by a great writer, that he never knew a man who held any great theological error, who did not also hold a doctrine which diminished the depravity of man. The Armenian says man is fallen, it is true, but then he has power of will left, and that will is free; he can raise himself. He diminishes the desperate character of the fall of man. On the other hand, the Antinomian says, man cannot do any thing, but that he is not at all responsible, and is not bound to do it, it is not his duty to believe, it is not his duty to repent. Thus, you see, he also diminishes the sinfulness of man; and has not right views of the fall. But once get the correct view, that man is utterly fallen, powerless, guilty, defiled, lost, condemned, and you must be sound on all points of the great gospel of Jesus Christ. Once believe man to be what Scripture says he is - once believe his heart to be depraved, his affections perverted, his understanding darkened, his will perverse, and you must hold that if such a wretch as that be saved, it must e t e work of the Spirit of God, and of the Spirit of God alone.

2. I have another proof ready to hand. Salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us, because the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of the work. And what are the means of salvation? Why, first and foremost stands the preaching of the Word of God. More men are brought to Christ by preaching than by any thing else; for it is God's chief and first instrument. This is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. "It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But what is there in preaching, by which souls are saved, that looks as if it would be the means of saving souls? I could point you to divers churches and chapels into which you might step, and say, "Here is a learned minister, indeed, a man who would instruct and enlighten the intellect;" you sit down, and you say, "Well, if God means to work a great work, he

will use a learned man like this." But do you know any learned men that are made the means of bringing souls to Christ, to any great degree? Go round your churches, if you please, and look at them, and then answer the question. Do you know any great men - men great in learning and wisdom - who have become spiritual fathers in our Israel? Is it not a fact that stares us in the face, that our fashionable preachers, our eloquent preachers, our learned preachers, are just the most useless men in creation for the winning of souls to Christ. And where are souls born to God? Why, in the house around which the jeer and the scoff and the sneer of the world have long gathered. Sinners are converted under the man whose eloquence is rough and homely, and who has nothing to commend him to his fellows, who has daily to fall on his knees and confess his own folly, and when the world speaks worst of him, feels that he deserves it all, since he is nothing but an earthen vessel, in which God is pleased to put his heavenly treasure. I will dare to say it, that in every age of the world the most despised ministry has been the most useful; and I could find you at this day poor Primitive Methodist preachers who can scarce speak correct English, who have been the fathers of more souls, and have brought to Christ more than any one bishop on the bench. Why, the Lord hath been pleased always to make it so, that he will clothe with power the weak and the foolish, but he will not clothe with power those who, if good were done, might be led to ascribe the excellence of the power to their learning, their eloquence, or their position. Like the apostle Paul, it is every minister's business to glory in his infirmities. The world says, "Pshaw! upon your oratory; it is rough, and rude, and eccentric." Yet, 'tis even so, but we are content, for God blesses it. Then so much the better that it has infirmities in it; for now shall it be plainly seen that it is not of man or by man, but the work of God, and of God alone. It is said that once upon a time a man exceedingly curious desired to see the sword with which a mighty hero had fought some desperate battles; casting his eye along the blade, he said, "Well, I don't see much in this sword." "Nay," said the hero, "but you have not examined the arm that wields it." And so when men come to hear a successful minister, they are apt to say, "I do not see any thing in him." No, but you have not examined the eternal arm that reaps its harvest with this sword of the Spirit. If ye had looked at the jaw-bone of the ass in Samson's hand, you would have said, "What! heaps on heaps with this!" No; bring out some polished blade; bring forth the

Damascus steel! NO; but God would have all the glory, and, therefore, not with the polished steel, but with the jaw-bone must Samson get the victory. So with ministers; God has usually blessed the weakest to do the most good. Well, now, does it not follow from this, that it must be the work of the Spirit? Because, if there be nothing in the instrument that can lead thereunto, is it not the work of the Spirit when the thing is accomplished? Let me just put it to you. Under the ministry dead souls are quickened, sinners are made to repent, the vilest of sinners are made holy, men who came determined not to believe are compelled to believe. Now, who does this? If you say the ministry does it, then I say farewell to your reason, because there is nothing in the successful ministry which would tend thereunto. It must be that the Spirit worketh in man through the ministry or else such deeds would never be accomplished. You might as well expect to raise the dead by whispering in their ears, as hope to save souls by preaching to them, if it were not for the agency of the Spirit. Melancthon went out to preach, you know, without the Spirit of the Lord, and he thought he should convert all the people, but he found out at last that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon, and he had to go back and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit or ever he saw a soul saved. I say, that the fact that the ministry is blessed proves, since there is nothing in the ministry, that salvation must be the work of a higher power.

Other means, however, are made use of to bless men's souls. For instance, the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are both made a rich means of grace. But let me ask you, is there any thing in baptism that can possibly bless any body? Can immersion in water have the slightest tendency to be blessed to the soul? And then with regard to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine at the Lord's Supper, can it by any means be conceived by any rational man that there is any thing in the mere piece of bread that we eat, or in the wine that we drink? And yet, doubtless, the grace of God does go with both ordinances for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them, and even for the conversion of those who look upon the ceremony. There must be something, then, beyond the outward ceremony; there must, in fact, be the Spirit of God, witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise none of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify; they could not

help us to commune with Christ; they could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts, be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence - the influence of the divine Spirit of God.

3. Let me again remind you, in the third place, that the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that all which has been done by God the Father, and all that has been done God the Son must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls. We believe, in the first place, that God the Father elects his people; from before all worlds he chooses them to himself, but let me ask you - what effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? How do I know whether God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world? How can I possibly know. Can I climb to heaven and read the roll? Is it possible for me to force my way through the thick mists which hide eternity, and open the seven seals of the book, and read my name recorded there? Ah! no; election is a dead letter both in my consciousness and in any effect which it can produce upon me, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light. And then, through my calling, I see my election, and, knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. It is a precious thing - that doctrine of election - to a child of God. But what makes it precious? Nothing but the influence of the Spirit. Until the Spirit opens the eye to read, until the Spirit imparts the mystic secret, no heart can know its election. No angel ever revealed to any man that he was chosen of God; but the Spirit doth it. He, by his divine workings bears an infallible witness with our spirits that we are born of God; and then we are enabled to "read our title clear to mansions in the skies."

Look, again, at the covenant of grace. We know that there was a covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by his Father from before all worlds, and that in this covenant the persons of all his people were given to him, and were secured; but of what use, or of what avail is the covenant to us, until the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the covenant to us? The covenant is, as it were, a holy tree laden with fruit; if the Spirit doth not shake that tree, and make the fruit fall therefrom, until it comes to the level of our

standing, how can we receive it? Bring hither any sinner and tell him there is a covenant of grace, what is he advantaged thereby? "Ah," says he, "I may not be included in it; my name may not be recorded there; I may not be chosen in Christ;" but let the Spirit of God dwell in his heart, richly by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and that man sees the covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and he cries with David, "It is all my salvation and all my desire."

Take, again, the redemption of Christ. We know that Christ did stand in the room, place, and stead of all his people, and that all those who shall appear in heaven will appear there as an act of justice as well as of grace, seeing that Christ was punished in their room and stead, and that it would have been unjust if God punished them, seeing that he had punished Christ for them. We believe that Christ, having paid all their debts, they have a right to their freedom in Christ - that Christ having covered them with his righteousness, they are entitled to eternal life as much as if they had themselves been perfectly holy. But of what avail is this to me, until the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me? What is Christ's blood to any of you until you have received the Spirit of grace? You have heard the minister preach about the blood of Christ a thousand times, but you passed by; it was nothing to you that Jesus should die. You know that he did atone for sins that were not his own; but you only regarded it as a tale, perhaps, even an idle tale. But when the Spirit of God led you to the cross, and opened your eyes, and enabled you to see Christ crucified, ah, then there was something in the blood indeed. When his hand dipped the hyssop in the blood, and when it applied that blood to, your spirit, then there was a joy and peace in believing, such as you had never known before. But ah, my hearer, Christ's dying is nothing to thee unless thou hast a living Spirit within thee. Christ brings thee no advantage, saving, personal, and lasting, unless the Spirit of God hath baptized thee in the fountain filled with his blood, and washed thee from head to foot therein.

I only mention these few out of the many blessings of the covenant just to prove that they are, none of them, of any use to us, unless the Holy Spirit gives them to us. There hang the blessings on the nail - on the nail, Christ Jesus; but we are short of stature; we cannot reach them; the Spirit of

God takes them down and gives them to us, and there they are; they are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach; but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, brings down the bread, and puts it to our lips, and enables us to eat. Christ's blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine-vat; but we cannot get thereat. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with his blood. The Spirit is absolutely necessary. Without him neither the works of the Father, nor of the Son, are of any avail to us.

4. This brings us to another point. The experience of the true Christian is a reality; but it never can be known and felt without the Spirit of God. For what is the experience of the Christian? Let me just give a brief picture of some of its scenes. There is a person come into this hall this morning - one of the most reputable men in London. He has never committed himself in any outward vice; he has never been dishonest; but he is known as a staunch, upright tradesman. Now, to his astonishment, he is informed that he is a condemned, lost sinner, and just as surely lost as the thief who died for his crimes upon the cross. Do you think that man will believe it? Suppose, however, that he does believe it, simply because he reads it in the Bible, do you think that man will ever be made to feel it? I know you say, "Impossible!" Some of you, even now, perhaps, are saying, "Well, I never should!" Can you imagine that honorable, upright tradesman, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner?" - standing side by side with the harlot and the swearer, and feeling in his own heart as if he had been as guilty as they were, and using just the same prayer and saying, "Lord, save, or I perish." You cannot conceive it, can you? It is contrary to nature that a man who has been so good as he should pat himself down among the chief of sinners. Ah! but that will be done before he will be saved; he must feel that before he can enter heaven. Now, I ask, who can bring him to such a leveling experience as that, but the Spirit of God? Ye know very well proud nature will not stoop to it. We are all aristocrats in our own righteousness; we do not like to bend down and come among common sinners. If we are brought there, it must be the Spirit of God who casts us to the ground. Why, I know if any one had told

me that I should ever cry to God for mercy, and confess that I had been the vilest of the vile, I should have laughed in their face; I should have said, "Why I have not done anything particularly wrong; I have not hurt anybody." And yet I know this very day I can take my place upon the lowest form, and if I can get inside heaven I shall feel happy to sit among the chief of sinners, and praise that Almighty love which has saved even me from my sins.. Now, what works this humiliation of heart? Grace. It is contrary to nature for an honest and an upright man in the eye of the world to feel himself a lost sinner. It must be the Holy Spirit's work, or else it never will be done. Well, after a man has been brought here, can you conceive that man at last conscience-stricken, and led to believe that his past life deserves the wrath of God? His first thought would be, "Well, now, I will live better than I ever have lived." He would say, "Now, I will try and play the hermit, and pinch myself here and there, and deny myself, and do penance; and in that way, by paying attention to the outward ceremonies of religion, together with a high moral character, I doubt not I shall blot out whatever slurs and stains there have been." Can you suppose that man brought at last to feel that, if ever he gets to heaven, he will have to get there through the righteousness of another? "Through the righteousness of another?" says he, "I don't want to be rewarded for what another man does, - not I. If I go there, I will go there and take my chance; I will go there through what I do myself. Tell me something to do, and I will do it; I will be proud to do it, however humiliating it may be, so that I may at last win the love and esteem of God." Now, can you conceive such a man as that brought to feel that he can do nothing? - that, good man as he thinks himself, he cannot do any thing whatever to merit God's love and favor; and that, if he goes to heaven, he must go through what Christ did? Just the same as the drunkard must go there through the merits of Christ, so this moral man must enter into life, having nothing about him but Christ's perfect righteousness, and being washed in the blood of Jesus. We say that this is so contrary to human nature, so diametrically opposed to all the instincts of our poor fallen humanity, that nothing but the Spirit of God can ever bring a man to strip himself of all self-righteousness, and of all creature strength, and compel him to rest and lean simply and wholly upon Jesus Christ the Saviour.

These two experiences would be sufficient to prove the necessity of the Holy Spirit to make a man a Christian. But let me now describe a Christian as he is after his conversion. Trouble comes, storms of trouble, and he looks the tempest in the face and says, "I know that all things work together for my good." His children die, the partner of his bosom is carried to the grave; he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." His farm fails, his crop is blighted; his business prospects are clouded, all seem to go, and he is left in poverty: he says, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." You see him next laid upon a sick bed himself, and when he is there, he says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." You see him approaching at last the dark valley of the shadow of death, and you hear him cry, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, and thou thyself art with me." Now, I ask you, what makes this man calm in the midst of all these varied trials, and personal troubles, if it be not the Spirit of God? O, ye that doubt the influence of the Spirit, produce the like without him, go ye and die as Christians die, and live as they live, and if you can show the same calm resignation, the same quiet joy, and the same firm belief that adverse things shall, nevertheless, work together for good, then we may be, perhaps, at liberty to resign the point, and not till then. The high and noble experience of a Christian in times of trial and suffering, proves that there must be the operation of the Spirit of God.

But look at the Christian, too, in his joyous moments. He is rich. God has given him all his heart's desire on earth. Look at him: he says, "I do not value these things at all, except as they are the gift of God; I sit loose by them all and, notwithstanding this house and home, and all these comforts, 'I am willing to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' It is true, I want nothing here on earth; but still I feel that to die would be gain to me, even though I left all these." He holds earth loosely; he does not grasp it with a tight hand, but looks upon it all as dust, - a thing which is to pass away. He takes but little pleasure therein, saying, -

"I've no abiding city here,
I seek a city out of sight."

Mark that man; he has plenty of room for pleasures in this world, but he drinks out of a higher cistern. His pleasure springs from things unseen; his happiest moments are when he can shut all these good things out, and when he can come to God as a poor guilty sinner, and come to Christ and enter into fellowship with him, and rise into nearness of access and confidence, and boldly approach to the throne of the heavenly grace. Now, what is it that keeps a man who has all these mercies from setting his heart upon the earth? This is a wonder, indeed, that a man who has gold and silver, and flocks and herds, should not make these his god, but that he should still say, -

"There's nothing round this spacious earth
That suits my large desire;
To boundless joy and solid mirth
My nobler thoughts aspire."

These are not my treasure; my treasure is in heaven, and in heaven only. What can do this? No mere moral virtue. No doctrine of the Stoic ever brought a man to such a pass as. that. No, it must be the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Spirit alone, that can lead a man to live in heaven, while there is a temptation to him to live on earth. I do not wonder that a poor man looks forward to heaven; he has nothing to look upon on earth. When there is a thorn in the nest, I do not wonder that the lark flies up, for there is no rest for him below. When you are beaten and chafed by trouble, no wonder you say, -

"Jerusalem! my happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

But the greatest wonder is, if you line the Christian's nest never so softly, if you give him all the mercies of this life, you still cannot keep him from

saying, -

"To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
Oh bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to his throne."

5. And now, last of all, the acts, the acceptable acts, of the Christian's life, cannot be performed without the Spirit; and hence, again, the necessity for the Spirit of God. The first act of the Christian's life is repentance. Have you ever tried to repent? If so, if you tried without the Spirit of God you know that to urge a man to repent without the promise of the Spirit to help him, is to urge him to do an impossibility. A rock might as soon weep, and a desert might as soon blossom, as a sinner repent of his own accord. If God should offer heaven to man, simply upon the terms of repentance of sin, heaven would be as impossible as it is by good works; for a man can no more repent of himself, than he can perfectly keep God's law; for repentance involves the very principle of perfect obedience to the law of God. It seems to me that in repentance there is the whole law solidified and condensed; and if a man can repent of himself then there is no need of a Saviour, he may as well go to heaven up the steep sides of Sinai at once.

Faith is the next act in the divine life. Perhaps you think faith very easy; but if you are ever brought to feel the burden of sin you would not find it quite so light a labor. If you are ever brought into deep mire, where there is no standing, it is not so easy to put your feet on a rock, when the rock does not seem to be there. I find faith just the easiest thing in the world when there is nothing to believe; but when I have room and exercise for my faith, then I do not find I have so much strength to accomplish it. Talking one day with a countryman, he used this figure: "In the middle of winter I sometimes think how well I could mow; and in early spring I think, oh! how I would like to reap; I feel just ready for it; but when mowing time comes, and when reaping time comes, I find I have not strength to spare." So when you have no troubles, couldn't you mow them down at once? When you have no work to do, couldn't you do it? But when work and trouble come you find how difficult it is. Many Christians

are like the stag, who talked to itself, and said, "Why should I run away from the dogs? Look what a fine pair of horns I've got, and look what heels I've got too; I might do these hounds some mischief. Why not let me stand and show them what I can do with my antlers? I can keep off any quantity of dogs." No sooner did the dogs bark, than off the stag went. So with us. "Let sin arise," we say, "we will soon rip it up, and destroy it; let trouble come, we will soon get over it; but when sin and trouble come, we then find what our weakness is. Then we have to cry for the help of the Spirit; and through him we can do all things, though without him we can do nothing at all.

In all the acts of the Christian's life, whether it be the act of consecrating one's self to Christ, or the act of daily prayer, or the act of constant submission, or preaching the gospel, or ministering to the necessities of the poor, or comforting the desponding, in all these the Christian finds his weakness and his powerlessness, unless he is clothed about with the Spirit of God. Why, I have been to see the sick at times, and I have thought how I would like to comfort them; and I could not get a word out that was worth their hearing, or worth my saying; and my soul has been in agony to be the means of comforting the poor, sick, desponding brother; but I could do nothing, and I came out of the chamber, and half wished I had never been to see a sick person in my life: I had so learned my own folly. So has it been full often in preaching. You get a sermon up, study it, and come and make the greatest mess of it that can possibly be. Then you say, "I wish I had never preached at all." But all this is to show us, that neither in comforting nor in preaching can one do any thing right, unless the Spirit work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Every thing, moreover, that we do without the Spirit is unacceptable to God; and whatever we do under his influence, however we may despise it, is not despised of God, for he never despises his own work, and the Spirit never can look upon what he works in us with any other view than that of complacency and delight. If the Spirit helps me to groan, then God must accept the groaner. If thou couldst pray the best prayer in the world, without the Spirit, God would have nothing to do with it; but if thy prayer be broken, and lame, and limping, if the Spirit made it, God will look upon it, and say, as he did upon the works of creation, "It is very good;" and he will accept it.

And now let me conclude by asking this question. My hearer, then have you the Spirit of God in you? You have some religion, most of you, I dare say. Well, of what kind is it? Is it a homemade article? Did you make yourself what you are? Then, if so, you are a lost man up to this moment. If, my hearer, you have gone no further than you have walked yourself, you are not on the road to heaven yet; you have got your face turned the wrong way; but if you have received something which neither flesh nor blood could reveal to you, if you have been led to do the very thing which you once hated, and to love that thing which you once despised, and to despise that on which your heart and your pride were once set, then, soul, if this be the Spirit's work, rejoice; for where he hath begun the good work he will carry it on. And you may know whether it is the Spirit's work by this. Have you been led to Christ, and away from self: Have you been led away from all feelings, from all doings, from all willings, from all prayings, as the ground of your trust and your hope, and have you been brought nakedly to rely upon the finished work of Christ? If so, this is more than human nature ever taught any man; this is a height to which human nature never climbed. The Spirit of God has done that, and he will never leave what he has once begun, but thou shalt go from strength to strength, and thou shalt stand among the bloodwashed throng, at last complete in Christ, and accepted in the beloved. But if you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. May the Spirit lead you to your chamber now to weep, now to repent, and now to look to Christ, and may you now have a divine life implanted, which neither time nor eternity shall be able to destroy. God, hear this prayer, and send us away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Need And Nature Of Conversion

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. - Isaiah 55:7

Some years ago, I preached from the last four words of this verse, laying special stress upon the abundant pardon which is given to repenting sinners through the rich mercy of our God. On this occasion, I am going to put the emphasis upon the first part of the verse, speaking more upon the necessity of the sinner forsaking his evil way, and of the unrighteous man abandoning his evil thoughts. There is urgent necessity for us continually to insist upon this course of action. This chapter, as we noticed in our reading, is full of gospel teaching, and it expresses, under the most striking and cheering metaphors, both the fullness and the freeness of the gospel. But the prophet also insists most clearly that the wicked man must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man must turn from his thoughts, and return to the Lord, that he may obtain the mercy and pardon that God is waiting and willing to bestow.

This is not a merely legal demand; it is a gospel demand, found in the centre of a gospel chapter in the writings of the most evangelical of all the prophets. The chapter begins with a number of gracious and wide invitations, and so naturally leads on to the promise of the coming Saviour. Only God himself could find a Saviour for our ruined race, and none but God's own Son could be that Saviour. Then there follows, in due order, the promise of a people to be saved. The Saviour shall not come to the earth in vain. He shall call a people unto himself, and "nations" shall run unto him. Then, following the promise of a Saviour, and the declaration of the certainty that many shall be saved by him, there comes in this loving invitation, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Since he is to have a people who shall be his for ever, put in your claim to be amongst them; and since, as a Saviour, he is near to you, call upon him, and he will hear your call.

This brings us to our text, which is consistent with the rest of the chapter, even though some people think it is not. Here we are told, first, that the wicked must forsake his way. There is no Saviour for the man who will not forsake his sin. Such a man can never be among the people who shall

run to Christ, for how can he run to Christ while he continues in the way of sin? Such a man shall seek sin, he cannot embrace the Saviour who hates sin with a perfect hatred. This is the theme upon which I am going to speak now, and I want to do it in the spirit of the Master, of whom Malachi wrote, "For who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." May the Master bless his own searching word, and he shall have all the praise.

I. First, then, let us meditate a while upon THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. If a man is to be saved, he must turn from his sins. "Right about face!" is the marching order for every sinner. There is no hope of forgiveness for him if he will continue with his face as it now is. He must turn from his sin if he would be saved.

This will be at once evident to you when I ask,—*How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for him to put aside our past sin, and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before?* How could he be thought to be just and pure if he should remit the punishment for past transgressions, without seeing in us any determination to abstain from such sin in the future? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but he never came here to spare their sins. God would never have sent his Son to this earth to be the messenger of sin, yet Christ would be nothing better than the messenger of sin if he had come, and said to men, "You may continue in your sin, yet I will forgive you. You may live as you like, yet you shall find mercy with the Lord at the last." It must strike you, in a moment, that such a course as this would be inconsistent with the character of the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. There is no such teaching as that in the whole of the Scriptures; and he who dares to believe it, believes a lie. Nowhere, in the whole compass of revelation, is there a promise of forgiveness to the man who continues in his iniquity. There is a promise of pardon to the sinner who forsakes his wicked way, and turns from his evil thoughts; there are many promises of forgiveness to those who confess their sins in humble penitence, and who seek to live new lives under the power of the Holy Spirit. Possibly, someone would

remind me that the greatest promises are given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is quite true; but the faith which believes in Jesus is a living and active faith, which works in the soul a hatred of sin; and if a man says, "I believe in Christ," and yet continues to delight in sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, for "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." That faith alone will save us which is proved to be a vital and real faith by bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." It is no use wanting or trying to be saved without a change of heart, and a change of life. "Ye must be born again," is Christ's own word to all unregenerate sinners. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There has never been any revocation of these truths, and again I repeat that, in the whole compass of the Word of God, there is no promise of pardon to the man who continues in his iniquities.

Neither, dear friends, is there *a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable*, that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins, and yet be saved. If you remind me of the woman in the city who was a sinner, I also remind you that her life had been completely changed, else our Saviour would not have permitted her to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of the great sin of persecuting the saints; but see what a changed man was Paul the apostle of the Gentiles. Zaccheus, the rich tax-gatherer, offered to make full restitution and recompense to any whom he might have wronged. So is it evermore where the grace of God works effectually. When the Lord Jesus Christ saves a sinner from the punishment of sin, he also saves him from the love of sin;—he makes him holy as well as makes him happy and safe. The same lesson is taught in our Lord's parables. For instance, there was no rejoicing over the lost sheep while it was still wandering away from the fold; the joy began when that lost sheep was found, and was brought home on the shepherd's shoulder. A more striking example is that of the prodigal son. There was no joy over him while he was in the far country, and no kiss for him from his father while he was feeding the swine. He must come back, he must say, "Father, I have sinned," there must be the forsaking of his former evil ways, or else there could be no enjoyment of his father's forgiveness. We must ever say, as plainly as we can possibly say it,—If thou wilt keep thy

sins, thou shalt go to hell; but if thou wouldst go to heaven, thou must part company with thy sins. He who would be married to Christ must first be divorced from sin. There is no possibility of walking in the way of the Lord and, at the same time, treading the pathway of evil. "No man can serve two masters." No one can, at the same time, be a servant of the Saviour and a servant of Satan.

Besides, dear friends, our common sense tells us that *it would be highly dangerous to society* if men were to be pardoned, and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. If Christ should meet with a man, and say to him, "I forgive thee because of the precious blood I shed for thee on Calvary; go and be a drunkard still, go and be unchaste, go and be a thief," this would be the way to undermine the very pillars of society, and, very soon, we should not be safe in our beds. If there were no laws, or if the laws had no system of punishment for the guilty, human society would cease to be endurable. He who ruleth all things righteously will never set up such a scheme as this. The Judge of all the earth must punish sin; he will by no means clear the guilty.

Moreover, *it would be a serious injury to the man himself* if he could be pardoned, and yet not be changed. For God to forgive us without renewing us, would be a frightful peril to ourselves. A man, finding himself so easily forgiven, and having no change of heart, would plunge into sin worse than ever; and, so far as my observation is concerned, I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in a man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favourite of heaven, and yet continues to indulge in sin. I recollect the thrill of horror, which passed through me, in my youthful days, when I heard a man, who was accustomed to be drunk, boast that he could say what none of his pot companions could say, namely, that he was one of the elect of God. I felt, child as I was, that he was one of the devil's chosen followers, and I do not doubt that he really was. If a man once gets into his head such a perverted notion of the free grace of God as to imagine that it is compatible with the love of sin, and a life of sin, he is on the high road to being made into the worst conceivable character; and if such a man as that could be delivered from all the consequences of his sin, from all such consequences as might be looked upon as arbitrarily fixed by the

punishing hand of God, (I know that I am talking of an impossibility,) even then he must be miserable. Such a man must go on from bad to worse; and sin, whatever we may think of it, is misery. The worm that never dies is sin; the fire that is never quenched is sin; and hell is sin fully developed. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," and that second death is hell. O sirs, if you could get rid of the disease, the pain, the headaches, the qualms of conscience which follow upon indulgence in sin, it would be a mischievous riddance for you, for the very pain that is caused by sin is part of God's way of calling to you to come back to him. As long as you are in this world, the consequences that follow after certain forms of sin are really, with all their bitterness,—and they *are* bitter,—but a healthful tonic that should make you give up sin, and turn to God.

If you go on sinning, you cannot be saved. If you continue to love sin, and to practise it, you cannot be saved. Think, for a moment, what any other result would involve; if it were possible for a man to live in sin, and yet be forgiven, what would be the value of the work of the Holy Ghost? He has come in order that we may be born again, and have new hearts and right spirits; but if men could be forgiven without having new hearts and right spirits, of what service would the Holy Spirit be? This would be contrary, also, to the whole design of Christ in our salvation. The angel said to Joseph, before our Saviour's birth, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins;" but if they can be saved in their sins, where is the meaning of his name? When he hung upon the cross, and one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, "forthwith came there out blood and water;" but what is the use of the purifying water if we need not be purified, and can be pardoned without being cleansed? Paul wrote to Titus that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" but how can that purpose be accomplished if men can be pardoned, and yet continue to live in sin?

Beside that, the very character of heaven prevents such a thing being done; we know that the unholy cannot enter there, nothing that defileth can pass the watchers at the pearly portals; therefore, be ye sure of this,—that you can never enter heaven, and you can never have forgiveness, if

you continue to cling to your sins. You must forsake them, or mercy cannot be yours.

II. Having spoken thus upon the necessity of conversion, I turn, for a little while, to the second part of our subject, THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSION. How is it described here?

First, *it deals with the life*: "Let the wicked forsake his way." Observe that it is "his way" that he is to forsake; that is, his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, and propensities, and passions lead him. He must forsake this way, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even eighty years; he will have to get out of this way, however much he may delight in it. Possibly, he has now got to love sin so much that he says he could not give it up. There are some sins which men roll under their tongues as dainty morsels; but if you are to be saved, you will have to give them up. If you would have mercy of God, you must give them all up. You must give up your old sins, your sweet sins, your pet sins; the sins of the flesh, with all their pleasure, and the sins of the mind, with all their pride, must be given up; for notice that word "forsake." "Let the wicked forsake his way." It does not say, "Let him own that his way is bad." There are some who will say, 'Oh, yes, I know that my way is very wrong;' and there they stop. Such an admission as that will not save you, my friend; you must forsake your way as well as own that it is wrong. To know that it is wrong, and yet to go on in it, will double your sin. This kind of confession will not help you in the least; on the contrary, it will only increase your guilt. You must forsake your wicked way if you are to be forgiven. "Oh, sir," you say, "I am very sorry for all the sin that I have committed!" I am glad that you are, and I hope that you will be still more so; but that sorrow alone will never save you. It is not saying, "I am sorry," nor yet your being sorry for your sin that will save you; that is right as far as it goes, but you must forsake the sin as well as be sorry for it. "I must forsake it; well, I resolve that I will do so." Yet that resolve by itself will not save you, for there are plenty of good resolutions that are good for nothing. You have actually to forsake your wicked way before you have complied with the requirements of our text. I know how the devil will try to deceive you, when you have made a good resolution. He

will say, "Ah, you are a fine fellow; and that is a splendid resolution of yours!" Yet mere resolutions are not worth a penny a thousand; we must act, not simply resolve what we mean to do. We must not be like the man who owes a lot of money, and has not a penny to pay, yet who keeps on saying to his creditors, "I hope I shall be able to pay you tomorrow." Then, when that day comes, he says he is very sorry, but he missed the friend he expected to see, so he must postpone the payment for a few days; yet, when the few days have passed, there is still nothing forthcoming. So it is with many who resolve to forsake sin; they are like those who promise, but never pay. This will not do; you must forsake your sin if it is to be forgiven.

"I will tell you what I will do," says one; "I will still keep to my old way, but I will not travel quite so rapidly in it; I will not live such a fast life as I have done." I tell thee, friend, that thou must forsake that old way of thine altogether if thou wouldst be saved. If thou standest still in it, if thou art decent and respectable in it, all that will avail thee nothing. Thou must clear right out of it, for so our text puts it, "Let the wicked forsake his way." In plain terms, the prophet means just this. Is your way the way of the drunkard? Now, no drunkard can ever inherit the kingdom of God as long as he continues a drunkard, so you cannot be saved if you remain in that condition. Are you a thief? Do you privately cheat in business? All that kind of thing must be given up. It is no use for you to say, "I *will* do it, and yet go to heaven." You will be damned unless that sin, as well as others, be given up. Or have you been a blasphemer? Do you talk profanely or filthily? You must wash all that foulness out of your mouth if you would be saved: "Let the wicked forsake his way." Am I addressing any who have practised vice in unmentionable forms? Oh, how many there are who do that, and yet are not ashamed! You must forsake all that, young man, or old man either; it is no use mincing matters with you. If you mean to go to hell, go on with your wickedness; but if you would be forgiven for the past, you must cut all connection with these evil things for the future. I most solemnly assure you, in the name of God, that there can be no compromise about this and every other sin. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, a fleshly way, a way of lust, a way of self-indulgence, any way of sin,—it must be forsaken. You must abandon it, or else you must abandon all hope of ever getting to heaven.

"That is pretty strong language," says someone. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that *it deals with the man's thoughts*: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." "But thoughts are free," says some unthinking person; "I shall never be hanged for my thoughts." No, perhaps not; but have you never heard that old saying, "A man may not be *hanged* for his thoughts, but he may be *damned* for his thoughts;" for, in thought, is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colourless; but the motive for doing it—the thought at the back of it—puts the venom, and virus, and guilt into the deed.

As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud;—his opinion about God, for instance. It is possible that he has thought nothing of him; or if he has thought of him at all, he has dared even to judge his Creator, and to find fault with what God does. Ah, sir! You must give up all such thoughts of God, and you must come to reverence him, and to regard him as so great that you are less than nothing in comparison with him. You will also have to give up your opinion concerning God's law. You thought it was too severe, too stringent, and that you could improve it a great deal. You will have to confess, with the apostle Paul, that the law is spiritual, and that you are "carnal, sold under sin." You will have to change your mind upon a great many subjects if you really wish to be saved. You will have to forsake your old thoughts concerning sin. You said, "Oh, it is a mere trifle,—a peccadillo! Poor helpless creatures as we are, God won't be angry with us for such a little thing as that." You will have to feel that sin is exceedingly sinful, a great and deadly evil, or you will never be likely to seek and to find peace with God. You will also have to change your mind about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is nothing to you now; but he will have to be everything to you if you are to be saved by him. You will have to change your mind about yourself; you fancy that you are a fine fellow now, but you will have to regard yourself as less than nothing before you come to your right position before God. If ever you are to find mercy at his hands, you will have to forsake your present thoughts on all these matters.

Do you ask, "What other thoughts shall we have to forsake?" I reply,—A whole set of thoughts in which many people indulge. To the ungodly man, it is often quite a treat to sit down, and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth when he sowed his wild oats. He wishes that he had a handful or two of them left. Ah, sir! You will have to give up all thoughts of that sort; but you will have to think of those past days with bitter tears of sorrow over the sins that you then committed. The ungodly man often pictures to himself scenes of carnal delight; and if he cannot have a share in such scenes, he often wishes that he could. I would remind any of you, who have ever done so, that you may commit every sin forbidden in the Decalogue, without having actually committed any one of them, by simply revelling in them in your thoughts. Remember that solemn affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the seventh commandment, "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" and learn from it how our Lord meant his interpretation to apply to the whole law, so that we should understand that the very thought of evil is sin; and to suck it down as a sweet morsel to think upon, even though we never dared to perpetrate the act, is still a gross evil; and if we would be forgiven, we must forsake all these vile, flesh-delighting thoughts.

We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all purposes of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here: "Let the unrighteous man forsake his purposes." You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, "to have your fling." You have come up from the country, young man, you are pleased that you have got away from your mother's apron strings, and now you are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you; and, if any, whom I am now addressing, have formed any purpose of sin, —if you have resolved to indulge in this or that evil, whatever it may be, I charge you, if you desire to have eternal life, to hate all such purposes and thoughts of sin. The garment spotted by the flesh must be flung away from us, and the very thought of evil must be banished from our minds as far as it is possible for us to do so.

Nor is this all, for the text further says, "and let him return unto the Lord," so that this conversion *deals with the sinner in his relation to God*. He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. Do you ask how you are to do so? Well, first, you must begin to think about God. I really believe that some of you do not think half as much about God as you do about the Sultan of Turkey; and with some of you, almost anybody is a greater factor in your life than God is. With some of you, it would not make any difference if there were no God at all, except that you would be rather glad if that could be proved to be the case, for you would feel easier in your mind, and could, in such a case, go on in your sin without any of the compunction that you now feel. Yet, is it not a singular state of mind for a man, who knows that he is a creature made by God, but who really cares so little about him that, if he could be assured that there were no such being, he would be better pleased than he is now? Oh, what a wretched state your heart must be in if it feels like that! It will have to be greatly altered if you are ever to be saved.

So, first, you must begin to think of God; and then, thinking of him, you must yield to him, give up your will to his will; and, doing that, you must pray to him, cry to him for mercy; and then you must trust him. Especially, you must accept his way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; and when you do that, then you will be sure to love him. When you get as far as that, you will be a new creature altogether. Then, God will delight in you; then, it will be misery to you to be out of his presence, and it will be the highest joy of your life to have constant communion with him.

III. Now I finish with the third part of our subject, that is, THE GOSPEL OF THIS CONVERSION.

Possibly, somebody says, "You have been preaching to us the law, sir." No, I have not. The law says nothing about repentance. The law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is not the utterance of law, but of the gospel.

I will try briefly to show you the gospel of it. It lies, first, in the fact that *God has promised that he will abundantly pardon those who turn from*

their evil ways: "Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." To the man who confesses his guilt, the law says, "Yes, you are guilty, and you must suffer the penalty attached to your crime." If a person pleads "guilty" in a court of law, the judge does not say to him, "If you will promise amendment, you may go free." No, he pronounces sentence upon him, and God, the righteous Judge, might justly have done the same to us; but, instead of doing so, he says, "Forsake your wicked way, and your evil thoughts, and turn to me, and I will abundantly pardon you. Only repent of your iniquity, and abandon it, and it shall all be blotted out. All the evil of your past life shall be forgiven and forgotten; and your sins and your transgressions I will not remember against you any more for ever." Oh, precious gospel message! Who would not turn from his sin when such a gracious promise awaits him in the turning?

Yet there is more even than that, a great deal; for not only does God bid men turn to him, but *he enables them to turn to him*; so the gospel of this passage is, that God the Holy Ghost is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts, and then in their lives. What you cannot do of yourself, the Holy Spirit will enable you to do, or will do for you. There is no form of sin which you cannot conquer by the power of the Spirit of God, and that Spirit is freely given to all who sincerely seek his aid. He is here on earth still. On the day of Pentecost, he descended from heaven, and he has never gone back again. "But," says someone, "the Holy Spirit was given to the saints." Yes, I know he was; but he was also given to sinners like yourself, for Peter said to those who were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." I wish that many of you would pray the prayer, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned." You must be turned, by sovereign grace, if you would really turn unto the Lord; and you must forsake your wicked way, and your evil thoughts, if you are to be saved, and you cannot do this of yourself; but the Holy Spirit has been given on purpose to enable you to do it.

There is a further gospel message in the fact that *Jesus Christ himself*

came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in him. One of the simplest declarations of the gospel is, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and one of the last sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ before he went back to heaven was, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and whosoever trusts Christ Jesus, depends upon the merit of his death, relies upon the excellence of his atoning sacrifice, and proves the reality of his faith by confessing it in the Scriptural way, such a man shall assuredly be saved; and, in order to his being saved, he shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by whose almighty power he shall be enabled to conquer the sin that still dwells within him.

Once more,—and this is the part of the gospel that is the best of all,—in order that you might be able to believe that God can have mercy on the guilty, and in order that you might be saved, *God gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin.* I never weary of preaching that glorious truth to you, but I long that, when I have done so, you may close in with Christ, and that Christ may close in with you, that you may be eternally saved. According to the righteous law of God, sin must be punished. Conscience tells you that it is not possible that guilt should go without its due penalty. Therefore it was that Jesus came, and bore the dread penalty that was due to sin. The lash of the law must fall on someone, so he bared his shoulders to its terrible blows. The sword of divine justice was unsheathed, and it must smite someone; so Jesus gave his heart to that sword's point, and quenched the flaming blade in the crimson fountain of his own blood. Now that this has been done, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of everyone who believes in Jesus; and the effect of that atoning sacrifice upon everyone who truly trusts to it is that he finds himself so changed that he hates the sin he formerly loved, he rushes out of the wicked way in which he once delighted, he abhors the thoughts that once charmed him, and he turns to the Saviour whom once he despised.

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Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!

He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. - Hebrews 13:5

What power resides in "Thus saith the Lord!" The man who can grasp by faith, "He hath said," has an all-conquering weapon in his hand. What doubt will not be slain by this two-edged sword? What fear is that which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death, will not the corruptions within and the temptations without, will not the trials from above and the temptations from beneath all seem but light afflictions when we can hide ourselves behind the bulwark of "He hath said?" Whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He hath said" must be our daily resort.

Hence, let us learn, my brethren, the extreme value of searching the Scriptures. There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is near at hand. There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopia of Scripture, and you may still remain sick, though there is the precise remedy that would meet your disease, unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "He hath said." Should we not, beside reading Scripture, store our memories richly with the promises of God? We can recollect the sayings of great men; we treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought we not to be profound in our knowledge of the words of God? The Scriptures should be the classics of a Christian, and as our orators quote Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, when they would clinch a point, so we should be able to quote the promises of God when we would solve a difficulty or overthrow a doubt. "He hath said," is the foundation of all riches and the fountain of all comfort, let it dwell in you richly as "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And, oh, my brethren,

how diligently should we test the Scriptures! Besides searching them by reading, and treasuring them by memory, we should test them by experience, and so often as a promise is proven to be true we should make a mark against it, and note that we also can say, as did one of old, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." "Wait on the Lord," said Isaiah, and then he added "Wait, I say, on the Lord," as if his own experience led him to echo the voice of God to his hearers. Test the promise, take God's banknote to the counter, and mark if it be cashed. Grasp the lever, which he ordains to lift your trials, and try if it possesses real power. Cast this divine tree into the bitter waters of your Marah, and learn how it will sweeten them. Take this salt, and throw it into the turbid waters, and witness if they be not made sweet, as were the waters of old by the prophet Elisha. Taste and see that the Lord is good, for there is no want to them that fear him.

The Apostles, you will notice, like their Master, were always very ready at quotations. Though they were inspired men, and could have used fresh words, yet they preferred, as an example to us, to quote "He hath said;" let us do the same, for, though the words of ministers may be sweet, the words of God are sweeter; and though original thoughts may have the novelty of freshness, yet the ancient words of God have the ring, and the weight, and the value of old and precious coins, and they shall not be found wanting in the day when we shall use them.

It seems from our text that "He hath said" is not only useful to chase away doubts, fears, difficulties, and devils, but that it also yieldeth nourishment to all our graces. You perceive that when the apostle would make us contented, he says, "Be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said;" and when he would make us bold and courageous, he puts it, "He hath said, therefore, we may boldly say, God is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me." When the apostle would nourish faith, he does it by quoting from Scripture the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Gideon, of Barak, and of Jephthah. When he would nourish our patience, he says, "Ye remember the patience of Job;" or if it be our prayerfulness, he says, "Elias was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed and prevailed." "He hath said" is food for every grace as well as death for every sin. Here you have nourishment for that which is

good, and poison for that which is evil. Search ye, then, the Scriptures, for so shall ye grow healthy, strong, and vigorous in the divine life.

We turn at once, with great pleasure, to the wonderful words of our text, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I have no doubt you are aware that our translation does not convey the whole force of the original, and that it would hardly be possible in English to give the full weight of the Greek. We might render it, "He hath said, I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee;" for, though that would be not a literal, but rather a free rendering, yet, as there are five negatives in the Greek, we do not know how to give their force in any other way. Two negatives nullify each other in our language; but here, in the Greek, they intensify the meaning following one after another, as I suppose David's five stones out of the brook would have done if the first had not been enough to make the giant reel. The verse we sung just now is a very good rendering of the original -

"The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

Here you have the five negatives very well placed, and the force of the Greek, as nearly as possible, given.

In trying to expound this five-fold assurance, this quintessence of consolation, we shall have to draw your attention, first of all, to an awful condition, or what is negatived; secondly, to a gracious promise, or what is positively guaranteed; next, we shall observe notable occasions or times when this promise was uttered; a few words upon certain sweet confirmations which prove the text to be true; and then, in the fifth place, necessary conclusions which flow from the words of the promise.

I. First of all, then, AN AWFUL CONDITION—lost and FORSAKEN of God! I am quite certain I shall fail in attempting to describe this state of mind. I have thought of it, dreamed of it, and felt it in such feeble measure as a child of God can feel it, but how to describe it I know not.

1. Forsaking implies an utter loneliness. Put a traveler in a vast howling wilderness, where for many a league there is no trace of man—no footstep of traveler. The solitary wretch cries for help—the hollow echo of the rocks is his only reply. No bird in the air; not even a prowling jackal in the waste; not an insect in the sunbeam to keep him company; not even a solitary blade of grass to remind him of God! Yet, even there he is not alone: for yon bare rocks prove a God, and the hot sand beneath his feet, and the blazing sun above his head, all witness to a present Deity. But what would be the loneliness of a man forsaken of God! No migration could be so awful as this, for he says, "If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea thou art there." Such a state were worse than hell, for David says, "If I make my bed in hell thou art there." Loneliness is a feeling which none of us delight in. Solitude may have some charms, but they who are forced to be her captives have not discovered them. A transient solitude may give pleasure; to be alone, utterly alone, is terrible; to be alone, without God, is such an emphasis of loneliness, that I defy the lip even of a damned spirit to express the horror and anguish that must be concentrated in it. There is far more than you and I dream of in the language of our Lord Jesus, when he says, "I have trodden the wine-press alone." Alone! You remember he once said, "Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." There is no agony in that sentence, but what must be his grief when he says—"I have trodden the wine-press alone!" "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the cry of human nature in its uttermost dismay. Thank God, you and I by this promise are taught that we never shall know the desperate loneliness of being forsaken of God; yet, this is what it would be if he should forsake us!

2. Mingling with this mournful solitude is a sense of utter helplessness. Power belongeth unto God; withdraw the Lord, and the strong men must utterly fail. The archangel without God passes away and is not; the everlasting hills do bow, and the solid pillars of the earth are dissolved. Without God our dust returneth to the earth; without God our spirit mourneth like David, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel." Christ knew what this was when he said, "I am a worm, and no man." He was so utterly broken, so emptied of all power,

that as he hung with dislocated limbs upon the cross, he cried, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; thou hast brought me into the dust of death." No broken reed or smoking flax can be so feeble as a soul forsaken of God. Our state would be as deplorably destitute as that of Ezekiel's infant, deserted and cast into the open field with none to swaddle and none to care for it, left utterly to perish and to die,—such should we be if we could be forsaken of God! Glorious are those negatives which shut us in from all fear of this calamity.

3. To be forsaken of God implies utter friendlessness. A thousand times let Jehovah be blessed that very few of us have ever known what it is to be friendless! There have been times in the experience of some of us when we felt that we stood without a friend in the particular spot which we then occupied, for we had a grief which we could not entrust to any other heart. Every man who is eminently useful in the Church will know seasons when as the champion of Israel he must go forth alone. This, however, is compensated by stronger faith, and the moral grandeur of solitary heroism. But what must it be to be some poor wretch whose parents have long since been buried; who has lost his most distant relatives; who, passing along the street remembers the name of one who was once his father's friend, knocks at the door, and is repulsed; recollects another—and this is his last hope—one he played with in his infancy—stands at that door asking for charity and is bidden to go his way, and paces the cold November streets while the rain is pouring down, feeling to his utter dismay that no friend breathes for him? Should he return to his own parish it would be like going to his own dungeon, and if he enters the workhouse no eye there will flash sympathy upon him! He is utterly friendless and alone! I believe that many a suicide has been produced by the want of a friend. As long as a man feels he has some one loving him, he has something worth living for; but when the last friend is gone and we feel that we are floating on a raft far out at sea, with not a sail in sight, and we cry, "Welcome death!" Our Lord and Master was brought to this state, and knew what it was to be forsaken, for he had no friends left. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." "All the disciples forsook him and fled." Brethren, many saints have lost all their friends, but have bravely borne the trial, for turning their eye to heaven, they have felt that though without friends they were still

befriended. They have heard the voice of Jesus say, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you;" and, made strong by Divine friendship, they have felt that they were not utterly bereaved. But to be forsaken of God! Oh, may you and I never know it! To be without a friend in heaven; to look to that throne of glory and to see the blackness of darkness there; to turn to mercy and receive a frown; to fly to love and receive a rebuke; to turn to God and find that his ear is heavy that he will not hear, and his hand restrained that he will not help—oh! this is terror, terror heaped on terror, to be thus forsaken!

4. Loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness—add these together, and then put the next—hopelessness. A man forsaken of men may still entertain some hope. But let him be forsaken of God, and then hope hath failed; the last window is shut; not a ray of light now streams into the thick Egyptian darkness of his mind. Life is death; death is damnation—damnation in its lowest deeps. Let him look to men, and they are broken reeds; let him turn to angels, and they are avengers; let him look to death, and even the tomb affords no refuge. Look where he will, blank, black despair seizes hold upon him. Our blessed Lord knew this when lover and friend had been put far from him, and his acquaintance into darkness. It was only his transcendent faith which enabled him after all to say "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The black shadow of this utter hopelessness went over him when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and he "sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."

5. To make up this five-fold forsaking, against which we have the five negatives, let us add to all this loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness, and hopelessness, a sense of unutterable agony. We speak of agony, but to feel it is a very different thing. Misery and despair—the wrestling of these with the spirit till the spirit is trodden down, and crushed, and broken, and chooses strangling rather than life; a horrible sense of every evil having made one's heart its den; a consciousness that we are the target for all God's arrows; that all God's waves and billows have gone over us; that he hath forgotten to be gracious; that he will be merciful to us no more; that he hath in anger shut up the bowels of his compassion—this is a part of being forsaken of God which only lost spirits in hell can

know! Our unbelief sometimes lets us get a glimpse of what this would be, but it is only a glimpse, only a glimpse; let us thank God that we are delivered from all fear of this tremendous evil. By five wounds doth our Redeemer slay our unbelief.

Brethren, if God should leave us, mark the result: I picture to myself the very best state of one forsaken of God—it is uncertainty and chance. I would rather be an atom, which hath God with it, predestinating its track and forcing it onward according to his own will, than I would be an archangel left to my own choice, to do as I would and to act at I please, without the control of God; for an archangel, left without God, would soon miss his way, and fall to hell; or he would melt away, and drop and die; but the tiny atom, having God with it, would fulfill its predestinated course; it would be ever in a sure track, and throughout eternity would have as much potence in it as at its first creation. I cannot think why some people are so fond of free-will. I believe free-will is the delight of sinners, but that God's will is the glory of saints. There is nothing I desire more to get rid of than my own will, and to be absorbed into the will and purpose of my Lord. To do according to the will of Him who is most good, most true, most wise, most mighty, seems to me to be heaven. Let others choose the dignity of independence, I crave the glory of being wholly dead in Christ, and only alive in him. Oh! dear friends, if the Lord should forsake us, to say the best of it, our course would be uncertain, and, ere long it would end in nothingness. We know, further, that if God should forsake the best saint alive, that man would immediately fall into sin. He now stands securely on yonder lofty pinnacle, but his brain would reel and he would fall, if secret hands did not uphold him. He now picks his steps carefully; take away grace from him and he would roll in the mire, and wallow in it like other men. Let the godly be forsaken of his God, and he would go from bad to worse, till his conscience, now so tender, would be seared as with a hot iron. Next he would ripen into an atheist or a blasphemer, and he would come to his dying bed foaming at the mouth with rage; would come before the bar of his Maker with a curse upon his lip; and in eternity, left and forsaken of God, he would sink to hell with the condemned, ay, and among the damned he would have the worst place, lower than the lowest, finding in the lowest depths a lower depth, finding in the wrath of God something more dreadful than the ordinary

wrath which falleth upon common sinners!

When we thus describe being forsaken of God, is it not satisfactory to the highest degree to remember that we have God's word for it five times over, "I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee?" I know those who caricature Calvinism say we teach that let a man live as he likes, yet if God be with him, he will be safe at the last. We teach no such thing, and our adversaries know better. They know that our doctrines are invulnerable if they will state them correctly, and that the only way in which they can attack us is to slander us and to misrepresent what we teach. Nay, verily, we say not so, but we say that where God begins the good work, the man will never live as he likes, or if he does, he will like to live as God would have him live; that where God begins a good work he carries it on; that man is never forsaken of God, nor does he forsake God, but is kept even to the end.

II. We have before us now, in the second place, A GRACIOUS PROMISE, or what is positively guaranteed.

What is guaranteed in this promise? Beloved, herein doth God give to his people everything. "I will never leave thee." Then no attribute of God can cease to be engaged for us. Is he mighty? He will show himself strong on the behalf of them that trust him. Is HE love? Then with everlasting lovingkindness will he have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity every one of them to its fullest extent shall be engaged on our side. Moreover, whatsoever God hath, whether it be in the lowest hades or in the highest heaven, whatever can be contained in infinity or can be held within the circumference of eternity, whatever, in fine, can be in him who filleth all things, and yet is greater than all things, shall be with his people for ever, since "He hath said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." How one might enlarge here, but I forbear; ye yourselves know that to sum up "all things" is a task beyond all human might.

III. More fully, however, to expound this promise, I would remind you of the five OCCASIONS in which it occurs in Scripture. The number five runs all through our subject. The sense and spirit of the text are to be

found in innumerable places, and possibly there may be some other passages which approximate so very nearly to our text, that you might say they also are repetitions, but I think there are five which may clearly take the priority.

1. One of the first instances is to be found in Genesis 28:15. "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Here we have this promise in the case of a man of trials. More than either Abraham or Isaac, Jacob was the son of tribulation. He was now flying away from his father's house, leaving the over-fondness of a mother's attachment, abhorred by his elder brother, who sought his blood. He lies down to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, with the hedges for his curtains, with the earth for his bed, and the heavens for his canopy; and as he sleeps thus friendless, solitary, and alone, God saith to him "I will never, never leave thee." Mark his after career. He is guided to Padan-aram; God, his guide, leaves him not. At Padan-aram Laban cheats him, wickedly and wrongfully cheats him in many ways; but God doth not leave him, and he is more than a match for the thievish Laban. He flies at last with his wives and children; Laban, in hot haste pursues him, but the Lord does not leave him; Mizpah's Mount bears witness that God can stop the pursuer, and change the foe into a friend. Esau comes against him; let Jabbok testify to Jacob's wrestlings, and through the power of him who never did forsake his servant, Esau kisses his brother, whom once he thought to slay. Anon Jacob dwells in tents and booths at Succoth; he journeys up and down throughout the land, and his sons treacherously slay the Shechemites. Then the nations round about seek to avenge their death, but the Lord again interposes, and Jacob is delivered. Poor Jacob is bereaved of his sons. He cries—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But they are not against him; God has not left him, for he has not yet done everything that he had spoken to him of. The old man goes into Egypt; his lips are refreshed while he kisses the cheeks of his favourite Joseph, and until the last, when he gathers up his feet in the bed and sings of that coming Shiloh and the scepter that should not depart from Judah, good old Jacob proves that in six troubles God is with his people, and in seven he doth not forsake them; that even

to hoar hairs he is the same, and until old age he doth carry them. You Jacobs, full of affliction, you tried and troubled heirs of heaven, he hath said to you, each one of you—oh! believe him!—I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

2. The next instance in which we find this same promise is in Deuteronomy 31:6. Here we find it spoken, not so much to individuals as to the whole body collectively. Moses said unto the people of Judah, by the Word of God, "Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Beloved, we may take this promise as being spoken to God's Church, as a Church. These people were to fight the accursed nations of Canaan, to drive out the giants, and the men who had chariots of iron, but the Lord said he would never leave them, nor did he, till from Dan to Beersheba the favored race possessed the promised land, and the tribes went up to Jerusalem with the voice of joyful song. Now, as the Church of God, let us remember that the land lieth before us, and we are called of God to go up and possess it. I would it were my lot yet more and more, like Joshua, to lead you from one place to another, smiting the enemies of the Lord and extending the kingdom of Messias! Let us undertake what we may, we shall never fail. Let us, by faith, dare great things, and we shall do great things. Let us venture upon notable exploits which shall seem fanatical to reason and absurd to men of prudence, for he hath said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." If the Church of God would but know that her Lord cannot leave her, she might attempt greater things than she has ever done, and the success of her attempts would be most certain and sure. God never can forsake a praying people, nor cast off a laboring Church; he must bless us even to the end.

3. The third occasion upon which this promise was made is in Joshua 1:5, where the Lord says to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Now this is a minister's text. If we be called to lead the people, to bear the brunt of the fight, the burden and heat of the day, let us treasure up this as our precious consolation, he will not fail us nor forsake us. It needs not that I should tell you that it is

not every man who can stand first in the ranks, and that, albeit there is no small share of honor given by God to such a man, yet there is a bitterness in his lot which no other men can know. There are times when, if it were not for faith, we would give up the ghost, and, were not the Master with us, we would turn our back and fly, like Jonah, unto Nineveh. But if any of you be called to occupy prominent positions in God's Church, bind this about your arm and it shall make you strong; He hath said to you, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Go, in this thy might; the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

4. On the next occasion, this same promise was given by David in his last moments to his son Solomon, 1 Chronicles 28:20. David was speaking of what he himself by experience had proved to be true, and he declares—"Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." Some Christians are placed where they need much prudence, discretion, and wisdom. You may take this for your promise. The Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon; she put to him many difficult questions, but God did not leave him, nor forsake him, and he was able to answer them all. As judge over Israel, many knotty points were brought before him; you remember the child and the harlots, and how wisely he decided the case. The building of the temple was a very mighty work—the like of which the earth had never seen, but, by wisdom given to him, the stones were fashioned, and laid one upon another, till at last the top stone was brought out with shoutings. You shall do the same, O man of business, though yours be a very responsible situation. You shall finish your course, O careful worker, though there are many eyes that watch for your halting. You shall do the same, sister, though you need to have seven eyes rather than two, you shall hear the voice of God saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Thou shalt never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

5. Once more, and perhaps this fifth occasion may be the most comforting to the most of you, Isaiah 41:17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." You may be brought to

this state to-day. Your soul may need Christ, but you may not be able to find him. You may feel that without the mercy which comes from the atoning blood you are lost. You may have gone to works and ceremonies, to prayings and doings, to alms-givings and to experiences, and have found them all dried wells, and now you can hardly pray, for your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth for thirst. Now in your worst condition, brought to the lowest state into which a creature ever can be cast, Christ will not forsake you, he will appear for your help.

Surely, one of these five occasions must suit you, and let me here remind you that whatever God has said to any one saint he has said to all. When he opens a well for one man it is that all may drink. When the manna falls, it is not only for those in the wilderness, but we by faith do eat the manna still. No promise is of private interpretation. When God openeth a granary-door to give out food, there may be some one starving man who is the occasion of its being opened, but all the hungry besides may come and feed too. Whether he gave the word to Abraham or to Moses matters not; he has given it to thee as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for thee; nor a wide mercy too extensive for thee. Lift up now thine eyes to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, for all this is thine. Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise, for the land is all thine own. There is not a brook of living water of which thou mayest not drink. If the land floweth with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk. The fattest of the kine, yea, and the sweetest of the wines, let all be thine, for there is no denial of any one of them to any saint. Be thou bold to believe, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." To put everything in one, there is nothing you can want, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection-morning, nothing in heaven that is not contained in this text—"I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

IV. I shall give five blows to drive home the nail while I speak upon THE SWEET CONFIRMATIONS of this most precious promise.

1. Let me remind you that the Lord will not and cannot leave his people,

because of his relationship to them. He is your Father; will your Father leave you? Has he not said—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Would you, being evil, leave your child to perish? Never, never! Remember, Christ is your husband. Would you, a husband, neglect your wife? Is it not a shame to a man, unless he nourisheth and cherisheth her even as his own body, and will Christ become one of these ill husbands? Hath he not said—"I hate putting away," and will he ever put thee away? Remember, thou art part of his body. No man yet ever hated his own flesh. Thou mayest be but as a little finger, but will he leave his finger to rot, to perish, to starve? Thou mayest be the least honorable of all the members, but is it not written that upon these he bestoweth abundant honor, and so our uncomely parts have abundant comeliness? If he be father, if he be husband, if he be head, if he be all-in-all, how can he leave thee? Think not so hardly of thy God.

2. Then, next, his honor binds him never to forsake thee. When we see a house half-built and left in ruins, we say, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Shall this be said of thy God, that he began to save thee and could not bring thee to perfection? Is it possible that he will break his word, and so stain his truth? Shall men be able to cast a slur upon his power, his wisdom, his love, his faithfulness? No! thank God, no! "I give," saith he "unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." If thou shouldest perish, believer, hell would ring with diabolical laughter against the character of God; and if ever one whom Jesus undertook to save shouldest perish, then the demons of the pit would point the finger of scorn for ever against a defeated Christ, against a God that undertook but went not through.

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

3. And if that be not enough, wilt thou remember besides this that the past all goes to prove that he will not forsake thee. Thou hast been in deep

waters; hast thou been drowned? Thou hast walked through the fires; hast thou been burned? Thou hast had six troubles; hath he forsaken thee? Thou hast gone down to the roots of the mountains, and the weeds have been wrapped about thy head; hath he not brought thee up again? Thou hast borne great and sore troubles; but hath he not delivered thee? Say, when did he leave thee? Testify against him; if thou hast found him forgetful, then doubt him. If thou hast found him unworthy of thy confidence, then disown him, but not till then. The past is vocal with a thousand songs of gratitude, and every note therein proveth by an indisputable logic that he will not forsake his people.

4. And if that be not enough ask thy father and the saints that have gone before. Did ever any perish trusting in Christ? I have heard that some whom Jehovah loved have fallen from grace, and have been lost. I have heard lips of ministers thus prostitute themselves to falsehood, but I know that such never was the case. He keepeth all his saints; not one of them hath perished; they are in his hand, and have hitherto been preserved. David mourneth, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me;" yet, he crieth, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." Jonah laments, "The earth with her bars was about me for ever;" and yet, ere long he says, "Salvation is of the Lord." Ye glorified ones above, through much tribulation ye have inherited the kingdom, and wearing your white robes, ye smile from your thrones of glory and say to us, "Doubt not the Lord, neither distrust him, he hath not forsaken his people nor cast off his chosen."

5. Beloved friends, there is no reason why he should cast us off. Can you adduce any reason why he should cast you away? Is it your poverty, your nakedness, your peril, the danger of your life? In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. Do you say it is your sins? Then I answer sin can never be a cause why God should cast away his people, for they were full of sin when he at first embraced their persons, and espoused their cause. That would have been a cause why he never should have loved them, but having loved them when they were dead in trespasses and sins, their sin can never be a reason for leaving them. Besides, the Apostle says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor

things to come,"—and sin is one of the things present, and I fear it is one of the things to come—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." O child of God, there is no fear of your misusing this precious truth. The base-born professor of godliness may say, "I will sin, for God will not cast me away," but you will not, ye heirs of heaven; rather you will bind this about your heart, and say "Now will I love him who having loved his own, loves them even unto the end." Glory be to God,

"Midst all my sin, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let me go."

Go, ye slaves that fear the curse of God, and sweat and toil; we are his sons, and we know he cannot expel us from his heart. May God deliver us from the infamous bondage of the doctrine which makes men fear that God may be unfaithful, that Christ may divorce his own spouse, may let the members of his own body perish; that he may die for them and yet not save them. If there be any truth taught us in Scripture, it is that the children of God cannot perish. If this Book teaches anything whatever, if it be not all a fiction from beginning to end, it teaches in a hundred places that "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his love cannot depart from us saith the Lord that hath mercy upon us."

V. And now, fifthly, the SUITABLE CONCLUSIONS to be drawn from this doctrine.

1. One of the first is contentment. The apostle says, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Ishmael, the son of Hagar, had his water in a bottle; and he might have laughed at Isaac because Isaac had no bottle, but then here was the difference between them—Isaac lived by the well. Now some of us have little enough in this world; we have no bottle of water, no stock in hand; but then we live by the well, and that is better still. To depend upon the daily providence of a faithful God, is better than to be worth twenty thousand pounds a year.

2. Courage is the next lesson. Let us boldly say, "God is my helper, why should I fear what man can do unto me." A child of God afraid! Why, there is nothing more contrary to his nature. If any would persecute you, look them in the face and bear it cheerfully. If they laugh at you, let them laugh; you can laugh when they shall howl. If any despise you, be content to be despised by fools, and to be misunderstood by madmen. It were hard if the world loved us; it is an easy thing if the world hateth us. We are so used to be spoken of as altogether vile in our motives and selfish in our objects; so used to hear our adversaries misconstrue our best words and pull our sentences to pieces, that if they were to do anything else but howl, we should think ourselves unworthy. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth."

3. Then next, we ought to cast off our despondency. Some of you came here this morning as black as the weather. Just now we saw some gleams of sunshine peering through those side windows, until our friends hastened to draw the blinds, to shut out the dazzling brightness from their eyes; I hope, however, you will not shut out the rays of holy joy which break in upon you now. No, since he has said, "I will never leave nor forsake thee" leave your troubles in your pews, and bear away a song.

4. And then, my brethren, here is argument for the greatest possible delight. How we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable if He will never leave us! Mere songs are not enough; shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

5. And, lastly, what ground there is here for faith! Let us lean upon our God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves upon his faithfulness as we do upon our beds, bringing all our weariness to his dear rest. Now, right on our God let us cast the burdens of our bodies, and our souls, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

Oh, I wish this promise belonged to you all! I would give my right hand if it could! But some of you must not touch it; it does not belong to some of

you, for it is the exclusive property of the man who trusts in Christ. "Oh!" saith one, "then I will trust in Christ." Do it, soul, do it; and if thou trustest in him he will never leave thee. Black as thou art, he will wash thee; he will never leave thee. Wicked as thou art, he will make thee holy, he will never leave thee. Though thou hast nought that should win his love, he will press thee to his bosom; he will never leave thee. Living or dying, in time or in eternity, he will never forsake thee, but will surely bring thee to his right hand, and say, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

May God seal these five negatives upon our memories and hearts for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A New Creation

He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. - Revelation 21:5

Men generally venerate antiquity. It were hard to say which has the stronger power over the human mind - antiquity or novelty. While men will frequently dote upon the old, they are most easily dazzled by the new. Anything new has at least one attraction. Restless spirits consider that the new must be better than the old. Though often disappointed, they are still ready to be caught by the same bait, and, like the Athenians of Mars Hill, spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And as for ourselves, dear friends, mournfully as we sometimes think of the flight of time, we are wont cheerfully to look out upon the new epochs as they begin to dawn upon us. If our calendar suggests some dismal memories in the past, our calculation forestalls some happier prospects in the future. And it will sometimes happen that we leave so much anxiety, adversity, and chastisement behind us, that it is a relief to hope that the tide has turned, and that a course of comfort, prosperity,

and mercy lies before us. One weeps over the past and the lost. I suppose the best of men must do so at times. I am sure those of us who are not the best, feel often constrained to pour out some such a lamentation as this: -

"Much of our time has run to waste;
Our sins, how great the sum!
Lord, give us pardon for the past,
And strength for days to come."

I do not know but it is sometimes as well, when one has been plunged in sorrow, or feels ashamed of his past life - after having regretted that which is bygone and repented of it, and sorrowed over it - to feel as if he breathed another atmosphere, and had started on a fresh career. Having thrown away the old sword, he is now about to see what he can do with the new: having put off an old garment, he is desirous to walk more worthily of his vocation with fresh ones that are provided for him. Perhaps the thought of freshness, the fact of new time having dawned on our path, may be a little help to those of us who are dull and heavy, and we may be stirred up to action, or, if not to action, it may awaken earnest hope that the infusion of a new start into our lives, new vigour instead of the old lethargy, new love instead of the old lukewarmness, new zeal instead of the old deathlikeness; new, pertinacious, persevering industry for Christ, instead of the old idleness, may result. God grant that it may be so!

Looking at the text in this light, I think it speaks to everyone here present - Would you begin anew, lo, there is one who can help you to do so! From the throne where sits the once crucified but now glorified Saviour, there comes a whisper of hope to each and every soul who would be made new, and would begin life anew. "Behold I make all things new." In trying to bring out the thoughts contained in this exclamation from the throne, from the Emperor of the Universe, from the court of the King of Kings, we shall first speak, very briefly, of the new creation; secondly, we should bid you adore the great Regenerator; and, in the third place, we shall ask you to behold with attention the fact before you, with a view of receiving benefit from it. Observe the text speaks of: -

I. A NEW CREATION.

"I make." That is a divine word. "I make all things." That, also, is divine. "I make all things new." This our Lord Jesus Christ has done upon the greatest scale. We must view his purpose. It is the purpose and intention of the Lord Jesus to make this world entirely new. You recollect how it was made at first - pure and perfect. It sang with its sister-spheres the song of joy and reverence. It was a fair world, full of everything that was lovely, beautiful, happy, holy. And if we might be permitted to dream for a moment of what it would have been if it had continued as God created it, one might fancy what a blessed world it would be at this moment. Had it possessed a teeming population like its present one, and if, one by one, those godly ones had been caught away, like Elijah, without knowing death, to be succeeded by pious descendants - oh! what a blessed world it would have been! A world where every man would have been a priest, and every house a temple, and every garment a vestment, and every meal a sacrifice, and every place holiness to the Lord, for the tabernacle of God would have been among them, and God himself would have dwelt among them! What songs would have hailed the rising of the sun - the birds of paradise carolling on every hill and in every dale their Maker's praise! What songs would have ushered in the stillness of the night! Ay, and angels, hovering over this fair world, would oft have heard the strain of joy breaking the silence of midnight, as glad and pure hearts beheld the eyes of the Creator beaming down upon them from the stars which stud the vault of heaven. But there came a serpent, and his craft spoiled it all. He whispered into the ears of a mother Eve; she fell, and we fell with her, and what a world this now is! If a man walks about in it with his eyes open, he will see it to be a horrible sphere. I do not mean that its rivers, its lakes, its valleys, its mountains are repulsive. Nay, it is a world fit for angels, naturally; but it is a horrible world morally. As I walked the other day down the streets of Paris, and saw the soldiers with their pretty dresses, and the knives and forks which they carried with them to carve men and make a meal for death, I could not help thinking - this is a pretty world, this is. Only let one man lift his finger, and a hundred thousand men are ready to meet a hundred thousand other men, all intent upon doing - what? Why, upon cutting each other's throats, upon tearing out each other's bleeding hearts, and wading up to their knees in each other's

gore, till the ditches be full of blood, horses and men all mingled, and left to be food for dogs and for carrion crows. And then the victors on either side in the fray, return, and beat the drums, and sound the trumpets, and say, "Glory! glory! see what we have done." Devils could not be worse than men when their passions are let loose. Dogs would scarce tear each other as men do. Men of intellect sit down, and put their fingers to their foreheads, racking their brains to find out new ways of using gunpowder, and shot, and shell, so as to be able to blow twenty thousand souls into eternity as easily as twenty might be massacred by present appliances. And he is considered a clever man, a patriot, a benefactor of his own nation, who, by dint of genius, can discover some new way of destroying his fellow creatures. Oh! it is a horrible world, appalling to think of. When God looks at it, I wonder he does not stamp it out, just as you and I do a spark of coal that flies upon our carpet from the fire. It is a dreadful world. But Jesus Christ, who knew that we should never make this world much better, let us do what we would with it, designed from the very first to make a new world of it. Truly, truly, this seems to me to be a glorious purpose. To make a world is something wonderful, but to make a world new is something more wonderful still. When God spake and said, "Let there be light," it was a fiat which showed him to be divine. Yet there was nothing then to resist his will; he had no opponent; he could build as he pleased, and there was none to pluck down. But when Jesus Christ comes to make a new world, there is everything opposed to him. When he saith, "Let there be light," darkness saith, "There shall not be light." When he says, "Let there be order," chaos says, "Nay, I will maintain confusion." When he says, "Let there be holiness, let there be love, let there be truth," the principalities and powers of evil withstand him, and say, "There shall not be holiness, there shall be sin; there shall not be love, there shall be hate; there shall not be truth, there shall be error; there shall not be the worship of God, there shall be the worship of stocks and stones; men shall bow down before idols which their own hands have made." And yet, for all that, Jesus Christ, coming in the form of a man, revealing himself as the Son of God, determines to make all things new; and be assured, brethren and sisters, he will do it. What though he pleases to take his time, and to use humble instrumentalities to effect his purposes, yet do it he will. The day shall come when this world shall be as fair as it was at the primeval Sabbath; when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth,

wherein shall dwell righteousness. The ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled to the letter. God shall dwell among men, peace shall be domiciled on earth, and glory shall be ascribed to God in the highest. This great work of Christ, this grand design of making this old world into a new one, shall be carried into effect.

In order to accomplish this, it hath come to pass that Christ has made for us a new covenant. The old covenant was, "Do this and live." That covenant was a sentence of death upon us all. We could not do, therefore we could not live, and so we died. The new covenant has nothing in it contingent upon creature doing, but it bases all its provisions upon Christ having done the world. "I will, and you shall," this is the language of the new covenant. The covenant of law, in which we were weak through the flesh, left us mangled and broken. The covenant of grace reveals God's kindness towards us, and our part thereof has been fulfilled for us by our surety, Christ Jesus. Thus it runs, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever; a new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." The old world is still under the old covenant of works, and its children perish, for they cannot carry out the conditions of the covenant, they cannot keep God's law, they break it constantly, and they die. But the children of grace are under the new covenant of grace, and through the precious blood, which is the penalty of the old broken covenant, and through the spotless righteousness of Christ, which is the fulfilment and magnifying of the old covenant, the Christian stands secure, and rejoices that he is saved. Christ has thus made his people dwell under a new covenant, instead of under the old one.

In addition to the new covenant, Christ has been pleased to make us new men. His saints are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." They have a new nature. God has breathed into them a new life. The Holy Spirit, though the old nature is still there, has been pleased to put within them a new nature. There is now a contending force within them - the old carnal nature inclining to evil, and the new God-given nature panting after perfection. They are new men, "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This new nature is moved by new principles. The old nature needed to be awed with threatenings, or bribed with rewards; the new nature feels the impulse of love. Gratitude

is its mainspring: "We love him because he first loved us." No mercenary motive now stirs the new creature: -

"My God, I love thee - not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love thee not
Must burn eternally."

I love thee, O my Saviour, because on the cross thou didst bear shame, and spitting, and manifold disgrace for me. New principles stir the new nature which God has given. And this new nature is conscious of new emotions. It loves what once it hated; it hates what once it loved. It finds blight where once it sought for bliss, and finds bliss where once it found nothing but bitterness. It leaps at the sound which was once dull to its ears - the name of a precious Christ. It rejoices in hopes which once seemed idle as dreams. It is filled with a divine enthusiasm which it once rejected as fanatical. It is conscious now of living in a new element, breathing a fresh air, partaking of new food, drinking out of new wells not digged by men or filled from the earth. The man is new - new in principles, and new in emotions.

And now the man is also new in relationship. He was an heir to wrath; he is now a child of God. He was a bond-slave; he is now a freeman. He was the Ishmael who dwelt in the wilderness; he is now the Isaac, and dwells with Sarah after the tenor of the new covenant. He rejoices in Christ Jesus, and feasts to the full. He was the citizen of earth once; he is now a citizen of heaven. He once found his all beneath the clouds; but now his all is beyond the stars. He has new relationships. Christ is his brother; God is his father; the angels are his friends; and the despised people of God are his best and nearest kinsfolk. And hence the man has new aspirations. He now pants to glorify God. What cared he about the glory of God once? He now pants to see God; once he would have paid the fare, if it had cost his life, that he might escape from the presence of the Lord. Now he hungers and thirsts after the living God; yea, if his soul had wings, and he could break the fetters of this mortality, he would mount at once to dwell where Jesus is. Dear friends, are you new men? If you are, you understand what it is; if you are not, I know I cannot explain it to

you. Oh! to be born again is a great mystery; blessed is the soul that comprehends it! But he that knows it not will never learn it by the lip; he can only know it by the Spirit of God causing him also to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Thus far I have said that the object of Christ was to make a new world, and he began by making a new covenant. Then, through his Spirit, he goes on to make new men under the new covenant, and you will see that by this means he makes a new society. Swelling words have been spoken and great attempts taken in hand to renovate society, but you can never renovate society till you have renovated the individual members who compose society. You may build a brick house, if you please; but, build it as you like, it will be a house of brick upon whatever principles of architecture it may be constructed; not until that brick shall be transformed to marble can you hope to "dwell in marble halls." So men may launch their divers theories, and patent their social inventions, but after they have re-shaped the society of sinners, they will leave it a sinful society still. It is otherwise with Christ. By making new men he makes a new society, which society he calls his "Church". That Church he sends into the world to act upon the rest of mankind. Verily the day will come - whether it shall be at his second advent or before his second advent, I do not know - the day when from the east to the west, and from the north to the south, there shall be a new world as far as men are concerned. There shall be no injustice towards the poor; there shall be no envying of the rich; there shall be no law to make men slaves; there shall be no power to oppress, because there shall be no will to do it. Our Lord Jesus Christ shall put a new heart into earth's kings, and then he shall come himself to take their thrones and their crowns, and to be himself our Universal King, and in his day shall the righteous flourish.

Now I believe the way for us to regard that happy day in which he will make all things new; that happy day when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the sword shall be turned into the sickle, and the spear into the pruning hook - the way for us to regard that day, I think, is not standing with our mouths open expecting it, but by setting to work after the Master's own fashion, seeking to bring it about, to gather out the elect from mankind, to

illustrate the gospel practically in our lives, and so to do as Jesus did among the sons of men; promoting light, and peace, and truth, and holiness, and happiness as God may help us.

I wish we had more time to enter fully into this part of the subject. We have not, and, therefore, we must leave it, but may you and I have a part in this new creation! Turning to our second point, I want you to: -

II. ADORE THIS GREAT REGENERATOR.

He says, "Behold I make all things new." Behold him! He is a man dressed in the common garments of the poor! He hath no form nor comeliness, and when you shall see him there is no beauty in him that you should desire him. He has come to make the world new. He has no soldiery, no book of laws, no new philosophy. He had come to make the world new, and to do this he has brought with him - what? Why, himself. He spends a life of weariness and sorrow amongst those who despise him, and if you want to know first and foremost how he makes all things new, you must see him sweating great drops of blood in the garden - that is the blood of the new world which he is pouring forth! You must see him bound, scourged, spat upon, led to the accursed tree. While God's wrath for sin is yet unspent, the world cannot be new; but when that wrath on account of sin is all poured upon the head of the great Substitute, then the world stands in a new relation to God, and it can be a new world. See the Saviour then, in groans and pangs which cannot be described, bearing the curse of God, for he made him to be sin for us, though he knew no sin. The curse fell on him, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; he hath made his soul to be an offering for sin." That dolorous pain, then, of the Master was the world's new- making. It was then and there that the world was born again. No mother's pangs, when she brought forth a man-child, were such as those of Christ when he brought forth the new creation. It was there in the travail of his soul - did you ever catch that idea, the travail of his soul? - it was there that the new world was born! "Behold I make all things new" is a mysterious voice from the broken heart of a dying Saviour. From the empty tomb, as he rises, I hear it come in silvery notes, "Behold I make all things new." You must trace the birth

of the new creation up to the grave of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the place where the cross stood, and where his body lay.

But the actual operations of new-making the world takes place through the truth which Christ promulgated. After the relation of the world to God had been changed by the sufferings of Jesus, the world's thought concerning God came to be changed by the preaching of Jesus. He came and revealed God to man as man had never seen God before. It was through him we learned that "God is love." It was through him that we understood that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the preaching of the cross of Jesus that is to make the world new. It is not the philosophies of men, but the wisdom of God which effects the change. In the presence of Christ your philosophies must sink into darkness as stars in the presence of the sun.

And it is also by the giving of the Holy Ghost, as the result of the ascension of Christ on high, that the world is made new. Thus he gives power to the ministry. There were three thousand new creations in one day when Peter preached the gospel under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And that blessed Spirit of God is here tonight. Oh! I would that there might be some new creations tonight, that that divine heavenly Spirit would come into some of your souls, and drop there that vital spark of heavenly flame which shall never be quenched, but shall burn brightly in heaven for ever. Wherever the gospel is preached, the Spirit is present in that gospel, and he gives faith to men, gives life to men, and so they are made new, and the new-making thus goes on.

I have not time - though thoughts crowd into my mind - to speak about the way in which Christ thus new-makes the world. It is quite certain that three parts of his history are connected with it. I have only referred to his death, his burial, and his resurrection, but I might go on to speak of his constant and prevalent intercessions, for his pleading before the throne is also a part of the mighty operation; nor can I doubt but that his Second Advent will be the bringing out of the topstone with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it!" Then shall be fulfilled - finally and exhaustively fulfilled - the saying that is written, "Behold I make all things new." The text begins

with "Behold!" and I am going to close with that same note of admiration. I want you to: -

III. BEHOLD AND TO BELIEVE.

Behold, the Lord Jesus is now enthroned in heaven. He it is who makes all things new. Is not this what some of you here present deeply need? If you look within, yourselves will see much to disgust and alarm you. Peradventure, you dare not take stock of yourselves now; you dare not consider where you are, nor what you are, nor whither you are bound. "To speak candidly," you say, "I want reforming." Very likely, but you want a great deal more than mere reformation. I have heard of a being who used habitually to swear, "God mend me!" Somebody said, "Better make a new one." That is the case with full many of you. You are saying, "Well, I will turn over a new leaf." You had better shut the book up altogether, and never turn over any more leaves, for all the pages are alike bad. "Oh! well," says one, "I shall try if I cannot alter." I wish you would try God's altering of you, instead of altering yourselves. "Well, but surely, surely, I may wash and be clean; I will try to make myself as clean as possible?" Yes, yes, that is all very well; but what if you have a corpse in the house? I would have you make it clean, yet that will not make it live. However much you may wash it, it is corrupt still. You may reform yourselves as much as ever you please, all your reformation will be futile; you need more, a great deal more than that. The fact is, you must be made new. Nothing less will do; you must be made new; you must be born again. "Ah!" says one, "if I could be made new, there might be a chance for me." Well now, Christ looks down from this throne in heaven, and he says, "Behold I will make all things new." "Yes," you say, "but he will not make me new." Why not? Does he not say, "I make all things new"? "But my heart is as hard as a rock," say you. Well, but he says, "I will make all things new," so he can give you a new heart. "Oh! but I am so very stubborn. Aye, aye, but he makes all things new, and he can make you as tender and sensitive as a little child. Oftentimes a grey-headed sinner has looked back to his childhood, and remembered the time when he used to sing his little hymn at his mother's knee, and he has said, 'Ah! I have been in many strange places since then, and my heart has got seared and hard; I wish I could get back to what I was then!'" Well, you can, you can. Christ

can bring you there. Nay, he can bring you to something better than you ever were when those golden ringlets hung so plentifully about that pretty little head of yours, for you were not so innocent then as you now think you were. Christ can make you really pure in heart; he can make you a new creature, so that you shall be converted and become as a little child. "Oh!" say you, "how can I get it? How can I prepare myself for him?" You do not want to prepare yourself for him. God to him just as you are; trust him to do it, and he will do it. That is faith, you know - trust, dependence. Canst thou believe that Christ can save thee? Oh! thou canst believe that; well now, wilt thou trust him to save thee? Wilt thou trust him to deliver thee from thy drunkenness, from thine angry temper, thy pride, thy love of self, thy lusts? Dost thou desire to be a new creature in Christ Jesus? If so, that very desire must have come from heaven. I could fain hope that he has already begun the good work in you, and he that begins it will carry it on. Do not be afraid, however bad thy character, or however vicious thy disposition. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." What a wonder it is that a man should ever have a new heart! You know if a lobster loses its claw in a fight it can get a new claw, and that is thought to be very marvellous. It would be very wonderful if men should be able to grow new arms and new legs, but who ever heard of a creature who grew a new heart? You may have seen a bough lopped off a tree, and you may have thought that, perhaps, the tree will sprout again, and there will be a new limb, but who ever heard of old trees getting new sap and a new core? But my Lord and Master, the crucified and exalted Saviour, has given new hearts and new cores; he has put the vital substance into man afresh, and made new creatures of them. I am glad to notice the tear in your eye, when you think on the past, but wipe it away now, and look up to the cross and say: -

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb, O God, I come."

"Oh! make me a new creature!" If you have said that from your heart, you are a new creature, dear brother, and we will rejoice together in this regenerating Saviour.

Let me just say a few words to those of you who love the Lord. You may have some very bad children, or you have some relatives who are going on in sin from bad to worse. I earnestly recommend you attentively to consider my text. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." "No, no," says the old father, "I used to pray for my boy; he broke my heart; he brought his mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; but he has gone away, and I have not heard of him for years, and I am almost afraid to wish I ever may hear of him again, for he did seem so reckless, that my only comfort is in trying to forget him." "Yes," says a husband here, "I have prayed for my wife o many times, that I do feel tempted to give it up; it is not likely that I shall ever live to see her saved." Oh! but, brethren and sisters, we do not know; since the Lord saved us, there cannot be any limits as to what he can do. Look at the text, "Behold I make all things new." I will pray, "Lord, make my children new." You shall pray, "Lord, make my wife new." You godly wives, who have ungodly husbands, you shall pray, "Lord, make our husbands new." You who have dear friends who lie upon your bosom, as you anxiously think of them, pray the Lord Jesus to make them new. When our friends are made new, oh! what a great comfort they are; just as much so as they formerly were a sorrow. The greater the sinner, the greater the joy to loving believers when they see him saved. "Behold," says Christ - I do like that word - "Behold it! Stand and look at it! See how I took the man when he was up to his neck in sin, and made him preach the gospel. Can I not do the same again? Look there and see the dying thief upon the cross, black with a thousand crimes: I washed him and took him to Paradise the same day; what can I not do? Behold I make all things new." Courage, my brethren and sisters. We will not entertain any more doubt about Christ's power to save. Rather, by God's grace, may we henceforth believe more in him, and, according to our faith, so shall it be done unto us. If we can only trust him for those of our friends whose faults seem to us few and light, our little trust will reap little reward; but if we can go with strong faith in a great God, and bring great sinners in our arms, and put them down before this mighty Regenerator of men, and say, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make them new"; and if we will never cease the pleading till we get the blessing, then we shall see ever-accumulating illustrations of the fact that Jesus makes all things new; and calling up the witnesses of his redeeming

power, we shall cry in the ears of a drowsy Church and an incredulous world, "Behold, behold, behold! He makes all things new." The Lord give us eyes to see it. Amen.

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The New Heart

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. - Ezekiel 36:26

Behold a wonder of divine love. When God maketh his creatures, one creation he regardeth as sufficient, and should they lapse from the condition in which he has created them, he suffers them, as a rule, to endure the penalty of their transgression, and to abide in the place into which they are fallen. But here he makes an exception; man, fallen man, created by his Maker, pure and holy, hath wilfully and wickedly rebelled against the Most High, and lost his first estate, but behold, he is to be the subject of a new creation through the power of God's Holy Spirit. Behold this and wonder! What is man compared with an angel? Is he not little and insignificant? "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." God hath no mercy upon them; he made them pure and holy, and they ought to have remained his, but inasmuch as they wilfully rebelled, he cast them down from their shining seats for ever; and without a single promise of mercy, he hath bound them fast in the fetters of destiny, to abide in eternal torment. But wonder, ye heavens, the God who destroyed the angels stoops from his highest throne in glory, and speaks to his creature man, and thus saith unto him, "Now, thou hast fallen from me even as the angels did; thou hast grossly erred, and gone astray from my ways—not for thy sake do I this, but for mine own name's sake—behold I will undo the mischief which thine own hand hath done; I will take away that heart which has rebelled against me. Having made thee once, thou hast unmade thyself—I will make thee over again. I will put my hand a second time to the work; once more shalt thou revolve upon the pottery wheel, and *I will make thee* a vessel of honor, fit for my gracious use. I will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh; a new heart will I give thee; a new spirit will I put within thee." Is not this a wonder of divine sovereignty

and of infinite grace, that mighty angels should be cast into the fire for ever, and yet God hath made a covenant with man that he will renew and restore him?

And now, my dear friends I shall attempt this morning, first of all, to show *the necessity for the great promise contained in my text*, that God will give us a new heart and a new spirit, and after that, I shall endeavor to show *the nature of the great work which God works in the soul, when he accomplishes this promise; afterwards, a few personal remarks to all my hearers.*

I. In the first place, it is my business to endeavor to show THE NECESSITY FOR THIS GREAT PROMISE. Not that it needs any showing to the quickened and enlightened Christian; but this is for the conviction of the ungodly, and for the humbling of our carnal pride. O that this morning the gracious Spirit may teach us our depravity, that we may thereby be driven to seek the fulfillment of this mercy, which is most assuredly and abundantly necessary, if we would be saved. You will notice that in my text God does not promise to us that he will improve our nature, that he will mend our broken hearts. No, the promise is that he will give us new hearts and right spirits. Human nature is too far gone ever to be mended. It is not a house that is a little out of repair, with here and there a slate blown from the roof, and here and there a piece of plaster broken down from the ceiling. No, it is rotten throughout, the very foundations have been sapped; there is not a single timber in it which has not been eaten by the worm, from its uppermost roof to its lowest foundation; there is no soundness in it; it is all rottenness and ready to fall. God doth not attempt to mend, he does not shore up the walls, and re-paint the door; he does not garnish and beautify, but he determines that the old house shall be entirely swept away, and that he will build a new one. It is too far gone, I say, to be mended. If it were only a little out of repair, it might be mended. If only a wheel or two of that great thing called "manhood" were out of repair, then he who made man might put the whole to rights; he might put a new cog where it had been broken off, and another wheel where it had gone to ruin and the machine might work anew. But no, the whole of it is out of repair; there is not one lever which is not broken; not one axle which is not disturbed; not one of the wheels

which act upon the others. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, it is all wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. The Lord, therefore, does not attempt the repairing of this thing; but he says, "I will give you a new heart, and a right spirit will I put within you; I will take away the heart of stone, I will not try to soften it, I will let it be as stony as ever it was, but I will take it away, and I will give you a new heart, and it shall be a heart of flesh."

Now I shall endeavor to show that God is justified in this, and that there was an abundant necessity for his resolution so to do. For in the first place, if you consider what human nature has been, and what it is, you will not be very long before you will say of it, "Ah, it is a hopeless case indeed."

Consider, then, for a moment how bad human nature must be if we think how ill it has treated its God. I remember William Huntingdon says in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt after he had been quickened by divine grace was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very expressive one; although I might prefer to say sympathy with God and grief that he should be so evil entreated. Ah, my friends, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows; but there never was a man who was so despised as the everlasting God has been. Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never one was treated as our God has been. Let us look back upon our past lives—how ungrateful have we been to him! It was he who gave us beings and the first utterance of our lips should have been in his *praise*; and so long as we were here, it was our duty to have perpetually sung his glory; but Instead of that, from our birth we spoke that which was false and untrue, and unholy; and since then we have continued to do the same. We have never returned his mercies into his bosom with gratitude and thankfulness; but we have let them lie forgotten without a single hallelujah, from our carelessness concerning the Most High, that he had entirely forgotten us, and that therefore we were trying to forget him. It is so very seldom that we think of him that one would imagine that surely he never gave us occasion to

think of him. Addison said, -

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

But I think if we look back with the eye of penitence we shall be lost in wonder shame, and grief, for our cry will be, "What! could I treat so good a friend so ill? Have I had so gracious a benefactor, and have I been so unmindful of him; and so devoted a father, and yet have I never embraced him? Have I never given him the kiss of my affectionate gratitude? Have I never studied to do something whereby I might let him know that I was conscious of his kindness, and that I felt a grateful return in my bosom for his love?"

But worse than this, we have not only been forgetful of him, but we have rebelled against him. We have assailed the Most High. If we knew that anything was God-like we hated it at once; we have despised his people, we have called them cants, and hypocrites, and Methodists. We have despised his day; he set it apart on purpose for our good, and that day we take for our own pleasure and our own labor instead of consecrating it to him. He gave us a book as a love-token. and he desired us to read it, for it was full of love to us; and we have kept it fast closed till the very spiders have spun their cobwebs over the leaves. He opened a house of prayer and bade us go there, and there would he meet with us and speak to us from off the mercy seat; but we have often preferred the theater to God's house and have been found listening to any sound rather than the voice which speaketh from heaven.

Ah, my friends, I say again there never was a man treated by his fellow-creatures, even by the worst of men, so bad as God has been, and yet while men have been ill-treating him, he has still continued to bless them; he has put breath into the nostrils of man, even while he has been cursing him; has given him food to eat even while he has been spending the strength of his body in warfare against the Most High; and on the very Sabbath, when you have been breaking his commandment and spending

the day on your own lusts, it is he who has given light to your eyes, breath to your lungs, and strength to your nerves and sinews; blessing you even while you have been cursing him. Oh! it is a mercy that he is God and changeth not, or else we sons of Jacob would long ago have been consumed, and justly too.

You may picture to yourselves, if you like, a poor creature dying in a ditch. I trust that such a thing never happens in this land, but such a thing might happen as a man who had been rich on a sudden becoming poor, and all his friends deserting and leaving him; he begs for bread and no man will help him, until at last, without a rag to cover him, his poor body yields up life in a ditch. This, I think, is the very extreme of human negligence to mankind; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was treated even worse than this. It would have been a thousand mercies to him if they had permitted him to die unregarded in a ditch; but that would have been too good for human nature. He must know the very worst, and therefore God allowed human nature to take Christ and nail him to the tree. He allowed it to stand and mock his thirst and offer him vinegar, and taunt and jeer him in the extreme of his agonies; it allowed human nature to make him its jest and scorn, and stand staring with lascivious and cruel eyes upon his stripped and naked body.

Oh! shame on manhood: never could there have been a creature worse than man. The very beasts are better than man, for man has all the worst attributes of the beasts and none of their best. He has the fierceness of the lion without its nobility; he has the stubbornness of an ass without its patience; he has all the devouring gluttony of the wolf, without the wisdom which bids it avoid the trap. He is a carrion vulture but he is never satisfied; he is a very serpent with the poison of asps beneath his tongue, but he spits his venom afar off as well as nigh. Ah, if you think of human nature as it acts towards God, you will say indeed it is too bad to be mended, it must be made anew.

Again, there is another aspect in which we may regard the sinfulness of human nature: that is its *pride*. It is the very worst phase of man—that he is so proud. Beloved, pride is woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, and we shall never get rid of it until we are wrapped in our

winding sheet. It is astonishing, that when we are at our prayers—when we try to make use of humble expressions, we are betrayed into pride. It was but the other day, I found myself on my knee, making use of such an expression as this: "O Lord, I grieve before thee, that ever I should have been such a sinner as I have been. Oh that I should ever have revolted and rebelled as I have done." There was pride in that; for who am I? Was there any wonder in it? I ought to have known that I was myself so sinful that there was no wonder that I should have gone astray. The wonder was, that I had not been even worse and there the credit was due to God, not to myself. So that when we are trying to be humble, we may be foolishly rushing into pride. What a strange thing it is to see a sinful, guilty wretch proud of his morality! and yet that is a thing you may see every day. A man who is an enemy to God, proud of his honesty, and yet he is robbing God; a man proud of his chastity, and yet if he knew his own thoughts, they are full of lasciviousness and uncleanness; a man proud of the praise of his fellows, while he knows himself that he has the blame of his own conscience and the blame of God Almighty. It is a wild, strange thing to think that man should be proud, when he has nothing to be proud of. A living, animated lump of clay—defiled and filthy, a living hell, and yet proud. I, a base-born son of one that robbed his Master's garden of old, and went astray and would not be obedient; of one that sunk his whole estate for the paltry bribe of a single apple! and yet proud of my ancestry! I, who am living on God's daily charity to be proud of my wealth! when I have not a single farthing with which to bless myself, unless God chooses to give it to me. I, that came naked into this world, and must go naked out of it. I, proud of my riches—what a strange thing! I, a wild asses colt, a fool that knoweth nothing, proud of my learning! Oh, what a strange thing, that the fool called man, should call himself a doctor, and make himself a master of all arts when he is a master of none, and is most a fool when he thinks his wisdom culminates to its highest point. And oh, strangest of all, that man who has a deceitful heart—full of all manner of evil concupiscence, and adultery, idolatry, and lust, should yet talk about being a good-hearted fellow, and should pride himself upon having at least some good points about him, which may deserve the veneration of his fellows, if not, some consideration from the Most High. Ah, human nature, this is, then, thine own condemnation, that thou art insanely proud, while thou hast nothing to be proud of. Write "Ichabod"

upon it. The glory has departed for ever from human nature. Let it be put away, and let God give us something new for the old can never be made better. It is helplessly insane, decrepid, and defiled.

Furthermore, it is quite certain that human nature cannot be made better, for many have tried it, but they have always failed. A man, trying to improve human nature, is like trying to change the position of a weathercock, by turning it round to the east when the wind is blowing west; he has but to take his hand off and it will be back again to its place. So have I seen a man trying to restrain nature—he is an angry bad-tempered man, and he is trying to cure himself a bit and he does, but it comes out, and if it does not burn right out, and the sparks do not fly abroad, yet it burns within his bones till they grow white with the heat of malice and there remains within his heart a residuum of the ashes of revenge. I have seen a man trying to make himself religious, and what a monstrosity he makes himself in trying to do it, for his legs are not equal, and he goes limping along in the service of God; he is a deformed and ungainly creature, and all who look at him can very soon discover the inconsistencies of his profession. Oh! we say, it is vain for such a man to try to appear white, as well might the Ethiopian think he could make his skin appear white by applying cosmetics to it, or as well might the leopard think that his spots might be brushed away as for this man to imagine that he can conceal the baseness of his nature by any attempts at religion.

Ah, I know I tried a long time to improve myself, but I never did make much of it; I found I had a devil within me when I began, and I had ten devils when I left off. Instead of becoming better, I became worse; I had now got the devil of self-righteousness, of self-trust, and self-conceit, and many others had come and taken up their lodging-place. While I was busy sweeping my house, and garnishing it, behold the one that I sought to get rid of, and which had only gone for a little season, returned and brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in and dwelt there. Ah, you may try and reform, dear friends, but you will find you cannot do it, and remember even if you could, still it would not be the work which God requires; he will not have reformation, he will have renovation, he will have a new heart, and not a heart changed a little for the better.

But, once again, you will easily perceive we must have a new heart when you consider what are the employments and the enjoyments of the Christian religion. The nature that can feed on the garbage of sin, and devour the carrion of iniquity, is not the nature that ever can sing the praises of God and rejoice in his holy name. The raven yonder has been feeding on the most loathsome food, do you expect that she shall have all the kindness of the dove and toy with the maiden in her bower. Not unless you could change the raven into a dove; for as long as it is a raven its old propensities will cling to it and it will be incapable of anything above the raven's nature. Ye have seen the vulture gorge to his very full with the very filthiest of flesh, and do you expect to see that vulture sitting on the spray singing God's praises with its hoarse screaming and croaking throat? and do you imagine you will see it feeding like the barn-door fowl on the clean grain, unless its character and disposition be entirely changed? Impossible. Can you imagine that the lion will lie down with the ox, and eat straw like the bullock, so long as it is a lion? No; there must be a change. You may put on it the sheep's clothing but you cannot make it a sheep unless the lion-like nature be taken away. Try and improve the lion as long as ye like—Van Amburgh himself, if he had improved his lions for a thousand years, could not have made them into sheep. And you may try to improve the raven or the vulture as long as you please, but you cannot improve them into a dove—there must be a total change of character, and you ask me, then, whether it can be possible for a man that has sung the lascivious song of the drunkard, and has defiled his body with uncleanness, and has cursed God, to sing the high praises of God in heaven as well as he who has long loved the ways of purity and communion with Christ? I answer, no, never, unless his nature be entirely changed. For if his nature remain what it is, improve it as you may, you can make nothing better of it. So long as his heart is what it is, you can never bring it to be capable of the high delights of the spiritual nature of the child of God. Therefore, beloved, there must assuredly be a new nature put into us.

And yet once again, and I will have concluded upon this point. God hates a depraved nature, and therefore it must be taken away, before he can be accepted in him. God does not hate our sin so much as he does our

sinfulness. It is not the overflowing of the spring, it is the well itself. It is not the arrow that doth shoot from the bow of our depravity; it is the arm itself that doth hold the bow of sin, and the motive that wings the arrow against God. The Lord is angry not only against our overt acts, but against the nature which dictates the acts. God is not so short-sighted as merely to look at the surface, he looks at the source and fountain. He saith, "in vain shall it be, though thou shouldst make the fruit good, if the tree remain corrupt. In vain shalt thou attempt to sweeten the waters, so long as the fountain itself is defiled." God is angry with man's heart; he has a hatred against man's depraved nature, and he will have it taken away, he will have it totally cleansed before he will admit that man into any communion with himself—and above all, into the sweet communion of Paradise. There is, therefore, a demand for a new nature, and that we must have, or otherwise we can never see his face with acceptance.

II. And now it shall be my joyful business to endeavor, in the second place, to set before you very briefly THE NATURE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS IN US.

And, I may begin by observing, that it is a *divine* work from first to last. To give a man a new heart and a new spirit is God's work, and the work of God alone. Arminianism falls to the ground when we come to this point. Nothing will do here but that old-fashioned truth men call Calvinism. "*Salvation is of the Lord alone;*" this truth will stand the test of ages and can never be moved, because it is the immutable truth of the living God. And all the way in salvation we have to learn this truth, but especially when we come here to this particular and indispensable part of salvation, the making of a new heart within us. That must be God's work; man may reform himself, but how can man give himself a new heart? I need not enlarge upon the thought it will strike you in a moment, that the very nature of the change, and the terms in which it is mentioned here, put it beyond all power of man. How can man put into himself a new heart, for the heart being the motive power of all life, must exert itself before anything can be done? But how could the exertions of an old heart bring forth a new heart? Can you imagine for a moment a tree with a rotten heart, by its own vital energy, giving to itself a new young heart? You cannot suppose such a thing. If the heart were originally right, and the

defects were only in some branch of the tree, you can conceive that the tree, through the vital power of its sap within its heart, might rectify the wrong. We have heard of some kind of insects that have lost their limbs, and by their vital power have been able to recover them again. But take away the seat of the vital power—the heart, lay the disease there, and what power is there that can, by any possibility, rectify it, unless it be a power from without—in fact, a power from above? Oh, beloved, there never was a man yet, that did so much as the turn of a hair towards making himself a new heart. He must lie passive there—he shall become active afterwards—but in the moment when God puts a new life into the soul, the man is passive: and if there be aught of activity, it is an active resistance against it, until God, by overcoming victorious grace, gets the mastery over man's will.

Once, again, this is a *gracious* change. When God puts a new heart into man, it is not because man deserves a new heart—because there was anything good in his nature, that could have prompted God to give him a new spirit. The Lord simply gives a man a new heart because he wishes to do it; that is his only reason. "But," you say, "suppose a man cries for a new heart?" I answer, no man ever did cry for a new heart until he had got one, for the cry for a new heart proves that there is a new heart there already. But, says one "Are we not to seek for a right spirit?" Yes, I know it is your duty,—but I equally know it is a duty you will never fulfill. You are commanded to make to yourselves new hearts, but I know you will never attempt to do it, until God first of all moves you thereunto. As soon as you begin to seek a new heart, it is presumptive evidence that the new heart is there already in its germ, for there would not be this germinating in prayer, unless the seeds were there before it.

"But," says one, "suppose the man has not a new heart, and were earnestly to seek one, would he have it?" You must not make impossible suppositions; so long as the man's heart is depraved and vile, he never will do such a thing. I cannot, therefore, tell you what might happen, if he did what he never will do. I cannot answer your suppositions; if you suppose yourself into a difficulty you must suppose yourself out of it. But the fact is, that no man ever did, or ever will seek a new heart, or a right spirit, until, first of all, the grace of God begins with him. If there be a

Christian here, who began with God, let him publish it to the world; let us hear for once that there was a man who was beforehand with his Maker. But I have never met with such a case; all Christian people declare that God was first with them, and they will all sing,

"Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

It is a gracious change, freely given without any merit of the creature, without any desire or good-will coming beforehand. God doeth it of his own pleasure, not according to man's will.

Once more, it is a *victorious* effort of divine grace. When God first begins the work of changing the heart, he finds man totally averse to any such a thing. Man by nature kicks and struggles against God; he will not be saved. I must confess I never would have been saved, if I could have helped it. As long as ever I could I rebelled and revolted, and struggled against God. When he would have me pray, I would not pray: when he would have me listen to the sound of the ministry, I would not. And when I heard, and the tear rolled down my cheek, I wiped it away and defied him to melt my heart. When my heart was a little touched, I tried to divert it with sinful pleasures. And when that would not do I tried self-righteousness, and would not then have been saved, until I was hemmed in, and then he gave me the effectual blow of grace, and there was no resisting that irresistible effort of his grace. It conquered my depraved will, and made me bow myself before the scepter of his grace. And so it is in every case. Man revolts against his Maker and his Saviour; but where God determines to save, save he will. God will have the sinner, if he designs to have him. God never was thwarted yet in any one of his purposes. Man does resist with all his might, but all the might of man, tremendous though it be for sin, is not equal to the majestic might of the Most High, when he rideth forth in the chariot of his salvation. He doth irresistibly save and victoriously conquer man's heart.

And furthermore, this change is *instantaneous*. To sanctify a man is the

work of the whole life; but to give a man a new heart is the work of an instant in one solitary second, swifter than the lightning flash, God can put a new heart into a man, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. You may be sitting where you are to-day, an enemy to God, with a wicked heart within; hard as a stone, and dead and cold; but if the Lord wills it, the living spark shall drop into your soul, and in that moment you will begin to tremble—begin to feel; you will confess your sin, and fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God's sovereign, effectual, and irresistible grace.

III. Now we have in this subject a grand field of hope and encouragement to the very vilest of sinners. My hearers, let me very affectionately address you pouring out my heart before you for a moment or two. There are some of you here present who are seeking after mercy, for many-a-day you have been in prayer in secret, till your very knees seemed sore with the oftenness of your intercession. Your cry to God has been, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Let me comfort you by this reflection, that your prayer is already heard. You have a new heart and a right spirit; perhaps you will not be able to perceive the truth of this utterance for months to come, therefore continue in prayer till God shall open your eyes, so that you may see that the prayer is answered; but rest assured it is answered already. If thou hatest sin, that is not human nature; if thou longest to be a friend of God, that is not human nature; if thou desirest to be saved by Christ, it is not human nature if thou desirest that without any stipulations of thine own, if thou art this day willing that Christ should take thee to be his own, to have and to hold, through life and through death, if thou art willing to live in his service, and if needful to die for his honor, that is not of human nature—that is the work of divine graces. There is something good in thee already; the Lord hath begun a good work in thy heart, and he will carry it, on even unto the end. All these feelings of thine are more than thou ever couldst have attained of thyself. God has helped thee up this divine ladder of grace, and as sure as he has brought thee up so many staves of it, he will carry thee to the very summit, till he grasps thee in the arms of his love in glory everlasting.

There are others of you here however, who have not proceeded so far, but you are driven to despair. The devil has told you that you cannot be saved; you have been too guilty, too vile. Any other people in the world might find mercy, but not you, for you do not deserve to be saved. Hear me then, dear friend. Have I not tried to make it as plain as the sunbeam all through this service, that God never saves a man for the sake of what he is, and that he does not either begin or carry on the work in us because there is anything good in us. The greatest sinner is just as eligible for divine mercy as the very least of sinners. He who has been a ringleader in crime, I repeat, is just as eligible for God's sovereign grace, as he that has been a very paragon of morality. For God wants nothing of us. It is not as it is with the ploughman; he does not desire to plough all day upon the rocks, and send his horses upon the sand; he wants a fertile soil to begin with, but God does not. He will begin with the rocky soil, and he will pound that rocky heart of yours until it turns into the rich black mould of penitential grief, and then he will scatter the living seed in that mould, till it brings forth a hundredfold. But he wants nothing of you, to begin with. He can take you, a thief, a drunkard, a harlot, or whoever you may be; he can bring you on your knees, make you cry for mercy, and then make you lead a holy life, and keep you unto the end. "Oh!" says one, "I wish he would do that to me, then." Well, soul, if that be a true wish, *he will*. If thou desirest this day that thou shouldst be saved, there never was an unwilling God where there was a willing sinner. Sinner, if thou willest to be saved, God willeth not the death of any, but rather that they should come to repentance; and thou art freely invited this morning to turn thine eye to the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ has borne the sins of men, and carried their sorrows; thou art bidden to look there, and trust there, simply and implicitly. Then thou art saved. That very wish, if it be a sincere one, shows that God has just now been begetting thee again to a lively hope. If that sincere wish shall endure, it will be abundant evidence that the Lord hath brought thee to himself, and that thou art and shall be his.

And now reflect every one of you—you that are not converted—that we are all this morning in the hands of God. We deserve to be damned: if God damneth us, there is not a single word that will be heard against his doing it. We cannot save ourselves; we lie entirely in his hands; like a

moth that lies under the finger, he can crush us now, if he pleases, or he can let us go and save us. What reflections ought to cross our mind, if we believe that. Why, we ought to cast ourselves on our faces, as soon as we reach our homes, and cry, "Great God, save me, a sinner! Save me! I renounce all merit for I have none; I deserve to be lost; Lord, save me, for Christ's sake;" and as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, there is not one of you that shall do this who shall find my God shut the gates of mercy against you. Go and try him, sinner; go and try him! Fall upon thy knees in thy chamber this day, and try my Master. See if he will not forgive you. You think too harshly of him. He is a great deal kinder than you think he is. You think he is a hard master, but he is not. I thought he was severe and angry, and when I sought him, "Surely," I said, "if he accepteth all the world beside, he will reject me." But I know he took me to his bosom; and when I thought he would spurn me for ever, he said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins," and I wondered how it was, and I do wonder now. But it shall be so in your case. Only try him, I beseech thee. The Lord help thee to try him, and to him shall be the glory, and to thee shall be happiness and bliss, for ever and ever.

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The New Nature

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. - 1 Peter 1:23-25

Peter had earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other "with a pure heart fervently," and he wisely fetches his argument, not from the

law, nor from nature, nor from philosophy, but from that high and divine nature which God hath implanted in his people. Love each other with a pure heart fervently, for ye have been born again, not with corruptible seed, but with incorruptible. I might compare Peter to some judicious tutor of the princes of the blood, who labors to beget and foster a kingly spirit in the king's sons. From their position and descent he brings argument for a dignified behavior: "Do not act foolishly, it would be unseemly in a king; speak not so, ribald language would be unbecoming to a prince; indulge not in these vanities, such folk would be degrading to the illustrious of the earth." So looking upon God's people, as being heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth's true and only real aristocracy, Peter saith to them, "See that ye love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of flesh shall fade, and even its very existence shall cease. I think it would be well, my brethren, if in a spirit of humility, you and I recognized the free dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. Oh! what is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king's royalty often lieth only in his crown, but with a Christian it is infused into his very nature. Compare him with a senator, with a mighty warrior, or a master of wisdom, and he far excelleth them all. He is of another race than those who are only born of woman. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as man is above the beast that perisheth. As humanity towers in dignity high above the grovelling brute, so doth the regenerate man o'ertop the best of human once-born mortals. Surely he ought to bear himself, and act as one who is not of the multitude, one who has been chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among "the peculiar people," and who therefore cannot grovel as others grovel, nor own think as others think. Let the dignity of your nature, and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, make you cleave to holiness, and hate the very appearance of evil.

In the text there are three points which, I think, will well repay our very serious attention. The apostle evidently speaks of two lives, the one, the life which is natural, born, matured, and perfected only by the flesh; the

other, the life which is spiritual, born of the spirit, in antagonism with the flesh, surviving it and triumphantly rising to celestial glory. Now, in speaking of these two lives, the apostle brings out, first of all, a comparison and a contrast between the two births, for each life hath its own birth. Then he brings out a contrast between the manifest existence of the two lives; and then lastly, between the glory of the two lives, for each life hath its glory, but the glory of the spiritual life far excelleth the glory of the natural.

I. First, then, the apostle Peter draws A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS WHICH ARE THE DOORWAYS OF THE TWO LIVES.

First, we have said that every life is prefaced by rib birth. It is so naturally—we are born; it is so spiritually—we are born again. Except a man be born he cannot enter into the kingdom of nature; except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Birth is the lowly gateway by which we enter into life, and the lofty portal by which we are admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

Now there is a comparison between the two births; in both there is a solemn mystery. I have read, I have even heard sermons, in which the minister seemed to me rather to play the part of a physician than of a divine, exposing and explaining the mysteries of our natural birth, across which both God in nature and the good man in delicacy must ever throw a veil. It is a hallowed thing to be born, as surely as it is a solemnity to die. Birthdays and deathdays are days of awe. Birth is very frequently used in Scripture as one of the most graphic pictures of solemn mystery. Into this, no man may idly pry, and Science herself, when she has dared to look within the veil, has turned back awestricken, from those "lower parts of the earth" in which David declares us to be "curiously wrought." Greater still is the mystery of the new birth. That we are born again we know, but how, we cannot tell. How the Spirit of God openeth upon the mind, how it is that he renews the faculties and imparts fresh desires by which those faculties should be guided, how it is that he enlightens the understanding, subdues the will, purifies the intellect, reverses the desire, lifts up the hope, and puts the fear in its right channel, we cannot tell, we

must leave this among the secret things which belong unto God. The Holy Ghost worketh, but the manner of his operation is not to be comprehended. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Oh! my hearers, have you felt this mystery? Explain it you cannot, nor can I, nor ought we to attempt an explanation, for where God is silent it is perhaps profanity, and certainly impertinence for us to speak. The two births then are alike in their solemn mystery.

But, then, we know this much of our natural birth, that in birth there is a life created. Yonder infant is beginning his being, another creature has lifted up its feeble cry to heaven, another mortal has come to tread this theater of action, to breathe, to live, to die. And so in the new birth, there is an absolute creation, we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, there is another spirit born to pray, to believe in Christ to love him here, and to rejoice in him hereafter. As no one doubts but that birth is the manifestation of a creation, so let no one doubt but that regeneration is the manifestation of a creation of God, as divine, as much beyond the power of man, as the creation of the human mind itself.

But we know also that in birth there is not only a life created, but a life communicated. Each child hath its parent. The very flowers trace themselves back to a parental seed. We spring, not from our own loins, we are not self-created, there is a life communicated. We have links between the son and the father, and back till we come to father Adam. So in regeneration there is a life, not merely created, but communicated, even the very life of God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope. As truly as the father lives in the child, so truly doth the every life and nature of God live in every Swiss born heir of heaven. We are as certainly partakers of the divine nature by the new birth as we were partakers of the human nature by the old birth: so far the comparison holds good.

Equally certain is it, that in the natural and in the spiritual birth there is life entailed. There are certain propensities which we inherit, from which this side the grave we shall not be free. Our temperament brave or gay, our passions slow or hasty, our propensities sensual or aspiring, our

faculties contracted or expansive are to a great measure an entailed inheritance as much linked to our future portion as are wings to an eagle or a shell to a snail. No doubt much of our history is born within us, and the infant hath within himself germ of his future actions. If I may so speak, there are those qualities, that composition and disposition of nature which will naturally, if circumstances assist, work out in full development certain results. So is it with us when we are born again: a heavenly nature is entailed upon us. We cannot but be holy; the new nature cannot but serve God, it must, it will pant to be nearer to Christ, and more like him. It hath aspirations which time cannot satisfy, desires which earth cannot surfeit, longings which heaven itself alone can gratify. There is a life entailed upon us in the moment when we pass from death unto life in the solemn mystery of regeneration.

In the old birth, and in the new birth also, a life is also brought forth which is complete in all its parts and only needs to be developed. Yon infant in the oracle shall never have another limb, or another eye. Its limb hardens, it grows, it gathers strength, its brain also enlarges its sphere, but the faculties are there already, they are not implanted afterward. Verily, so is it in the new-born child of God. Faith love, hope, and every grace are there the moment he believes in Christ. They grow 'tis true, but they were all there in the instant of regeneration. The babe in grace who is just now born to God, hath every part of the spiritual man, it only needs to grow till he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Thus far, you perceive, that the two births have a very close resemblance to one another. I pray you, now that I have introduced the subject, do not turn from it till you have thought of the reality of the new birth, as you must of the reality of the first. You were not here if you had not been born, you shall never be in heaven unless you are born again, you had not been able to-day to hear, or think, or see, if you had not been born. You are not to-day able to pray or to believe in Christ, unless you are born again. The enjoyments of this world you could never have known, if it had not been for birth, the saved delight of God you do not know to-day, and you never shall know unless you be born again. Do not look upon regeneration as though it were a fancy or a fiction. I do assure you, my hearers, it is as real as is the natural birth; for spiritual is not the same as

fanciful, but the spiritual is as real as even nature itself. To be born again is as much a matter of fact to be realised, to be discerned, and to be discovered, as to be born for the first time into this vale of tears.

But now comes the contrast—"being born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Herein lieth the contrast between the two. That child which has just experienced the first birth has been made partaker of corruptible seed. The depravity of his parent lieth sleeping within him. Could he speak, he might say so. David did,—*"Behold, I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity."* He receiveth the evil virus which was first infused into us by the fall. Not so, however, is it when we are born again. No sin is then sown within us. This sin of the old flesh remains but there is no sin in the newborn nature, it cannot sin because it is born of God himself; it is as impossible for that new nature to sin as for the Deity itself to be defiled. It is a part of the divine nature—a spark struck off from the rental orb of light and life, and dead or dark it cannot be, because it would be contrary to its nature to be either the one or the other. Oh, what a difference! In the first birth—born to sin, in the next—born to holiness; in the first—partakers of corruption, in the next—heirs of incorruption in the first—depravity, in the second—perfection. What broader contrast could there be! What should make us more thoroughly long for this new birth than the glorious fact that we are by its means consciously lifted up from the ruins of the fall, and made perfect in Christ Jesus.

In the birth of the flesh too, what dread uncertainties attend it! What shall become of yonder child? It may live to curse the day in which it was born, as did the poor troubled patriarch of old. What sorrow may drive its ploughshares along its yet unwrinkled brow? Ah! child, thou shalt be gray-headed one day, but ere that comes thou shalt have felt a thousand storms beating about thine heart and head. Little dost thou know thy destiny, but assuredly thou shalt be of few days and full of trouble. Not so in the regeneration, we shall never rue the day in which we are born again, never look back upon that with sorrow, but always with ecstasy and delight, for we are ushered then, not into the hovel of humanity, but into the palace of Deity. We are not then born into a valley of tears, but into an inheritance in the Canaan of God.

That child too, so fondly the object of its mother's love may one day vex or break its parent's heart. Are not children doubtful mercies? Bring they not with them sad forebodings of what they yet may be? Alas for the pretty prattlers who have grown up to be convicted criminals! But blessed be God, they who are sons of God shalt never break their father's heart. Their new nature shall be worthy of Him that gave it existence. They shall live to honor him, they shall die to be perfectly like him, and shall rise to glorify him for ever. We have sometimes said that God her a very naughty family, but surely the naughtiness is in the old Adam nature, and not in Jehovah's gracious work. There is no naughtiness in the new creature. In that new creature there is no taint of sin. God's child as descended from his loins, can never sin. The new nature which God hath put into it doth never wander, death never transgress. It were not the new nature if it did, it were not God's offspring, if it all, for that which cometh of God is like Him, holy, pure, and undefiled, separate from sin. In this indeed lieth a strange difference. We know not to what that first nature tendeth, who can tell what bitterness it shall bring forth? But we know whither the new nature tendeth, for it ripeneth towards the perfect image of Him that created us in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps without my endeavoring to enlarge further you could yourselves muse upon this theme. It remains but for me upon this first head to return with earnestness to that point upon which I fear the greatest difficulty lies—the realisation of this birth—for we repeat it, we are speaking of a fact and not a dream, a reality and not metaphor.

Some tell you that the child is regenerated when the drops fall from priestly fingers. My brethren, a more fond and foul delusion was never perpetrated upon earth. Rome itself did never discourse upon a wilder error than this. Dream not of it. O think not that it is so. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord himself addresses this sentence not to an infant but to a fullgrown man. Nicodemus—one who was circumcised according to the Jewish law, but who yet, though he had received the seal of that covenant, needed as a man to be born again. We all without exception must know this change. Your life may have been moral, but it will not suffice. The most moralised human nature can never attain to the divine nature. You may cleanse and

purge the fruit of the first birth, but still the inevitable decree demands the second birth for all. If from your youth up you have been so trained that you have scarcely known the vices of the people; so tended, hedged in, and kept from contamination with sin, that you have not known temptation, yet you must be born again, and this birth, I repeat it, must be as much a fact, as true, as real, and as sure as was that first birth in which you were ushered into this world. What do you know of this, my hearer? What do you know of this? It is a thing you cannot perform for yourself. You cannot regenerate yourself any more than you could cause yourself to be born. It is a matter out of the range of human power it is supernatural, it is divine. Have you partaken of it? Do not merely look back to some hour in which you felt mysterious feelings. No, but judge by the fruits. Have your fears and hopes changed places? Do you love the things you once hated, and hate the things you once loved? Are old things passed away? Have all things become new? Christian brethren, I put the query to you as well as to the rest. It is so easy to be deceived here. We shall find it no trifle to be born again. It is a solemn, it is a momentous matter. Let us not take it for granted because we have given up drunkenness that we are therefore converted, because we do not swear, because now we attend a place of worship. There is more wanted than this. Do not think you are saved because you have some good feelings, some good thoughts. There is more required than this—ye must be born again. And oh, Christian parents, train up your children in the fear of God, but do not be content with your training—they must be born again. And Christian husbands, and Christian wives, be not satisfied with merely praying that your partner's characters may become moral and honest; ask that something may be done for them which they cannot do for themselves. And you, philanthropists, who think that building new cottages, using fresh plans for drainage, teaching the poor economy, will be the means of emparadising the world; I pray you go further than such schemes as these. You must change the heart. It is but little use to alter the outward till you have renewed the inward. It is not the bark of the tree that is wrong so much as the sap. It is not the skin—it is the blood—nay, deeper than the blood—the very essence of the nature must be altered. The man must be as much made anew as if he never had an existence. Nay, a greater miracle than this, these must be two miracles combined—the old things must pass away, and new things must be created by the

Holy Ghost. I tremble while I speak upon this theme, lest I, your minister, should know in theory but not in experience a mystery so sublime as this. What shall we do but together offer a prayer like this—"O God, if we be not regenerate let us know the worst of our state, and if we be, let us never cease to plead and pray for others till they too shall be renewed by the Holy Ghost." That which is born of the flesh is flesh; its best endeavors go no higher than flesh, and the flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit alone is spirit, and only the Spirit can enter into spiritual things, inherit the spiritual portion which God has provided for his people. I have thus passed through the somewhat delicate and extremely difficult task of bringing out the apostle's meaning—the comparison between the two births, which are the door-steps of the two lives.

II. I now come to the second point—THE MANIFEST DIFFERENCE OF THE TWO LIVES RESULTING FROM THE TWO BIRTHS.

Brethren, look around you. To what shall we compare this immense assembly? As I look upon the many colors, and the varied faces, even if it were not in the text, I am certain that a meadow thickly besprinkled with flowers would rise up before my imagination. Look at the mass of people gathered together, and doth it not remind you of the field in its full summer glory, when the king-cups, daisies, cloves, and grass blooms, are sunning themselves in countless varieties of beauty? Ay, but not only in the poet's eye is there a resemblance, but in the mind of God, and in the experience of man. "All flesh is grass;" all that is born of the first birth, if we compare it to grass in poetry, may be compared to it also in fact, from the frailty and shortness of its existence. We passed the meadows but a month ago, and they were moved in verdant billows by the breeze like waves of ocean when they are softly stirred with the evening gale. We looked upon the whole scene, and it was exceeding fair. We passed it yesterday and the mower's scythe had cut asunder beauty from its roots, and there it lay in heaps ready to be gathered when fully dry. The grass is cut down so soon, but if it stood, it would wither, and handfuls of dust would take the place of the green and coloured leaves, for doth not the grass wither and the flowers thereof fall avidly? Such is mortal life. We are not living, brethren, we are dying. We begin to breathe, and we make

the number of our breaths the less. Our pulse is "beating funeral marches to the tomb." The sand runs down from the upper bulb of the glass, and it is emptying fast. Death is written upon every brow. Man, know that thou art mortal, for thou art born of woman. Thy first birth gave thee life and death together. Thou dost only breathe awhile to keep thee from the jaws of the grave, when that breath is spent, into the dust of death thou tallest there and then. Everything, especially during the last few weeks, has taught us the frailty of human life. The senator who guided the affairs of nations and beheld the rise of a free kingdom, lived not to see it fully organized, but expired with many a weighty secret unspoken. The judge who has sentenced many, receives his own sentence at the last. From this earth, since last we met together, master-minds have been taken away, and even the monarch on his throne has owned the monarchy of Death. How many of the masses too have fallen, and have been carried to their long home! There have been funerals, some of them funerals of honored men who perished doing their Master's will in saving human life, and alas, there have been unhonoured burials of others who did the will of Satan, and have inherited the flame. There have been deaths abundant on the right hand and on the left, and well have Peter's words been proved—"All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away."

Now, brethren, let us look at the other side of the question. The second birth gave us a nature too—Will that also die? Is it like grass, and its glory like the flower of the field? No, most certainly not. The first nature dies because the seed was corruptible. But the second nature was not created by corruptible seed, but with incorruptible, even the Word of God into which God has infused his own life, so that it quickens us by the Spirit. That incorruptible word produces an incorruptible life. The child of God in his new nature never dies. He can never see death. Christ, who is in him, is the immortality and the life. "He that liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die." And yet again, "Though he were dead yet shall he live." When we are born again, we receive a nature which is indestructible by accident, which is not to be consumed by fire, drowned by riveter, weakened by old age, or smitten down by blast of pestilence; a nature invulnerable to poison; a nature which shall not be destroyed by the sword; a nature which can never die till the God that gave it should

himself expire and Deity die out. Think of this, my brethren, and surely you will find reason to rejoice. But perhaps, you ask me, why it is the new nature can never die? I am sure the text teaches it never can. "But not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." If that does not teach that the spiritual nature which is given us by the new birth never dies, it does not teach anything at all; and if it does teach that, where goes Arminian doctrine of falling from grace; where go your Arminian fears of perishing after all? But let me show you why it is that this nature never dies. First, from the fact of its nature. It is in itself incorruptible. Every like produces in like. Man, dying man, produces dying man; God, eternal God, produces everlasting nature when he begets again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy:" the earthy dies, we who are earthy die too. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly," the heavenly never dies, and if we are born as the heavenly, the heavenly nature dieth neither. "The first Adam was made a living soul." We are made living souls too, but that soul at last is separated from the body. "The second Adam is made a quickening spirit," and that spirit is not only alive but quickening. Do you not perceive it?—the first was a quickened soul—quickened, receiving life full a season; the second is a quickening spirit, giving out life, rather than receiving it; like that angel whom some poet pictures, who perpetually shot forth sparklers of fire, having within himself an undying flame, the fountain of perpetual floods of light and heat. So is it with the new nature within us, it is not merely a quickened thing which may die, but a quickening thing which cannot die, being Snide like unto Christ the quickening Spirit. But then, more than this, the new nature cannot die, because the Holy Spirit perpetually supplies it with life. "He giveth more grace"—grace upon grace. You know the apostle puts it thus: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." Is not the Holy Spirit the divine agent by whom the life of Christ is infused into us? Now, the life-floods which the Holy Spirit sends into us, co-work with the immortality of the new-born spirit, and so doubly preserve the eternity of our bliss. But then, again, we are in vital union with Christ, and to suppose that the new nature could die out, were to imagine that a member of Christ would die, that a finger, a hand, an arm, could rot from

the person of Jesus, that he could be maimed and divided. Doth not the apostle say, "Is Christ divided?" And was it not written, "Not a bone of him shall be broken?" and how were this true, if we were broken from him, or rolled from his body? My brethren, we receive the divine sap through Christ the stem that divine sap keeps us alive but more the very fact that we are joined to Christ preserves our life, "Because I live ye shall live also." The new life cannot die, because God is pledged to keep it alive. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." And yet again, "The water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And yet again, "He that believeth in me shall never hunger and never thirst." And so might we repeat multitudes of passages where the divine promise engages omnipotence and divine wisdom, to preserve the new life. So then, let us gather these all up in one. As a man born of the flesh, I shall die, as a new man born of the Spirit, I shall never die. Thou, O flesh, the offspring of flesh thou shalt see corruption. Thou, O spirit, new-created spirit, offspring of the Lord corruption thou shalt never see. With our glorious Covenant Head we may exclaim "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." I shall die, yet never die. My life shall flee, yet never flee. I shall pass away, and yet abide; I shall be carried to the tomb, and yet, soaring upward, the tomb can ne'er contain the quickened Spirit. Oh, children of God, I know not any subject that ought more thoroughly to lift you out of yourselves than this. Now let the divine nature live in you; come, put down the animal for a moment, put down the mere mental faculty; let the living spark blaze up; come, let the divine element, the newborn nature that God has given to you, let that now speak, and let its voice be praise; let it look up and let it breathe its own atmosphere, the heaven of God, in which it shall shortly rejoice. O God, our Father, help us to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, seeing that we have by thine own self been quickened to an immortal life.

III. I now come to the last, and perhaps the most interesting point of all. THE GLORY OF THE TWO NATURES IS CONTRASTED. Every nature has its glory. Brethren, look at the field again. There is not only the grass but there is the flower which is the glory of the field. Sometimes many

coloured hues begem the pastures with beauty. Now, the painted flower is the glory of the verdant field. It conies up later than the grass, and it dies sooner, for the grass is up a long while before the flower blooms, and when the flower is dead, the stalk of the grass still retains vitality. It is precisely so with us. Our nature has its glory, but that glory does not arrive for years. The babe has not yet the glory of full manhood, and when that glory does come, it dies before our nature dies, for "they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few." The man loses his glory and becomes a tottering imbecile before life becomes extinct. The flower comes up last and dies first, our glory comes last and dies first, too. O flesh! O flesh! what contempt is passed upon thee! Thy very existence is frail and feeble, but thy glory more frail and feeble still. It grows but late and then it dies, alas how soon! But what is the glory of the flesh? Give me your attention for a moment while I tell you briefly. In some, the glory of the flesh is BEAUTY. Their face is fair to look upon, and as the handiwork of the Great Worker, it should be admired. When a person becometh vain of it, beauty becomes shame; but to have well-proportioned features is, doubtless, no mean endowment. There is a glory in the beauty of the flesh, but how late it is developed, and how soon it fades! How soon do the cheeks become hollow! how frequently does the complexion grow sallow, and the bright eyes are dimmed, and the comely visage is marred! A part, too, of the glory of the flesh is physical strength. To be a strong man, to have the bones well set and the muscles well braced,—to have good muscular vigor is no small thing. Many men take delight in the legs of a man, and in the strength of his arm. Well, as God made him, he is a wonderful creature, and 'twere wrong for us not to admire the masterpiece of God. But how late does muscular strength arrive! There are the days of infancy, and there are the days of youth, when as yet the strong man is but feeble; and then, when he has had his little hey-day of strength, how doth the stalwart frame begin to rock and reel! and the rotting teeth and the whitened hair show that death has begun to claim the heriot clay, and will soon take possession of it for himself "The glory thereof falleth away." To others, the glory of the flesh lies rather in the mind. They have eloquence, they can so speak as to enchant the ears of the multitude. The bees of eloquence have made their hives between the lips of the orator, and honey distils with every word. Yes, but how late is this a coming! How

many years before the child speaks articulately, and before the young man is able to deliver himself with courage! And then, how soon it goes!—till, mumbling from between his toothless jaws, the poor man would speak the words of wisdom, but the lips of age deny him utterance. Or, let the glory be wisdom. There is a man whose glory is his masterly power over others. He can foresee and look further than other men, he can match craft by craft: he is so wise that his fellows put confidence in him. This is the glory of the flesh; how late is it in coming!—from the puking child, what a distance up to the wise man! And then how soon it is gone! How often, while yet the man himself in his flesh is in vigor has the mind strewn symptoms of decay! Well, take what ye will to be the glory of the flesh, I will still pronounce over it "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." If the flesh be frail, the glory of the flesh is frailer still, if the grass wither, certainly the flower of the grass withereth before it.

But is this true of the new nature? Brethren, is this true of that which was implanted at the second birth? I have just shown you, I think, that the existence of the new nature is eternal, because it was not born of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. I have tried to show that it can never perish and can never die. But your unbelief suggests, "Perhaps its glory may." No, its glory never can. And what is the glory of the new-born nature? Why, its glory first of all is beauty. But what is its beauty? It is to be like the Lord Jesus. We are, when we shall see him as he is, to be like him. But that beauty shall never fade, eternity itself shall not hollow the cheeks of this seraphic comeliness, nor dim the brilliant eye of this celestial radiance. We shall be like Christ, but the likeness shall ne'er be marred by time, nor consumed by decay. I said just now that the glory of the flesh consisted sometimes in its strength, so does the glory of the Spirit consist in its vigor, but then it is a force that never shall be expended. The strength of the new-born nature is the Holy Ghost himself, and while Deity remains omnipotent, our new nature shall go on increasing in vigor till we come first to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and next come to be glorified men standing before his throne. The flower of the new nature you cannot see much of yet, you see through a glass darkly. That flower of glory consists perhaps, too, in eloquence. "Eloquence," say you, "how can that be?" I said the glory of the old nature might be eloquence, so with the new, but this is the

eloquence—"Abba Father." This is an eloquence you can use now. It is one which when you cannot speak a word which might move an audience, shall still remain upon your tongue to move the courts of heaven. You shall be able to say, "Abba Father," in the very pangs of death, and waking from your beds of dust and silent clay, more eloquent still you shall cry, "Hallelujah," you shall join the eternal chorus, swell the divine symphony of cherubim and seraphim, and through eternity your glory shall never part awry. And then, if wisdom be glory, your wisdom, the wisdom which you inherit in the new nature, which is none other than Christ's who is made of God unto us, wisdom shall never fade, in fact it shall grow, for there you shall know even as you are known. While here you see through a glass darkly, there you shall see face to face. You sip the brook to-day, you shall bathe in the ocean tomorrow; you see afar off now, you shall lie in the arms of wisdom by-and-bye; for the glory of the Spirit never dies, but throughout eternity expanding, enlarging, blazing, gloryfying itself through God, it shall go on never, never to fail. Brethren, whatever it may be which you are expecting as the glory of your new nature, you have not yet an idea of what it will be. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But though he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, yet, I fear we have not fully learned them. However, we will say of this glory, whatever it may be, it is incorruptible, undefiled, and it fadeth not away. The only question we have to ask, and with that we wish, is—are we born again? Brethren, it is impossible for you to possess the existence of the new life without the new birth, and the glory of the new birth you cannot know without the new heart. I say—are you born again? Do not stand up and say, "I am a Churchman, I was baptized and confirmed." That you may be, and yet not be born again. Do not say, "I am a Baptist, I have professed my faith and was immersed." That you may be, and not be born again Do not say, "I am of Christian parents." That you may be, and yet be an heir of wrath, even as others. Are you born again be Oh! souls, may God the Holy Ghost reveal Christ to you, and when you come to see Christ with the tearful eyes of a penitential faith, then be it known unto you that you are born again and that you have passed from death unto life, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." God help you to believe!

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A New Order Of Priests And Levites

And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. -
Isaiah 66:21

This chapter is surrounded with critical difficulties, and yet it is full of spiritual instruction. The verse before us is by some referred to Gentiles, and supposed to mean that the Lord promises that he will take out of the heathen nations a people whom he will make into priests and Levites. Others would say it points to the Jews, rejected for their unbelief and dispersed in judgment among all nations. When their own Messiah came, it was not with a devout faith, but with a profane imprecation, they said, "His blood be on us, and on our children." The curse they invoked did come upon them. The retribution they challenged has been meted out to them in full measure. To the letter it was verified. Have you never read how, when Titus was besieging Jerusalem, five hundred Jews were sometimes crucified in a day? Do you not remember that Josephus, speaking as an eye-witness, said, "There wanted room for crosses, and crosses for bodies"? To this day their children are scattered in all lands, and have found no rest for the soles of their feet. But they are to be restored; they are to be brought back to their own land, and to worship God in his holy mountain; and in the latter days, when they are restored, then will God take of them for priests and Levites. To me it appears of very small consequence to which this verse refers, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision; and this promise seems to me to stand good to the whole human race considered in its fallen state. "I will take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." Under the gospel dispensation God will select both out of Jews and Gentiles a chosen people, who shall stand before him spiritually as the priests and the Levites stood before him typically.

Think for a minute of the compass of this great promise. Evidently a high honor is here conferred. The connection leads us to see that not only a great promise but likewise a great privilege is herein implied. What is this privilege? It is that we shall be priests and Levites. Now, the priests or Levites were persons set apart to be God's peculiar property. When the firstborn were spared in Egypt, God claimed the firstborn to be his own, and he took the tribe of Levi to represent the firstborn; they were to be the Lord's. Though all Israel belonged to God, yet the tribe of Levi was especially selected and particularly appointed to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and of this tribe of Levi, chief among them the house of Aaron, to minister in the sanctuary as priests. So now, glory be to God, he takes out of all nations a people that are to be peculiarly his own—his own by election, as he chose them—his own by redemption, as he bought them—his own by endowment through the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;" his own, therefore, before time, and after time shall close. "I will take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." Being thus set apart as the Lord's property, the priests and Levites lived only for divine service. While others were engaged with their trade or upon their farm, the Levites were attending to the tabernacle or temple, and the priests in their courts were slaughtering bullocks and lambs, and offering them to God; or they had other duties of a kindred order, by reason of the charge given them of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel. Anyhow, it was in sacred things that they were occupied; so now, it is the duty of every man to serve the Lord; but, alas! man will not; and therefore God takes unto himself a people out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and he ordains them to stand before him continually, to wait on his commands, and to do his bidding. Thus he puts upon their shoulders his easy yoke and weights them with his light burden, and they become his willing servants—that their life may be for his glory, and that their desire, as well as their duty, may be to serve him with heart and strength so long as they have any being. In this sense, then, happy is the man who is set apart to the divine service, a priest and a Levite unto God.

Further than this, the priests and the Levites enjoyed the privilege of drawing near to God—nearer than the rest of the people in that typical

dispensation. While the people stood without, the Levites are busy inside. One of them, the chief of the tribe, and the High Priest before the Lord for all the tribes, was permitted and commanded to go into the most holy place within the veil; and you know that the holy places made with hands are figures of the true, even of heaven itself. In like manner there is a people to be found on earth at this day whom God has chosen to draw near unto him. In Christ Jesus they who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The same precious blood that is applied to their conscience is sprinkled on the mercy-seat; therefore they have access to the Father. Oh! happy they, who, like the priests and Levites, love dwelling in the Lord's house, and praising him, who can say—

"Here, Lord, I find settled rest
While others go and come;
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations: we are a people near unto thee made nigh by affinity with the Son of God, brought nigh by the blood, led nigh by the Spirit of God, kept nigh, and rejoicing to be nigh—for herein is our honor and comfort, to be near unto God; made priests and Levites, because claimed as God's portion, prepared for God's service, and admitted to a near familiarity with him. There are some such to be found in this place to-day, whom God has taken from among the Gentiles to be priests and Levites unto him. But priests and Levites had two works to do: something to do towards God for men, and something to do towards men for God. They were engaged to do something towards God for men, and so they offered the sacrifices that were brought to the door of the tabernacle, whether according to the general ordinances, or to any special vows. Spiritually minded, they were much engaged in intercession for the rest of Israel. So there is a people to be found this day who offer unto God acceptable prayer and praise, and in answer to their prayer, unnumbered blessings come down upon the sons of men. I trust there are some here that have power with God in prayer. Ye are the king's remembrancers; ye make mention of his name, and keep not silence; ye cry to God for Sodom, and yet more hopefully ye cry to God for Jerusalem: your prayer ceaseth not, and God's grace and

favor always follow it. In this sense God is constantly taking out, even from amongst the vilest of the vile, a people whom he makes to be priests and Levites for men towards himself. Another part of their office consisted in speaking for God to the people; "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge." As for the Levites, they were as ushers in the schools and tutors in the families of Israel. Amongst the Levites were found those scribes who became the instructors of the people, the copyists of the law, and the expounders of its statutes and ordinances; ministers who opened up to the people, as Ezra did, the knotty points of the old covenant, and expounded the word. So not all of us in the same degree, but all of us in a measure, are to be teachers of God's revealed truth, even as he has taught us; and he has in this place, and throughout the world, taken out a certain company whom he has made to speak as his mouth to the sons of men—men of his own choosing, and his own sending, who are as priests and Levites for his name. They claim no priestly office as though they could absolve the sinner: they leave that with Christ, the firstborn of his Father's house, and the chief rabbi of all the Lord's chosen seed, but as teachers and instructors; they are in the midst of the world the priests and Levites of God. I have thus shown what the promise means. God will take out of the Jews and Gentiles a people whom he will bring very near to himself, and make use of for his own sacred purposes. The great point is this. It seems to be mentioned here as a matter of surprise that God should take any of them—of the persons here mentioned—of the sinful, backsliding, transgressing Jews, or of the blinded, dark, benighted, heathen Gentiles—that he should take them, and make them to be priests and Levites before him. Now, that is parallel to the fact that God does take some of the most unlikely persons, who seem to be the most unsuitable of all, and make these to be his faithful and honored servants among the sons of men.

Now, I shall first notice that fact; then, the reason for it; and then, the lessons from it.

I. First, I notice that God does, to the astonishment of men, TAKE SOME WHOM HE MAKES BE PRIESTS AND LEVITES TO HIMSELF. This is a fact. How, there are priests and Levites that God never took. There have been such in all ages. There were those in the days of Aaron who said: "Ye

take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi;" and when they stood before the Lord with their censers, "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up." There were those in the days of Elias. When he stood by the altar of the Lord, the priests of Baal, in great numbers, stood by their altar, offering prayer to Baal. Ye know how God had no regard to their sacrifice. They were the church established by law; but, for all that, Elias the Nonconformist, put them to the rout, and maintained the worship of the invisible God of Israel firm and faithful to the end. So in our Savior's days there were priests and Levites—men taught and instructed in the law, and these were the very men who conspired together against him, who took counsel how they might put him to death, and who stirred up the people to say, "Not this man, but Barabbas." And on down to this present day there are those legitimate priests and Levites—at least, those who call themselves so—whom God hath never taken, upon whom he hath never laid his hand, upon whom his Holy Spirit hath never descended; who speak, but he speaks not by them; and who administer ordinances, but he gives not grace to the ordinances by their hands. And such there always will be, doubtless, till Christ cometh, but they are not spoken of in the text, for the text says, "I will take," and it is only those whom God himself takes and chooses among men that are the real priests and Levites that serve him.

Observe, according to the text, men have nothing to do with the selection; for here it is said, "I will also take of them"—not "their parents shall bring them up to it;" not "those who shall be looked out as the most fit and proper men on account of some natural bent and bias, or gift and talent, but I will take." God's priesthood in the world is a priesthood of his own choosing of his own setting apart, of his own anointing. "He hath made us kings and priests unto God." The church is a royal priesthood, not of man, neither by man, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth: it is of God's choosing. This sacred and consecrated band of priests and Levites, and all that serve God effectually and acceptably, are men whom he has himself chosen to the work. He himself hath done it, and only his own will as been consulted in the matter. In their case, it appears from the text, that whatever was unfit in their character has been overcome by divine grace. "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." If God takes them for Levites, he makes them Levites; if he

chooses them for priests, he makes them priests. So, glory be to his name, when he chose you, my dear brother, when he chose you, my dear sister, to be his servants, to be his priests and his Levites, he gave you the grace you wanted. He found in you no natural fitness, no suitability, but in fitness for sin, a suitability to go astray, and to become a brand for the burning; but if there be a fitness in you to serve him on earth and in heaven, it is his grace that has done it. It is his grace speaking in all its wondrous majesty—"I will take of them for priests and for Levites"—which has effected in you the great transformation, making in you all things new, and thus qualifying you to become the servants of the Most High. In some persons this natural inaptitude and unfitness for the Lord's work has been more apparent than in others. They have been men of rough exterior, unhallowed life; their education neglected, their passions wild and lawless, their tastes low and grovelling; yet, for all that, God has taken from amongst such men some who in an especial manner, even beyond the rest of God's servants have become as priests and Levites unto him. He has sometimes selected women, in whom there seemed to be no suitability for his grace, to make them matrons in the church; and men, who seemed to be ringleaders in the service of Satan, to make them very captains of the Lord's hosts. They had no inbred faculty, no natural genius that qualified them to become the instruments of righteousness: as I have said before, it was the reverse of this. Their career was not foreshadowed by any instinct with which they were born; nor was it aided by any training they received in childhood. The God who chose them gave the grace they required at their second birth, and subdued all the evil that was in them by the rich discipline of his spiritual operations, in order to qualify them for efficient service. I thank God, I do remember in my soul some dear brethren who have been made eminent ministers of the gospel, of whom, if any one had said they would ever have preached the gospel, none would have believed it. Not to mention the living, the men of to-day, go back to the early days of John Newton, an earnest preacher, a famous evangelist, not to add a sweet poet. Almost a model for the ministry was John Newton, but once a blasphemer and injurious. Turn farther back, to John Bunyan, on the village green, with his tip-cat on the Sabbath-day, with all a drunkard's vices and sins, and foul-mouthed in his profanity: yet John Bunyan becomes an eminent proclaimer of the gospel, and the author of a matchless allegory which has served to guide many a pilgrim

to heaven. Turn farther back, to Luther, most earnest as a Romanist for all the letter of the law, diligent in every ceremony, superstitious to a high degree, yet afterwards the bold proclaimer of the gospel of the grace of God. Turn to Augustine, in youth of corrupt and vicious propensities, according to his own confession, to the grief of his mother Monica, yet called by sovereign grace to be one of the fathers of the church, and a notable exponent of sound doctrine. Look yet farther back to the apostle Paul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, like a huge wild beast, making havoc of the church, but suddenly struck down, and almost as suddenly raised up a new man, and ordained (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father) to be a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name unto the Gentiles. "I will also take of them," the most unlikely and unfit, according to human judgment. "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites unto me." And where the service has not taken the form of preaching, we can remember some whom God hath made eminent in prayer. Never account prayer second to preaching. No doubt prayer in the Christian church is as precious as the utterance of the gospel. To speak to God for men is a part of the Christian priesthood that should never be despised. Surely I have heard some prayers of those whom none would ever have expected to pray, such as I have not heard from those who, from their youth up, have been accustomed to the language of devotion—moved with energy and full of fervor, like Elijah. Or, shall I say it, they have become in spiritual force nerved as Samson was with physical strength. In their prayers they have seemed to take hold of the pillars of the temple of Satan, and pull it down upon their enemies; they have been so mighty as to wrestle with God and prevail. God has taken of them—that is, even of the prayerless, and the careless, and the blaspheming—and he has made these to be priests and Levites unto him. And in all other holy service I think I can recollect eminent men who out of weakness were made strong, from simpletons they were changed into sages, or, rescued from the dregs of infamy, they became paragons of virtue. In their unregeneracy as bitter fruit, apples of Sodom, that crumbled into dust and turned to ashes, yet so transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they bore the richest clusters of choicest fruit to the praise and glory of the Great Husbandman. "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." There is the fact. You need not that I enlarge upon it. While a

false priesthood still lives (and always will), God has his elect people, who are his royal priesthood among the sons of men, who are discharging regal functions and sacred offices among the sons of men in his name, and before his face; and these he oftentimes takes out from the least likely of mankind.

II. And now, secondly, as to THE REASON OF THE FACT. Does not he do this to display his mercy—his great and infinite mercy? that those who have provoked him to wrath should become the men in whom he should show forth his lovingkindness—men to be pardoned, men to be washed, to be sanctified—and then men to be put in trust of the gospel of Jesus Christ—does not this reveal and illustrate the high prerogative of sovereign grace? "Unto me," saith the apostle, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is a great grace to be permitted to preach the gospel. I have sometimes said to you that when the prodigal came back to his father, and was received into his father's house, no earthly parent, though he had quite forgiven him all the wildness of his son's adventure, could wholly forget the waywardness of his disposition. He might condone the past without confiding in him for the future. If it were needful to send one of the sons to market with a bag of money, the good old father would, in all probability, say to himself, "I will send the elder son with it: he is better to be trusted; I would hardly like to put such a responsibility upon the young lad who has so lately been reclaimed." I can fancy, without uttering a word to his younger son he would, discreetly (as you would say), trust the other with any weighty concerns. But our heavenly Father—oh, how he forgives us! He leaves no back reckonings, for though we used to be such sinners, some of us, and so injurious, after he forgave us, he committed to our charge not merely silver and gold, the perishable resources of time, but the priceless treasure of the gospel of Jesus Christ: he allowed us to go and tell to others "the unsearchable riches of Christ." See ye not the impure giving, lessons on chastity, the intemperate teaching chastity? and mark ye not how he who persecuted the disciples in times past, now preacheth the faith he once destroyed? Oh, what deep mercy there is in Jesus! What wonderful grace there is in giving his commissions, that those that cursed him themselves should intercede with him for others; that those that despised him should be

permitted to honor him; that those who broke his Sabbaths should nevertheless be helpful to his people in hallowing the Lord's-day; that those who despised his word, and put it behind their back, should be the men to open it, and display the sweetness of it to their fellow men! Is not this grace? Methinks every time Paul preached Jesus Christ he would say to himself: "I used to call him the Nazarene; I abhorred him and used opprobrious language, but herein is great mercy, boundless mercy, that he should take me to be his servant, permit me to labor for his people and suffer for his sake."

Next to this, do you not think that the Lord loves to display his power? Men who are tamers of wild beasts, will frequently, when they have subdued a lion, take a delight in showing to the people how obedient that lion will be to them, and how every word that the lion-tamer chooses to say, it will regard and pay attention to. Thus, when the Lord takes a great sinner, after he has tamed him, removed his heart of stone, and given him a heart of flesh, he desires to show how, without the use of the whip, without a threatening look or an angry word, he causes his enemy to become his diligent servant, his earnest friend. O brethren, it shows the power of love on a man when he is so broken down that the things he sneered at he now preaches with all his might. Surely it showed the power of divine grace when Paul avowed Christ openly, and vehemently preached—exposing himself to persecution and death—that same gospel which his soul had previously nauseated; yea, which his zeal, full of bitterness, had kindled to exterminate. God takes great sinners, and then appoints and qualifies them to be priests and Levites, in order that he might show the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.

Again, does not God do this to show his sovereignty? Can we ever forget that attribute of the Almighty? Divine grace, while it comes freely to us, is dispensed freely by God, according to the good pleasure of his will. I should like to hear that text thundered throughout Christendom: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." No man hath any right to the mercy of God. We have all sinned ourselves into outlaw: all the rights we have are the right to be condemned, and the right to be cast into hell; all the rights of man that he can appeal to God for in equity are merged in the wrongs

for which he is responsible. If the Lord have mercy, it is his own will to do it: he can withhold it if it pleases him; so he selects the most degraded, those that have gone farthest from him, and takes them into his church; nay, more, advances them into eminent positions of service in that church, that all his people may know that the Most High ruleth in the armies of heaven and Amongst the inhabitants of this earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" He lifteth up the poor from the dunghill, and setteth him among princes, even among the princes of his people. His mercy, power, and sovereignty are displayed when he takes of them to be priests and Levites.

But does he not thereby secure to himself the most loving service? I have sometimes thought (I hope I am not censorious) as I have observed with pain the superficiality of a great deal of what is called ministry in these days—that kind of superficiality, I mean, in which little is said about the corruption and depravity of the heart; little about the experience of the child of God when under the law; little, far too little, about the glory of that grace that takes such worms of the dust to make them one with Christ. I have often thought that this avoidance of, not to say this aversion to, deep ploughing, may be accounted for by the fact that the preachers themselves probably had not been suffered to go very far into outward sin; had never had any very deep law-work upon their souls; never had much awakening of conscience, nor felt much of the powers of the world to come. They got their religion very easily; and so knowing little of soul-humbling sensations themselves, they could not go very deeply into the experience of the children of God. When the Lord calls a grievous sinner, to make a gracious example of him, it is not so. The man who has done business in deep waters knows what sin means; tortured with a sense of his own crimes, he has been like those wretched culprits who surrender themselves to justice, because their conscience makes liberty chafe them. He knows what pardon means, for he has found peace after great bitterness, and got remission after the gnawings of despair; he knows what the conflicts of God's people are, for he has had many fierce encounters with the lusts that beset him within, and the temptations that assailed him from without. And now, when he opens his mouth, the testimony he bears is from an inwrought experience: he speaks of things which he has tasted and handled of the good Word of God. John Newton,

to whom I referred just now, could not do otherwise than livingly and lovingly preach the Word of God. You could not have brooked from him a dainty essay or a flowery sermon, because nothing else would have consorted and accorded with his experience, but a faithful tale of the way the Lord had led him, and a forcible exposition of what the Lord had taught him. He had been such a sinner, that it must be grace which saved him; and he would have belied all his inward feelings if he had not proclaimed the grace of God. And so with Bunyan: if he had not tearfully wept over sinners and preached Jesus Christ in his fullness, as the Savior of Jerusalem sinners, he would have been opposing all that animated his own breast, and all that burned and glowed for utterance. God, therefore, takes some of these men who have gone far astray, that he might have warm-hearted, intensely earnest men, who must proclaim the gospel, because they have felt its power; who love much because they have had much forgiven; who preach of grace, because they need much grace, and lift up high the brazen serpent amongst the sin-bitten hosts of men, because they have been sin-bitten themselves and do remember it; they have looked and been cured, and they still remember the cure, and rejoice in it.

Another reason why the Lord takes the vilest of men to make them the saintliest is, that he might openly triumph over Satan. How the devil must feel defeated when such a man as Saul is taken straight away from persecuting to preaching! Surely, it makes Satan bite his chains and gnash his teeth when he loses his servants so. Just when he has trained them up, and got them into fine condition for doing mischief, in comes the officer of divine grace, arrests them, and changes their hearts. You know none ever do the devil so much mischief as those who once did him service. They know the ins and outs of his castle—where to attack it. They understand so much of his devices and tactics, that they become all the more powerful adversaries when they are converted. All heaven rings with rapture when a great sinner is saved; and all hell howls with dismay when one of the arch host bows down to kiss the feet of Christ, and receive the mercy of God. Glory be to God when he takes those that would have been deepest damned, and sets them highest among the saved on earth to be priests and Levites unto him. By these means also he secures another end: he encourages poor penitents; for when a sinner, under a

sense of sin, meets with a brother in Christ, who was like himself once, but is now living near to God and serving him acceptably, he is much encouraged. "Why," he thinks to himself, "is this how God receives sinners when they turn to him? Perhaps he will receive me." And if he gets into conversation with one of those whom God has made priests and Levites, he says, "Tell me what the Lord has done for thy soul." And the minister being a man of like passions, and having had like experience, delights to describe the works and ways of God with hardened sinners and old offenders and then the man who is seeking finds in the other a guide who is touched with the feeling of his infirmity, is very helpful to him, and much blessed of God to enter into the secrets of his heart, and lead him to the cross. If there be here some great rebel against God, I think he ought to take encouragement thence to turn unto the Lord and live, for surely, when God so treats his most defiant enemies as to make them his most honored ministers, there should be some comfort for the great sinner to seek the Lord while yet he waits to be gracious.

And do not you think this is done very much for the encouragement of the church of God? I know, as myself one of its humble members I often need to be solaced by seeing what God's hand can do. We ought to walk by faith, and so I trust we do; but when we see sinners converted, it gives zest to our fellowship and zeal to our enterprise. We all of us feel the happier for it. I hardly expect to see so many converts in the Tabernacle as there used to be. We have had so very many brought to God, that those of you who are left, I almost fear, have resisted overmuch the wooings and warnings of love divine. Indeed, there are so few comparatively left, that we have not the opportunities we once had when the mass of the congregation was not converted. Peradventure there are few of you whom God has not blessed. But I do long to see a fresh ingathering of converts: it would make my heart glad, and it would make all the church glad if we heard of some great sinners being saved.

I pray God sometimes that he would save a great multitude of the priests of the church of Rome and the church of England. Be did in the olden times bring a great multitude of the priests to believe the gospel, and why should he not yet again? If he wills to call to himself some of the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile, and make them wonders of his grace,

his omnipotent fiat shall be instantly obeyed. Why should he not? Why should he not? He has done so: why should he not again? He has done so, I say, and the text says, "I will take of them for priests and for Levites." Why should he not go on to take from strange quarters still a people that shall serve him? Does he not say "I will"? Suppose it should ever come to this, as some say it will, that the churches, many of them, should desert the old truths, and the ministers become dumb dogs that cannot bark, and one by one their testimony should be silent, and every candlestick should be taken out of its place, and the whole head should be sick, and the whole heart faint, and Zion be under a cloud, and there should be none to help her, and none to lift up the banner for the truth? What then? Why, then God would arise, and take again from the fishermen in their boats new apostles, and from the lowest dens of iniquity, and the worst haunts of vice, from the saloons of frivolity where the rich resort, and from the chambers of commerce and the palaces of merchandise where buyers and sellers make their contracts, he would take a fresh staff of men. Out of the roughest material he can make the finest fabric, out of the newest recruits he can raise the noblest regiment, to show forth his praise, to do his work, and to secure victory for his cause. If some were unworthy holders of his vineyard, and brought him no revenue, he would put aside these wicked men, and send forth fresh laborers, and give his vineyard unto others, for he will get glory unto his name; he "will take of them for priests and for Levites." Never say it is a dark day; never say God has forgotten his church; never give way to despairing fits, and dream of horrible times coming, that yet are not to come. Verily, "all flesh shall see the salvation of God," and the glory of God shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. He shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion; he will build up her walls, heal all her breaches, and once again shall she be the joy of the whole earth. Take heart and comfort, God can find his servants anywhere. Omnipotence hath instruments where we see them not. He "will take of them for priests and for Levites."

III. Lastly, WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM THIS? I address myself to those of you especially, my dear brethren and sisters, whom the grace of God has taken to make priests and Levites unto God. You are near to him: you serve him. What effect should this have upon you? First, remember

what state you were in before God's grace took you in hand. Then consider what you are called to be; you are made priests and Levites. Then ask yourself what you would soon become if his grace were to depart from you? Why, as you were before, only with this difference, that the evil spirit in you would take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than the first, and enter in and dwell there, and your last state would be worse than the first. Watch then, watch! watch! God, his grace enabling you to watch, will preserve you to the end. Am I a priest and Levite—a holy vessel set apart before God, serving at his altar, bringing prayers and praises to him? Ah! yes, I may be a priest and a Levite, but I should be a devil if his grace did not prevent. O watch, watch, watch! "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

And oh, what humility this vocation of God should produce! However high we may be raised, we must remember whence the honor cometh. For this promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west—it is God's gift. Thou, a blasphemer and injurious; thou, a careless, godless, Christless man, now raised to be a servant of God, to wait in his courts, and honor his name, be thankful that thou art lifted so high, but wonder, and fear and tremble, for all the goodness that God has made to pass before thee. What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto; to pray and my prayer to be heard, yet not worthy to lift mine eyes to the place where thine honor dwelleth; to have thy holy Spirit dwelling in me, and yet not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof! Be humble brother: it will help you to watch. Watching is done best in a lowly manner.

And since he hath taken us for priests and for Levites, let us do every office heartily as unto the Lord. If others in this world can serve God coldly, yet, my brethren and sisters, you and I cannot afford to do so. We were such sinners, that if we have been forgiven, we must love him. Those that had little sin to be cleansed may not have much love to lavish on their Redeemer. Not so with me or thee:

"Love I most; I've more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace."

Those that had some good principles instilled into them by early training or some sort of preparation to receive the gospel, may not feel their deep indebtedness to the wonderful working of the Spirit; but those of us who were steeped in sin, and hardened in heart, when we are saved must magnify the power of God, and moved by that feeling we must serve him heartily with our whole spirit, soul, and body. A man that feels what grace has done for him cannot help throwing his whole soul into it. I used to know a man whom I often heard swear—on the other side of the river, in the town where I was—and when converted I recollect his prayers. They used to trouble us rather: they were so loud. It was not everybody that knew the reason why. He had been so accustomed to swear loud that he could not help praying loud; and when a man has been very loud for the devil, he cannot help being loud for Christ. Some of those dear Methodist brethren who cry out, "Amen!" so stentoriously, do it, I hope, because they feel the love of God in Christ on account of what great things have been done for them. Let those go the common track of service that have gone the common track of sin, but let those serve the Lord with all their heart, and mind, and strength, that have been unusual sinners. Bring your alabaster box, O great sinner, break it on his blessed head that pardoned you. Wash his feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head, for where extraordinary love has been experienced, extraordinary love ought to be the outgrowth, and extraordinary service ought to be the consequence.

Once again, if the Lord has taken of us to be his priests and Levites, let us serve him with great thankfulness and joy. If any people should be glad, I am sure it is those people that feel the aboundings of his mercy in forgiveness, having heard those glad tidings, as it were, from the lips of Jesus himself. "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee: go in peace." They have something always to stimulate their gratitude and regale them with sunshine. "I am very poor," saith one, "but, never mind, poor as I am, I am not a drunkard or a swearer now; I feel weak and sickly in body, it may be; never mind that; I have not the burden of sin upon my soul." Or, "I am unknown, quite unknown. I have nobody to come and see me. Never mind that; I am known to God. I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me. My great wounds have been healed in Jesus' precious blood." Why, you have always cause to be glad,

my dear brother and sister, if you have had your sins forgiven: you have a fountain opened in your soul of love to Christ and joy in God, quite as surely as there is a fountain open for the cleansing of your sin in the side of Jesus.

So let me close, by saying, surely we ought to serve God with great confidence in him. If he has made us priests and Levites to him, why then we may trust him to do anything. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" He that has done so much for us, as to take us out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put his gospel into our hearts, may be trusted for the rest. Suppose a man owed you ten thousand pounds and a trifling sum besides for a small promissory note he had given you; if he paid you the ten thousand pounds, you might trust him to meet the little bill when it fell due. And when the Lord has given us so much, so infinitely much, the little that remains—for it is comparatively little—ought to cause us no anxieties or doubts, no fears or misgivings. "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." He who found me a sinner, made me a pardoned sinner, put me among his children, and numbered me among his honored servants, has not done all this to desert me at last and put me to shame. He has not been at this expense with his poor servant to fling him away after all. No, glory be to his name: he will continue his work till he has perfected it. He is the God that performeth all things for me, and in him will I rest, and not be ashamed, world without end. Amen.

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The New Song

O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. - Psalm 98:1

There must be new songs on new occasions of triumph. It would have

been absurd for Miriam with her timbrel to conduct the music of the daughters of Israel to some old sonnet that they had learned in Egypt. Nay, an old song could not have spoken out the feelings of that generation, much less could it have served to utter a voice, the jubilant notes of which distant posterity should echo. They must have a new song while they cry the one unto the other, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The like had never been known before, but henceforth father to son must show forth its fame. In after times, when Deborah and Barak had routed the hosts of Sisera, they did not borrow Miriam's song; but they had a new psalm for the new event. They said, "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." In after years, at the building of the temple, or on the solemn feast days, it was ever the wont of the inspired poets of the age to cry, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord a new song." Thus the grateful notes of praise have gathered volume and augmented their compass as the ages have rolled onwards; and these as it were only the rehearsals for a grand oratorio. What then, shall be the marvellous novelty and the matchless glory of that song which shall be sung at the last upon Mount Zion, when ten thousand times ten thousand of the warriors of God shall surround Jesus the conqueror, when we shall hear a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and like great thunders, when shall be heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps; what shall be, I say, the strange novelty of that new song which they shall sing before the throne, when the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures shall fall before God upon their faces, and worship him for ever and ever? Would that our ears could anticipate that tremendous burst of "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

I want to carry your minds, if I can, to-night, for a little season to that last and grandest, because the decisive victory, which shall tell out the name and fame of Jehovah in all his mighty attributes, and in all his majestic deeds, when the battle shall be over for ever, and the banner shall be furled and the sword shall be sheathed, because the last foe shall be destroyed, and placed beneath the feet of the Almighty victor; "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath him the victory." My text seems, however suitable it may be to other occasions, to be most fitting to that last and

most splendid triumph.

Three things there are in it: *victory transcendent; Deity conspicuous; holiness glorified.*

I. First in our text we perceive very clearly VICTORY TRANSCENDENT.

What shall we say of that victory? The shouts thereof already greet our ears, and the anthem that celebrates it is already prepared, when all the principalities and powers of this world shall be laid low, the pride of earth shall burst like a bubble, the great globe itself shall dissolve, and the things that are seen shall be folded up like a vesture, worn out, and crumbled with decay, that victory will be transcendent; there shall be none comparable to it; it shall stand matchless and unrivalled in all the wars of God, of angels, or men.

Well, we must say of that victory, *there shall be none to dispute the claim of God the Most High.* The most splendid victories of one army have frequently been claimed by the opposite partisans. If you stand beneath the triumphal arch in Paris, you will see the names of some battles which you simple-minded Englishmen always thought had been won by British soldiers; but you discover that our history was all a mistake, and that the Frenchmen really retired victorious from the plain. I suppose in America it is always difficult to ascertain who has been the conqueror; and where there are no generals, and the whole affair seems to be which shall kill the most and wade through the most blood, there naturally must be difficulty in ascertaining who has won the day. But in this case there shall be no dispute whatever. The dragon's head shall be so completely broken, that he can do nothing but bite his iron bonds and growl out his confession that God is stronger than he. The hosts of hell shall have been so utterly routed, that the deep groans of dismay and shrieks of terror shall be the confession that Omnipotence rules their terrible doom. As for Death, when he shall see his captives all loosed before his eyes; as for the grave, when the key shall be rent from her grip, and all her treasures plucked from her grasp—death and the grave shall both acknowledge that their victory is gone for ever; Christ has been the conqueror, the Son of God who in our nature has already taken away the sting. There may be to-day

some who write their names down as Atheists; there may be others who openly avow that they are the adversaries of God; and throughout the universe there are never wanting those who are hopeful that the issue will turn out as they wish—they are hopeful that wrong will master right; that evil shall drive out good, and darkness extinguish light. But there shall not be one such being left on that great day of victory; it shall be acknowledged even by the lip of despair that the Lord God, "with his own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." Blazoned across the sky in lightnings such as the eye of terror has never beheld before; thundered out with trumpet louder than even that which startled the sleeping dead, every tongue in earth and hell shall confess, because every ear hath heard, that the Lord reigneth, and is king for ever and ever.

But further, as this victory will be certainly beyond all dispute, let me remind you it will be transcendent, because *there shall be nothing that can occur to mar it*. When the last shock of the dread artillery shall have been endured by the hosts of God's elect; when the last charge shall have driven the foes before them as thin clouds fly before a Biscay gale; then, as the heroes sit down to read the story of the war, they shall discover that there is nothing to mar the splendor of that glory, for it has been a victory throughout. Of all other victories we read, at one time the balance trembled—sometimes the host on this side wavered; perhaps for the first half day it seemed not only doubtful which would win, but it appeared as though the adversary at length defeated would certainly be the conqueror. But, beloved, when we shall read history in the light of heaven, we shall discover that God was never conquered—that never did the ranks reel; we shall see that even the most disastrous strokes of Providence, even the most dire calamities that ever occurred to the Church, were only the on-march, the tramp of victories yet to come. I am certain that those things we most deplore to-day will even become the subjects of the most marvellous gratitude to-morrow. We look to-day upon the black side of the question, and say, "Ah! here, indeed, goodness was foiled;" but when we look at the whole matter through, we shall see that every dark and bending line meets in the center of the divine plan, and that which seemed the most incongruous and out of place with its fellow, was the most fitting and the most necessary of the whole

programme. Satan at the last shall not be able to put his finger upon any spot of the battle-field and say, "Here my hosts routed the troops of Emmanuel." Everywhere it shall be seen that, from the dawning day, when first he struck the blow at Eve and made her sin, to the very last, when Christ shall drag him up the everlasting hills, led captive at his chariot wheels, from the first to the last, the Lord's "right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

Remember, too, that *this is a victory all along the line*. The general's cautious eye marks that there the left wing has driven the adversary back, but for that right wing bring up the reserves, let not the ranks be broken. Stern liners, let your chivalry be seen yonder for that wing reels. Generally in the battle some part must fail, while in this portion or the other there shall be success. Ah! but at the last when Christ shall stand, and bare his brow in heaven's sunlight, and all his angels shall be with him, it shall be seen that they were everywhere triumphant. The blood on Madagascar's rocks shall not defeat the on-march of God's armies. Saints may be burned, may be sawn in sunder, may wander about in sheep skins and goat skins, but they shall be victorious everywhere. Spain may shut her gates against the gospel, and the inquisition may make that place its stronghold, but as sure as there is a God in heaven, Christ shall be conqueror there. Tyrants may pass edicts to exterminate Christians, conclaves may make decrees to drive out the religion of Jesus, but in every place, in every land, where ever foot of man has trodden this green earth, shall there be victory; from the north to the south, from the east to the west, everywhere shall be triumph—China and Japan, Brazil and Chili, the islands of the south, the frozen regions of the north, even Africa with her sable sons, the dwellers in the wilderness shall bow before him and lick the dust at his feet. There shall be victory all along the line. Not from one place merely, but from all, shall be heard the tune—"His own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

And it shall be *a victory Sustained by the news of the morrow*. Not so among the embattled hosts of men. How hard to brook the morrow! Then the general's brow is dark, and his eye is heavy, for the list of the dead and wounded is brought in for inspection. "Another victory like this," says one, "and I am defeated for ever. It is dearly purchased," saith he, "with

the blood of these mothers' sons. My comrades and companions in arms must bite the ground to let the country live." But in that last great battle of God the muster-roll shall be found without one missing in it; as they call their names they shall all answer, there shall not be one left dead upon the field. "How so? How so?" saith unbelief, "are they not dead and buried now? Have not their bodies lain to bleach upon the side of the Alps? Have they not been burned in the fire and scattered as ashes to the four winds? Do not the saints sleep to-day in our cemeteries, and in our grave-yards, and doth not the deep engulf full many a body that was a temple of the Holy Ghost?" I answer, yes, but they shall come again. Refrain thine eyes from weeping, O daughter of Jerusalem; refrain thine heart from sorrow, for they shall come again from the land of their captivity. We that are alive and remain shall not have the preference beyond them that sleep, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

And sometimes, on the morrow, the general feels the glory of the victory is marred, for there are many prisoners; they are not dead, their corpses lie not on the field, but they have been taken off by the opposite parties, and they are a prey; and who knoweth what may become of them; what dungeons may contain them; to what tortures they may be put. But in this last victory of God, *there shall be no prisoners*, no prisoners left in the hand of his enemy. I know there are some who say that we may be children of God, and yet fall from grace and perish. My brethren, it is a foul slander upon the faithfulness and power of the Redeemer. I know that all he undertakes to save he will save, and he will bring the troops off from the battle field, every brow crowned with laurel, not one slain, not one a prisoner; the gates of hell shall never enclose the ransomed of the Lord; amongst the groans of the lost there shall never be heard a sigh from one that was once a saint before God. There are no prisoners. March out your prisoners, Prince of Hell, bring forth, if you can, one soul that Jesus bought with blood, one soul that the Spirit quickened, one soul that the Eternal Father gave to the hands of the Great Surety to keep for ever—

bring him forth. Ah! ye have none. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, "My ransomed shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;" then shall it be said, "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

But, beloved, after the battle is over, the conqueror wipes his brow and says, "Ah, but the scattered hosts may rally, and they who were driven today like chaff before the wind, may rise again, and long may be the campaign, and fierce the struggle, before we have stamped out the sparks of war. "Sleep on your arms," saith he, "you may be attacked to-morrow, be ready for the cry of 'boot and saddle,' for there may be a charge again ere many hours are spent." But not so in this case: the victory is crushing, total, final; it is once for ever with evil, with darkness, with hell; they shall never again be able to tempt the righteous, or to cast them down, or to pale their cheeks with fear; they shall never be able again to win the world to their dominion, they are routed, routed, routed for ever. Hosts of evil, it is not your heel that is bruised—your head is broken; the Lord hath used his people as his battle-axe and his weapons of war, and he hath cleft ye and left ye without might or strength for ever and for ever. So, dear friends, this is our joy and comfort, that once the battle over, the whole campaign is ended; there shall be no further onslaughts; we rest eternally; we triumph everlastingly; no more fights to risk, no more conflicts in which to tug and strive. This shall be the note that shall ring throughout the arches of eternity—"The Lord's right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory for ever and for ever."

I think these are two good reasons why I should say this victory is transcendent—there is none to dispute it, and there is nothing to mar it.

But yet further we will venture to enlarge upon this victory by shewing its particulars. The ultimate triumph and victory of God in all his purposes will lie in several things. How glorious the fact that *all whom he ordained to save are saved!* Calling was the first work which he wrought in them; they were called every one of them, but like the rest of mankind they would not come; their wills were so desperate that they resisted long; the minister preached at them; their mother wept over them; their father

entreated them; providence came and hewed them; afflictions broke them in pieces, and they were unsaved still; but not in one case where God ordains to call has the calling failed. In every case where his electing love hath set its purpose, the will is turned round, the affections yield, the judgment gives way, the man is subdued—he is called, he is quickened. There may be some such here to-night, who think, "Well, I never would be saved upon such terms as acknowledging the sovereign grace of God, even if he wills to do it." Thy will must give way before the crushing force of the will of God. He hath mysterious ways of finding an entrance into the most reluctant heart, and taking up his throne there for ever.

How clearly is this victory seen *in the subjugation of the lusts and passions of the called sinner!* He may have been a drunkard, he thought he could not give it up, but the rod of iron "dashes in pieces the potter's vessel." He may have loved the pleasures of the flesh, they were dear to him as his right eye, but grace overcame the most darling lust, and threw to the earth the most pampered sin.

Not less conspicuously will it appear in the perseverance of every saint. Not a stone will have been left unturned by the adversary to prevent the saints holding on; the caverns of hell will be emptied against God's redeemed; Satan and his myrmidons will do their utmost to cast them down to destruction, but they shall hold on their way, they shall wax stronger and stronger, and when at last the gates of heaven shall be fast closed, because there are no more to enter, it shall be proclaimed, while devils bite their iron bands in shame, that not a soul who was written in the Book of Life was lost, not one whom Jesus bought with blood has been unredeemed, not one quickened by grace suffered to die, not one who truly began the heavenly race turned aside from it, not one concerning whom it was said, "These are mine, and in the day when I make up my jewels they shall be mine;" not one of these is lost, but all saved, saved eternally. Oh! that will be a splendid victory! What can be greater? You that know the conflict through which the child of God has to pass will bear me witness that if you get to heaven, you will sing with all your might the conqueror's hymn. And I think we all should do the same. I remember saying once that if ever I got to heaven I would sing the loudest there, for I owed the most to sovereign grace. But when I came

down stairs, one said to me, "You made a mistake, I shall sing more loudly than you, for I owe more than you do." And I found that was the general opinion, that each brother and each sister thought that he owed most to divine grace. Now, if we are all to sing loudest what a shout of triumph there will be! And I suppose the verse in our hymn is quite true to the apprehension of each of us -

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

What a transcendent triumph!

Not a few shall there be to share the triumph, but *a multitude that no man can number*; for the glory shall be enhanced *by the salvation of so many*. Heaven is none of your narrow places for narrow-hearted bigots. No, brethren, our largest imagination never yet could grasp heaven, but it will hold multitudes of multitudes. Nor will the praise be any the less, when we consider that there were so many of such varied clans and climes, some of all kindreds on the face of the earth, swarthy or white. There shall be found in heaven the vilest sinner that lived, there shall be brought thither the proudest rebel, and the stoutest hearted, and the most obstinate of sinners; there shall be such in heaven as would have made a wonder in hell, some, I say, who would have been such great sinners, had they been suffered to go to hell, that their dreadful fall would even hell itself appal, but they are in heaven, saved by sovereign grace. And, O beloved! as there are such persons, this will help to make the victory grand, that they were saved by such means, such simple means, by the simple preaching of the gospel; not by wisdom, not by science, not by eloquence, but by the simple telling out of the story of the cross. How this will tend to make the triumph brighter than it could have been in any other way.

And, O beloved, this victory will excel all others in *the routing of such foes, such cruel, such crafty, such mighty, such numerous foes*. Sin, sin, it is a name of horror—sin o'erthrown. Death—what glooms are concentrated in that word!—death destroyed. Satan—what craft, what

cruelties, what malice linger there—Satan bound hand and foot, and led captive. Such a victory over such foes. I find no words in any tongue by which I can describe its magnitude. And oh! the results of that victory, how bright! Souls knit to Christ by such love, tongues tuned to such music, hearts burning with such fire, heaven filled with such devout, such holy inhabitants, the ears of Deity regaled with such grateful music, heaven filled with such myriads of happy spirits. The peaceful results, setting aside the overthrow, will be enough to make this victory grander than all the triumphs of men or angels put together.

Say now, and gather up all your enthusiasm to say it—What a victory shall that be, when *there shall not be a single trophy in the hands of the adversary*. The victory shall be unparalleled in this, that all the success which the enemy thought he had achieved shall only tend to make his defeat the more galling, and add lustre to the victorious King of kings. You see sometimes hanging up in old minsters tattered flags, that were taken from the adversary; sometimes when the report of battle comes in, we are told the battle was won, that so many cannon and so many flags were left with the enemy. But, O Lord God! thou hast not left a single trophy in the hands of thy foe. I said he had no prisoners, but he shall not even have a flag, not one truth rent in pieces, not one doctrine of revelation hung up to rot in the minsters of hell; not one single attribute of God that shall be trailed in the mire, not one single truth of Christianity to be laughed at, and despised by fiends, not a trophy; there shall not a hair of your head perish, not so much as that shall Satan gain, not a bone, not a fragment of the saint, either of his body or his spirit—no trophies left. And all this will make hell angry, to think that God gave him vantage-ground, let him contend with poor feeble men; but God was in man, and fought with Satan—man, a poor feeble worm, fought with Satan, and, like David, he threw the stone of faith at the giant's head, and destroyed him with his own weapons. God hath destroyed death by the death of Christ, destroyed sin by the great sin-bearer, yea he has destroyed the dragon by the seed of a woman, who bruised his head with that very seed whose heel the serpent once did bite. Glory be unto thee, O Lord! This is thy victory. The more we muse upon it, the higher doth our rapture rise, and the more prepared do our hearts grow to peal forth the words of the Psalmist, "His right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him

the victory."

II. Secondly; observe that DEITY IS CONSPICUOUS HERE.

Man is not made mention of. There is no name of Moses, or of the prophets, or of the apostles here; I read not the names of Chrysostom and Augustine, nor of those modern fathers of the Church, such as Calvin, and Zwingle—the stars are lost in the blaze of the sun. O God! how glorious is thy right arm, and how do thy disciples, thy children, hide their heads and say, "Not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory!" But mark, beloved, as they are not mentioned it is not because the mention need to be avoided, for the more we talk of instrumentalities, or rather think about them—(I do not say the more we think *of* them, but the more we think *about* them)—the more persuaded we shall be that it only adds to God's glory to use men, for men are such poor tools to work with. You have heard of the celebrated painter who gained renown by painting with poor brushes, when the good ones were stolen; and Quintin Matsys, who made a cover for the well without tools, when all the proper tools were taken away; he wrought the ironwork with such poor implements as he could get. So was the skill of the painter or artisan admired in that he could produce such effects under such disadvantageous conditions. Ah! then what an artist must he be! they exclaim concerning the one. And they look upon this piece of ironwork, and say of the other, "What! no graving tools, no casting, how could he do it?" So when we shall come to look at men, when we look at them in the light which eternity shall reveal, we shall say of the best of them, "How can the Lord have won such victories with such poor things as these!" So that you may mention the instruments every one of them, from righteous Abel down to the last preacher of the Word, and yet it shall be true, that the victory shall speak the sole praise of the General. No doubt, dear friends, this will be a part of the splendor of the triumph to think that he did win by man. It was in man that Satan conquered: Adam and Eve were led astray by the crafty wiles of Satan. It is by man that death came, and by man comes the resurrection of the dead. This will be gall and wormwood in the cup of the lost, when they shall see the *Man* Christ Jesus, the seed of the woman, sitting at the right hand of God. This is judgment's greatest terror, "Hide us from the Lamb;" and this shall be hell's greatest horror, "Hide us from

the Lamb; let us not behold his face." But glory be unto thee, most gracious God, for thou hast lifted man up above all the works of thy hands, and given him dominion above all creatures, so that principalities and powers are put beneath his feet in the person of Christ. And all this only proves that "His own right-hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

I wish I might enlarge here and speak of the conspicuous glory of God in this respect, that all the persons of the Trinity will be glorified, the Father, the Son, the Spirit. All the attributes of God, his unsearchable greatness, and his unrivalled majesty, his grace, his power, his truth, his justice, his holiness, his immutability, these shall shine forth with resplendent lustre. His wondrous works and his terrible acts shall declare his praise; they shall be the theme of every tongue, and the topic of every conversation. "Men shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." All his decrees shall be seen in their final accomplishment, every one of them fulfilled, the counsel answering to the providence. Of all that the Father willed, of all that the Son performed, of all that the Spirit revealed, not one thing is frustrated. How shall I gather up these things? O for the voice of a mighty angel! O for a seraph's lip of fire, to speak now of the splendor of that last day, when not only the great but the little, not only the abundance of God's providence, and the great deeps of his counsel, but even the small deeds of his lovingkindness shall be made to sing forth his praise, when not only the leviathan deeds of God shall make the deep to praise the Lord, but even the little fish that move therein, shall leap up to join the chorus, and everywhere from everything, for everything, there shall be heard the tune—"His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

III. We have in our text a third thought, which we can only hint at. In all this—**HOLINESS WILL BE GLORIFIED.**

Note the adjective,—"*His holy arm.*" When we contemplate any actions of God, you will notice that the name which cherubs utter, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," is always brought out. Where Christ bears sin, and overcomes it, I hear the cry of "Holy, holy, holy," from the cross. Where Jesus breaks the tomb, and conquers death, I seem to hear the note of

"Holy, holy, holy," for it makes the day holy on which the deed was done. And when he ascends to glory, and the Father says, "Well done," we seem to hear still the note, "Holy, holy, holy." In everything, from the manger to the cross, and from the cross onward to the crown, holiness becometh God's house, and all God's acts for ever. Is it not, dear friends, after all the hinge of the struggle? Is not this the point, just as you know in great battles, there is some one mountain or hill, which is the object of struggle, not for the value of that particular hill, but because on that the battle will depend, so holiness is just the point, the rallying point between God and Satan. Here are the two war-cries. The hosts of evil cry, "Sin, sin, sin;" but the cry of the armies of the Lord of hosts is this, "Holiness, holiness, holiness." Every time we strike a blow it is "Holiness;" and every time they attack us it is "Sin." Sin is the real object of their aim. When Satan attacks, it is to stab at holiness, and when we resist, it is to guard holiness, or to drive back his sin. Mark you, this, I say, is the point of the battle, and by that ye shall be able to judge on which side you are. What is your war-cry? What is your war-cry? When Cromwell fought with the soldiers of the covenant at Dunbar, you will remember they were distinguished by their cries, on the one side, "The Covenant, the Covenant;" and on the other side, "The Lord of hosts, the Lord of hosts." And so to-night there is the cry on either side, "Sin and the pleasures thereof." Is that your war-cry, friend? You say "No,"—how is it then you were at the theater the other night? You say "No,"—how is it then you frequent the tavern? You say "No,"—how is it then you have got so many misgotten gains about you now? You say, "No,"—how is it you make appointments for deeds of sin, and perhaps to-night, or to-morrow night, intend to fulfill them? I tell you, sirs, there are many of you whose war-cry to-night is "Sin, and the pleasures thereof." On the other hand, I trust there are not a few in this vast throng, who can say, "Oh! sir, feebly though I speak it, yet my war" cry is 'Holiness, and the cross'"—that goeth with it, "Holiness, and the cross." Ah! beloved you are just now on the side that is laughed at, the world points at you and says, "There are your saints." Yes, here they are, sir, what dare you say against them? Abide your time, man, and have your jeering out; ye shall change that laugh for everlasting howlings by-and-bye. "There are your Methodists; there are your hypocritical professors." What, sir, dare you say it? The servants of the living God will know how to answer you in that day, when their king

shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven, and his glory shall be manifest, and they shall share his triumph, and all flesh shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Come, we will pass that question again to-night, "What is your war-cry?" There has been a good deal of wickedness these last few days in London. I love to see holy mirth; I delight to see men well feasted. I like Christmas; I wish it came six times a-year. I like the generosity of those who give to the poor. Let it be extended. I would not stop a smile. God forbid me! But cannot men be happy without drunkenness? cannot they be mirthful without blasphemy? Is there no possibility of being happy without lasciviousness? Are there no other ways of finding true pleasure besides selling your soul to the devil? O sirs! I say there have been thousands in this huge city who have been going about the streets, and whose cry has been, "Sin, and the pleasures thereof! Where is the music-hall? Where is the Casino? Where is the Coal Hole? Where is the tavern? Where is the ball-room? Sin, and the pleasures thereof." O Satan! thou hast many soldiers, and right brave soldiers they are, and never are they afraid of thy cause, nor ashamed of thy name nor of thy unholy work. Ay, thou art well served, O prince of hell! and rich will be thy wages when thy drudges earn the fire for which they have labored. But I hope and trust there are some to-night who will change their watch-note. Ye have not nailed your colors to the mast, have you? Even if you have, by God's grace I would pull the nails out. Are ye determined to die? Will you serve the black prince for ever, and perish with him? Jesus Emmanuel, the captain of our salvation, bids me cry to you, "Enlist beneath my banner." Believe in him, trust in him, and live. Oh! trust the merit of the cross, the virtue of the blood, the tears, and the dying groans. This it is to be a Christian, and ever afterwards this shall be your war-note—"Holiness, and the cross thereof!" O take this, all! Fear not. The cross with holiness will bring the mortifying of the flesh, the shame of the world, and the reproach of men. Take both, for now the battle is raging. But, O my brethren, another crush, and another, and another, and another, and we shall gain the top of the hill, and the shout of "Holiness and the cross!" shall be answered by the echoes all round the world, for everywhere holiness shall be victorious, and men shall know the Lord. Ay, and the echoes of heaven shall answer, too, and the spirits

of the sanctified shall cry, "Holiness, and the crown thereof!" Then we will change one word of our watch-note; and as our enemies have broken before us and are utterly destroyed; as they melt away like the fat of rams; as unto smoke they consume away, we will sing for ever, "Holiness, and the crown thereof! holiness, and the crown thereof!" But that shall be only one note: this shall be the song—"His own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."

I would that some soul would believe in Jesus to-night, that it might share in the victory. I would that young man's heart would be given to Christ to-night, or yours yonder. He deserves it of you: if it were only his mercy in having spared you, he deserves it. And thou greyheaded sinner there, does he not deserve thy heart for sparing thee so long? Yield, I pray thee; his love meets thee. Yield; his terrors threaten thee. Yield; lay down thy weapons, and be for ever forgiven. May God help thee to do it. The Lord prove his sovereignty and his power to-night in the conversion of many of his chosen; and unto him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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New Uses For Old Trophies

King David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the Lord. - 2 Kings 11:10

When David had fought with an adversary, and overcome him, he took away his armor and his weapons, and as other victorious heroes were wont to do, he bore them home as mementoes of his prowess, the trophies of the battle. These were placed in the house of the Lord.

Perhaps David at the same time dedicated in like manner the shield and the sword which he had himself used in battle. After Solomon had built the temple, these trophies, which seem to have been very numerous, were hung up there. So they adorned the walls. So they illustrated the valour of noble sires. So they served to kindle emulation, I doubt not, in the breasts of true-hearted sons. Thus it was while generations sprung up and passed away; till at length other days dawned, darker scenes transpired, and sadder things filled up the chronicles of the nation. You will all of you remember the crisis to which my text refers. Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, wife of Jehoram, king of Judah, the usurping queen of Judah, had played the tyrant for well-nigh seven years. The endurance of the people had been tried to the uttermost; a just recompense was in store, and a well-concerted plan ready for execution. The time had come when she should be put to death, and the young prince who had been hidden away should be proclaimed king. It was arranged that he should be proclaimed in the temple court, yet the men that were to be the body-guard were not armed with weapons, for fear an alarm might be given, and the matter discovered too soon. But these weapons that were hung up of old in the temple were taken down, and the Levites and other friends were armed with them. When Athaliah came in and saw the young king surrounded by his body-guard, thus strangely equipped with the old weapons of former days ready to protect him, she rent her clothes, and cried, "Treason, Treason:" but her doom was sealed, escape was impossible, she was slain. To such good account there and then was the good old armor turned. This simple fact appears to me to suggest a striking moral.

The matter I shall speak to you about to-night will lie under four heads. We will give them to you as they occur to us.

I. And the first is this, IT IS WELL FOR US TO HANG ALL OUR TROPHIES IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

We, too, are warriors. Every genuine Christian has to fight. Every inch of the way between here and heaven we shall have to fight, for as hitherto every single step of our pilgrimage has been one prolonged conflict. Sometimes we have victories, a presage of that final victory, that perfect triumph we shall enjoy with our Great Captain for ever.

"Oh! I have seen the day
When with a single word,
God helping me to say
'My trust is in the Lord,'
My soul has quelled a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose."

When we have these victories it behoves us to be especially careful that in all good conscience we hang up the trophies thereof in the house of the Lord. The reason for this lies here: it is to the Lord that we owe any success we have ever achieved. We have been defeated when we have gone in our own strength; but when we have been victorious it has always been because the strength of the Lord was put forth for our deliverance. You never fought with a sin, with a temptation, or with a doubt, and overthrew it, except by the Spirit's aid. You never won a soul for Jesus, you never spoke a valiant word that repelled an error, you never did an enterprising deed which really told well for the success of the kingdom, but God was in it all—virtually, nay, actually enabling you; and he did it of his own good will. What is it but a simple matter of justice that he who wrought the wonder should have the honor of it? It would have been a crying shame if Miriam had sung to the praise of Moses and Aaron at the Red Sea. They were but the outward instruments of the people's coming out of Egypt. As she took her timbre!, she rightly said, in the hymn that Moses had given her for the occasion: "Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." So in every struggle that transpires in our hearts, in every combat waged in the world, ascribe the power to him to whom it belongs, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." As before the fight in his name we set up our banner, so after the fight in his name again we give the conquering banner to the breeze. "All glory be unto him that won the victory."

This will save us from pride and self-sufficiency. Scarcely can God trust us with a victory, lest we begin fingering it with our own hands, as if our own ingenuity, our own wisdom, or our own strength had done marvels. As of old, Israel sacrificed to her net when a great draught of fish was taken, or to her drag when a great harvest had been threshed out, so are

we too apt to sacrifice to our own ability, our own industry, our own superiority in one respect or another, and think that there is some virtue or merit in us to which the Almighty has awarded the palm. Instead of looking only to God we begin to look in some degree to ourselves. You cannot do otherwise than put the honor somewhere. If you do not ascribe it to God the temptation will be too strong for you, you will be sure to take it for yourself; and if you do this the most fatal consequences will follow, for they that walk in pride God will assuredly abase. No matter how dear you are to him, if pride be harboured in your spirit he will whip it out of you. They that go up in their own estimation must come down again by his discipline. You cannot be exalted in self without being by-and-by brought low before him. God will have it so; it is always the rule, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted them of low degree." He goes forth with the axe, and this is the work he does among the thick trees—he cuts down the high tree and dries up the green tree, but he exalts the low tree, and makes the dry tree to flourish, that all the glory may be unto himself alone; for, saith he, I the Lord have spoken and have done it. Let us take care, however, that we ascribe the glory to God, and do not forget to honor him. We have received so many mercies, my brethren, that they come to us as common things. We receive them, and scarcely know, perhaps, that we have received them. According to the old proverb we do not know the value of our mercies till we miss them; but it ought not to be so. Must we be defeated in order to let us know that God gives us victory? Is it needful that you and I should suffer some great disaster in order to make us grateful for past success? Will you never prize health as one of the choicest boons of heaven till some grievous malady has sapped your strength, and made all the enjoyments of life tasteless or even nauseous? Well, if it be needful, it is a necessity of our own producing. The more the pity that we should challenge the ills we complain of, and incur the reverses we so bitterly deplore. O that we may never slight the good things we have, or trifle with the benefits we receive from the hand of the Lord! Especially, my dear brethren, let us bless God for every spiritual success achieved, and take care to make a record of it on the tablet of our grateful heart. If we should one day have to flee before the enemy, if our work for God should one day seem to be without success, we may look back with much smiting of heart upon those ungrateful times when God dealt so generously with us, and yet we did

not take the trouble to sing him a psalm or offer up a vow, or do any act of homage to express our gratitude to him. Hang up Goliath's sword; do not put it by to rust. Hang up the shields and the spears of the Philistines. If by God's help you have taken them, set store by them, and make the world see what the Lord has done on your behalf, whereof you are glad. Hake the church to join your grateful song. There is too much of the cold silence of ingratitude amongst us. Too seldom do we chant forth our *Te Deum laudamus* with solemn, lively air. Stir the hearts of others because your own heart heaves with deep emotions of thankfulness to the Most High. I am persuaded, my brethren, that it is only in this way that we can secure for ourselves future success. David's life was a series of dilemmas and deliverances. With what sort of face, think you, could he have invoked rescue from fresh perils, had he failed to recognize God's help in past preservation? If, when flushed with victory, he had usurped the honor to himself, what assistance would he have received the next time he was curried with impending disaster? Or, had he not taught the Israelites in the hour of triumph to sing, "Non nobis, Domine"—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory;" how could he have engaged their hearts in the hour of trial to wail forth the litany of supplication—"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." Without consistency we cannot exert any moral influence with men, or obtain any spiritual prevalence with God. May not many of our barren seasons be ascribed to the fact that we did not thank God for fruitful ones? If the preacher has been honored in his ministry to win souls to Christ, but has not duly blessed his God for the enabling of the Holy Ghost granted to himself, and for the witness of the Holy Ghost given to the people; or, worse still if he has complimented himself on his own talents, and the use he makes of them; need he wonder if, when next he goes forth, as Samson of old, and shakes himself as aforetime, he finds his strength has departed from him? "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;" else when most you need him, you may find his strength is taken from you and your honors will have departed too. Hang up the shield, hang up the spear, let Jehovah's name be exalted. Bring forth the forgotten memorials of lovingkindness, expose them to public view, put them before your own mind's eye to-night,

gratefully remember them, lovingly praise him and magnify his name. I am sure we, as a church whom God has blessed so long, ought not to be slow to hang up the trophies of his loving kindness in our midst. If God has done anything for you, tell it. If he has delivered you out of trouble, tell it. If he has fed your soul in the wilderness, tell it. If you have lately been converted, tell it. If you have found Christ precious to you, though just now you were a poor lost soul, tell it. Hang up the shields and spears. Let each individual do it, let the whole church do it; and often by our enlarged endeavors for the dear Savior's sake, by our consecrated self-denials, let us show that we do feel how much we owe to the infinite power of the God of victory, who maketh us strong in the day of battle. That is the first point. If we have any victories, let all the trophies be dedicated to the Lord.

II. The second is this: THESE TROPHIES MAY COME IN USEFUL AT SUCH TIMES AS WE CANNOT FORESEE, AND UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES AS WE WOT NOT OF.

Little could David have thought when he gave Abiathar the sword of Goliath, that he would ever go to the priests of Gad and ask them to lend him a sword, and that they should say, We have no sword here, save the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the Valley of Elah, behold it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. He gave it to God, but he did not think that he would ever have it back again with a priestly blessing on it, so that he should be able to say, "There is none like that: give it me." And when, in after years, he hung up the swords and shields which he had taken away from Philistine heroes, he did not surmise that one of his descendants, or the seed royal, would find the need to employ his own, his grandsire's, or, further back, from himself—his forefather's trophies—in order to establish himself on the throne. We never know, my brethren, when we praise God for mercies, but what the very praises might come back into our bosoms, and the offerings we make to God in the way of thankfulness may be our own enrichment in the days to come. The memorials we put up to record God's goodness, may be to us in after years among the most useful things in all our treasury. To ourselves and others the memorials of the victories we have won may be signally profitable, strangely opportune, seemingly indispensable.

Let me try to show this. Years ago you and I were fighting battles with unbelief. We were struggling after a Savior. Our sins rose up against us thick and furious. The fiery darts of the enemy rained upon us like hail. That conflict we never shall forget; we bear the scars of it to this very day. Glory be to God! by his grace we won the victory and overcame through the blood of the Lamb. We looked at Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in that moment our sins fled away. The whole host of them was defeated. A dying Savior was the symbol of victory. What then? Let us use the mementoes we laid up before the Lord of that day—the trophies that we took in that battle—for ourselves and for others.

For ourselves. If ever we have another struggle against sin—perhaps we shall have many—I mean such alarming assaults as involve severe struggles—let us recollect how Jesus met with us the first time, and "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." He saved us with a great salvation when we first came home as prodigals covered with rags, will he not help us now, when he come to him as his own children, clothed in his own righteousness, and say, "Abba, Father," being already accepted in the Beloved?

I do think it often proves a great blessing to a man that he had a terrible conflict, a desperate encounter, a hard-fought engagement in passing from the empire of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Sooner or later each saved man will have his hand-to-hand fight with the prince of darkness; and as a general rule, it is a great mercy to have it over on the outset of one's career, and be able afterwards to feel, "Whatever comes upon me, I never can suffer as I suffered when I was seeking Christ. Whatever staggering doubt, or hideous blasphemy, or ghastly insinuations, even of suicide itself, may assail my feeble heart, they cannot outdo the horror of great darkness through which my spirit passed when I was struggling after a Savior." Now I do not say that it is desirable that we should have this painful ordeal, much less that we should seek it as an evidence of regeneration, but when we have passed through it victoriously, we may so use it that it may be a perpetual armoury to us. If we can now defy all doubts and fears that come, because

they cannot be so potent as those which already in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior we have overthrown, shall we not use that for ourselves? and can we not equally well use it for others? Full often have I found it good, when I have talked with a young convert in deep distress about his sin, to tell him something more of his anxious plight than he knew how to express and he wondered where I had found it, though he would not have wondered if he knew where I had been, and how much deeper in the mire than he; when he has talked about some horrible thought that he has had, with regard to the impossibility of his own salvation, and I have said, "Why, I have thought that a thousand times, and yet have overcome it through the help of God's Spirit." I know that a man's own experience is one of the very best weapons he can use in fighting with evil in other men's hearts. Often their misery and despondency, aggravated, as it commonly is by a feeling of solitariness, will be greatly relieved before it is effectually driven out when they find that a brother has suffered the same, and yet has been able to overcome. Do I show him how precious the Savior is to my soul he glorifies God in me. Right soon will he look into the same dear face and be lightened; and then he will magnify the Lord with me, and we shall exalt his name together. Thus good it is, you see, to take the old shields and spears away from the enemies and to use them again against new foes of the house of David.

Since that time, dear brethren, when we had the first struggle, we have had to fight with many evil passions and propensities. Perhaps we have had one besetting sin. We were a long time before we came up to beard that. We avoided it, and refrained from rising up against it, until at length we perceived that it must be killed or it would kill us. It was very like pulling out our eyes, but we saw it must be done; we stood foot to foot with it. A sharp time it was, for the sin threatened to prevail against us; if we threw it down it seemed to rise again, like the giant of old, strengthened by its fall. Did you ever have a personal, mental, moral conflict with some great dragon of besetting sin? If so be you have been enabled to smite it valiantly, and slay it utterly, I know you have gained trophies to hang in the house of God. To do so will be of no small advantage to ourselves, because you can take them down and use them in future; and you will find they are footholds of your strength to fight with

the next sin that comes upon you. The strength which God has educated and fostered in the last struggle will greatly assist you in the next. The man who gives way to one sin will very readily give way to another, but a man who through God's grace has won a very high vantage ground by mastering one sin, will be very likely to win another. The spoils taken from the last Philistine will help us to go forth and win more, and in the name of God we shall get the victory. Many a man has had a hard struggle at first. He has been drawn to Christ, proved the grace of acceptance, and taken the vows of allegiance, and henceforth it behoves him to depart from iniquity, and not turn again to folly. Perhaps he has been addicted to swearing, and he has to get rid of that wicked habit at any cost. Perhaps he has been accustomed to frequent the public house, to sit in the seat of the scornful, and enliven his companions with jest and song, he has forthwith to relinquish that place, and take leave of that company for ever. Then perhaps there has been some other vice which he has cherished in secret, and clung to with the more tenacity because it so tenacious!, clung to him; of that evil he has purged himself, and from that bondage he has escaped. Is it not possible that there yet remains one transgression which lurks in the breast of such a one? Very likely at this time he has a passionate temper. Down with it, my brother. You slew the lion, and you slew the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them. Do not be afraid to grapple with it. Do not say, "I have a quick temper, and I cannot help it." There is no need for it. God's grace can drive it out even as the rest. Beard it in the name of the Most High, and use the trophies that you stole from past success—nay, fairly won them from the foes you have vanquished—use those with which to combat sins that now assail you.

To change the figure, it is the lot of some of us to be called to withstand great errors. We have been sorely harassed at times with doubts and misgivings about some established truth. I suppose no one is a firm believer who has not once been a doubter. He knows no faith who never had a fear; for candid enquiry must go before absolute credence. How can any one know the proofs and vouchers of his faith unless he has taken pains to dig into the volume of evidence that lies at its base? Now it is a fine, a noble thing, when you have had a conflict in your own soul with some plausible heresy, some seductive perversion of the truth, and have

put it to flight with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; it is a noble feat, I say, to capture the arms of your assailant and to use the very weapons of the adversary against him. You have detected his sophistry, you have found out his devices, and now for the future you will not be so readily carried away with every wind of doctrine. This time you are too old to be taken with his chaff. You were deceived once, but by God's grace you are not willing any longer to lend a ready ear to the fair speech which casts a mist over plain facts, but you henceforth resolve to prove the spirits whether they be of God. So from the spoils of past conflicts you are made strong to win present victories. Texts of Scripture are sometimes used by the adversaries of the gospel, and turned against us. I know some ministers who, when they meet with a passage that they cannot immediately reconcile with the orthodox faith, alter the reading, or put a fresh sense on the words, or twist it and turn it to suit their purpose. It is a bad plan, my brethren; the texts of Scripture are to be taken as they stand, and you may rest assured they will always defend, never overturn, the faith once delivered to the saints. When I have seen a text sometimes in the hand of the enemy made use of against the deity of Christ, or against the doctrine of election, or against some other important and vital doctrine, I have not felt at all inclined to give up the text or think lightly of it. I rather admire those Americans in the South, who when they had lost some guns, were asked by the commanding officer whether they had not spiked the guns before they gave them up to the foe? "Spiked them! no," said they, "we did not like to spoil such beautiful guns; we will take them again tomorrow." And so they did. I would not have a text touched. Grand old text! we honor thee even while we cannot keep the field, or ward thee from the aggression of the invader. But shall we spoil it, or give it up as lost? Never, we will take it out of the hand of the enemy, use it for the defense of the gospel, and show that it does not mean what they think, or answer the ends to which they would apply it. Are we baffled in attack, or do we lose ground in an argument, it is for us by more diligent study, and closer research, to take the guns, the good old guns, and use those which the enemy used against ourselves—to turn them round and use them against him. Depend upon it the great temple of truth is not like a house divided against itself. Nothing equivocal or prevaricating hath come forth at any time from the mouth of the Lord. As for our understanding, it is always weak, and as for our

tactics in upholding the right, they are often at fault. But the word of God is steadfast; it does not change with the times or yield to suit any man's purpose. The weapons of our warfare are good, it is the hands that wield them that are so unskillful. Thus I might continue to show that in all the battles we fight, the trophies which we win should be stored; for they may come in for future use at some time or other. There is no experience of a Christian that will not have some ultimate service to render him. He may say to himself, "What can be the good of this feeling, what can be the practical advantage of that agony of mind through which I passed?" My brother, you know not what may be the history of your life, it is unfinished yet; if you did know you would see that in this present trial there is a preparation for some future emergency, which will enable you to come out of it in triumph. The shields and spears of David are hung up for future action.

III. In the third place, our text may mean that David hung up the spears and shields which he was accustomed to use himself; and if so, we shall remark that ANCIENT WEAPONS ARE GOOD FOR PRESENT USE.

I should like to show you this by taking you on to a battle-field. I did take you there just now, but you did not recognize it, perhaps, as a battle-ground. We will go to it. It is not Sadowa or Sedan, it is a grander arena far—the old seventy-seventh. Turn to the seventy-seventh Psalm, and you have a battle-field there. Should you ever have to fight the same battle, by looking through this Psalm, you will see David's shields and spears, and you will soon learn how to screen yourself with the one, and how to do exploits with the other. Here is David fighting with despondency—an old enemy of mine. I daresay some of you are afflicted with it. But observe how he fought with it. The first weapon he drew out of the scabbard was the weapon of all-prayer. And how grandly he used it! "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice." Satan trembles when he hears the sound of prayer. They are the conquering legions that know how to pray. Despondency soon flies when a man knows how to ply this all-conquering and ever-useful weapon of petition to the Most High.

Then note how he used this weapon continually. "My hand was stretched out all night," saith he, according to the marginal reading of the second

verse. If the first prayer did not help him, he prayed again; if an hour's prayer did not bring him peace, he would pray two hours; and all night long he kept at it. You will get a like result too, my brother, if you exercise a like perseverance, you must get a like result if you know how to linger at the mercy-seat.

When he had used the weapon of prayer, what did he do next? He took out another spear. It was that of remembering God. He had long enough pored in thought over himself and his present sinfulness and weakness, and now he remembered God's mercy, God's faithfulness, God's lovingkindness, God's power, God's covenant, God in the person of Christ. Oh! this is indeed to prepare a salvo against the enemy, and to fortify one's own position with fresh succours. He can win the battle that knows how to use this artillery of remembering God.

Going on with the strategy of war, what next? Why, in the fifth verse we read how he maintained his courage and his constancy—"I considered the days of old." He enquired of hoary fathers, and looked back upon the inspired traditions, if I may be allowed the expression, of the early church. He tamed to see whether God ever did forsake any of his people, rightly judging that if he never did he never would, and firmly resolving that till he could find a clear case of God's unfaithfulness he would not yield an inch of soil, nor give up a stone of any fortress, but would hold on and fight the battle out. That inward musing helped him much. The enemy began to weary, while he recruited his strength.

But now he used another weapon. He looked to his own experience—see the sixth verse. "I called to remembrance my song in the night." Past experience acknowledged gratefully, and taken as the index of what the future will be—this is another of David's shields and spears. And then he seemed to put a whole path of spears before the enemy, and hold up an entire wall of shields when he came to close quarters with him, and said, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Oh! this is how to win the battle. The next time, dear friend, you find yourself downcast in trouble, do not run away because Giant Despair is so

strong. Though pressed by danger and beset by foes, feed not this frenzy of the soul with gloomy black forebodings. Armed with David's shield and spears, attack him; show a bold front, and so shall yet resist the devil and find that he flees from you, and you shall come back from the conflict with louder notes of victory than you had dreamed before.

There are some persons here, however, who are not yet far enough advanced to understand this battle of the seventy-seventh. I will take them to another battle, the battle of the fifty-first. That is the sinner's battle; we shall see David's shields and spears there. A tremendous battle it was with sin, with a guilty conscience, with despairing thoughts. Some of you, perhaps, are fighting such a battle to-night. I rather hope you are. I was preaching the other day, I think it was last Tuesday evening, at Acton. I went my way after service hopeful, prayerful that some fruits might be reaped from my labors. Not long after I received a letter from the minister to this effect: "My dear friend, I could not help writing to tell you that last Tuesday night when I was in bed and asleep, there was a knock at my door, and I came down and found a railway porter wanting to see me. "O sir," said he, "I cannot sleep; I was obliged to come and knock you up though it is late. I heard the sermon at your chapel to-night, and I want to know what I must do to be saved? It is time for me to seek the Lord, and I shall never get rest till I find him." Oh! it is good for us to be knocked up at night to answer any one that comes on such an errand as that. Would God it were every night in the year, if it were to hear a sinner saying, "What must I do to be saved?"

Now, if one here present be in such a condition as that, just let him follow me to this battle-field, and see how David fought. His shields and spears in such case consisted first in an appeal to God's mercy. Do not appeal to justice, sinner. That is against you; appeal to mercy. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness!" Prayer he brings before God, but it is prayer tipped with a hope in the mercy in God. Go, sinner, and plead with God and fight your sins with hope in his mercy. When he had done that he then turns to confession: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me." No weapon to drive away guilty fears like making a clean breast of your sins. Tell your Father you have offended; do not plead any extenuations or mitigations. Confess that

you deserve his wrath. Put yourself before the throne of God's clemency. Confess that if it were turned to a throne of vengeance you deserve it well. Prayers, tears, pleas for mercy, and full confession—these are weapons to conquer with.

But note the master weapon! See where the battle began to turn into victory. It is here when he cries in the seventh verse, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You know that hyssop was a little bunch, a brush used to dip into the blood—a basin full of blood, and then with this brush of hyssop the priest sprinkled the guilty man, the unclean man, and he was counted clean. So the master argument in this verse is blood. Oh! how this destroys our sins, how this scatters all our doubts and fears—the almighty weapon of the cross, the divine weapon of the atonement. Let sins come on, and let them be more than the hairs of my head, loftier than mountains and deeper than the unfathomed ocean, let them come on—God's flaming wrath behind them, hell itself coming to devour me; yet if I can but take the cross and hold it up before me, if I can plead the precious blood I shall be safe, for I shall be saved and prove a conqueror, notwithstanding all. Beloved, then, see that in all your fights you use the old, old weapons of David himself—his shields and spears—by these same weapons shall you also win the day.

IV. And now, lastly, let me suggest to you a fourth version of the text. DID NOT DAVID HEREIN PREFIGURE HIM THAT WAS TO COME—DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD?

Jesus Christ, our King, has hung up many shields and spears in the house of the Lord. I shall not occupy many minutes, but I invite every believer's heart to look at the great temple that Christ has builded, and see how he has hung it round with trophies of his victory. Sin—Christ has borne it in himself, endured its penalty and overcome it; he has hung up the handwriting of ordinances that was against us as a trophy in the house of the Lord. He has nailed it to the cross. Satan—our great foe—he met him foot to foot in the wilderness and discomfited him—met him in the garden—overcame him on the cross. Now hell, too, is vanquished—Christ is Lord. The prince of the power of the air is but his serf. The King of

kings hath led captivity captive, and all the crowns of this prince of the power of the air are hung up as trophies. Broken are their spears: their shields all battered and vilely cast away, hang up as memorials of what Christ has done. Death, too, the last enemy, Christ hath taken spoils from him when he rose again himself from his prison house, and ascended on high, leading captivity captive. And the enmity of the human heart, my brethren. Oh I how many of these enmities has Christ hung up in the hall, for he has conquered that enmity and made the hater into a lover. My heart, your heart, I hope that all our hearts, too, are trophies of what Christ's love can do. There are some great sinners at this day who are wonderful tokens of the power of love. When we look round the temple and see the shields and spears hung up, we say, "Who did those shields and spears belong to?" One says, "Why, that is the shield and spear of John Newton, the old blasphemer!" Glory be to God, Christ conquered him. Whose shield and spears are those? Why, that is the shield and spear of John Bunyan, the blasphemer on the village green. God's mercy conquered him. Yes, there will be a pillar for many of us, and I do not know which will bring Christ most honor, for he had much ado to bring us down. I wonder whether there will be a place for you, you old sailor? These many year you have been living without God and without Christ. You have been a frequenter of every place of sin, every filthy haunt in London. I do trust God's grace will meet with you. The poor harlot, Mary, the woman that was a sinner—there hangs her shield and spear. She was a hard fighter, a very Amazon, but Christ conquered her, hung up her shield and spear, and there it shall hang for ever, to the praise of the glory of his grace, who vanquished even her, and made her his willing servant, nay, his beloved friend. What will heaven be when all of us shall be trophies of his power to save, and when our bodies shall be there as well as our souls! "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—when not only souls, but bodies shall be in heaven too, all trophies of what Christ has done when he plucked his people from the jaws of the grave and delivered them from the grasp of the sepulcher.

I came just now, before I entered here, from a sight which did my very soul good. One of our dear and well-beloved sisters, lies very sick, I think sue is dying—in all human probability a few hours will see her in another world. I looked at her as one of the trophies of Christ's power to save. I

would not have missed the visit for I know not what. She was not only calm, but joyous; nay, triumphant, expecting the time of her departure and longing for it, speaking of everlasting faithfulness, of sure promises, and of the presence of Christ as a reality, which she enjoyed even now, before the veil of flesh is rent that hides his blessed face from ours. I said to her, "How long is it since the cloud has broken away from you?" She said, "I have had a good deal of peace of mind, but never such joy as I have now. Now that I am going hence I shall soon see his face without a veil between." The victories of dying spirits substantiate the gospel. When Christian people have no motive to overrate their assurance, and certainly no inducement to play the hypocrite, when they have nothing in their present sensations to inspire courage, raise enthusiasm, or buoy them up with suspicious comfort—for heart and flesh fail—there is much to admire in their constancy, much to animate us in their faith:

"Our dying friends are pioneers to smoothe
Our rugged path to death, to break those bars
Of terror and abhorrence Nature throws
Cross our obstructed way, and thus to make
Welcome, as safe, our port from every storm."

When you can see the eye, soon to be closed, sparkling with ecstasy, and hear the voice feeble because the throat is choking, as brave, and braver still than ever it has been before, and when you mark the look of deep composure, nay, of heavenly expectancy, upon the pale, pale face—oh! this makes our soul, my brethren, to feel that we have a faith that is worth prizing, a Christ that is worth trusting. These are trophies; and these death-bed trophies are hung up in that part of the temple where we can see them.

Let us take care that we have good confidence, always walking by faith, be the path of our pilgrimage rough or smooth, arid ever maintaining the fight of faith, however fierce our temptations or fiery our trials. So when we come to die we may hang up our trophies too, saying to death and hell that we bid them defiance, for Christ is with us to the last, making our darkest moments to be bright with the light of his presence. God grant that all of us may be trophies of Christ, and hung up thus as memorials

for ever. Amen.

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A New Year's Benediction (1 Peter)

But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. - 1 Peter 5:10

The apostle Peter turns from exhortation to prayer. He knew that if praying be the end of preaching in the hearer, preaching should always be accompanied by prayer in the minister. Having exhorted believers to walk stedfastly, he bends his knee and commends them to the guardian care of heaven, imploring upon them one of the largest blessings for which the most affectionate heart ever made supplication. The minister of Christ is intended to execute two offices for the people of his charge. He is to speak for God to them, and for them to God. The pastor hath not fulfilled the whole of his sacred commission when he hath declared the whole counsel of God. He hath then done but half. The other part is that which is to be performed in secret, when he carrieth upon his breast, like the priest of old, the wants, the sins, the trials of his people, and pleads with God for them. The daily duty of the Christian pastor is as much to pray for his people, as to exhort, instruct, and console. There are, however, special seasons when the minister of Christ finds himself constrained to pronounce an unusual benediction over his people. When one year of trial has gone and another year of mercy has commenced, we may be allowed to express our sincere congratulations that God has spared us, and our earnest invocations of a thousand blessings upon the heads of those whom God has committed to our pastoral charge.

I have this morning taken this text as a new year's blessing. You are aware that a minister of the Church of England always supplies me with the motto for the new year. He prays much before he selects the text, and I

know that it is his prayer for you all to-day. He constantly favors me with this motto, and I always think it my duty to preach from it, and then desire my people to remember it through the year as a staff of support in their time of trouble, as some sweet morsel, a wafer made with honey, a portion of angel's food, which they may roll under their tongue, and carry in their memory till the year ends, and then begin with another sweet text. What larger benediction could my aged friend have chosen, standing as he is to-day in his pulpit, and lifting up holy hands to preach to the people in a quiet village church - what larger blessing could he implore for the thousands of Israel than that which in his name I pronounce upon you this day: - "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."

In discoursing upon this text, I shall have to remark: - first, what the apostle asks of heaven; and then, secondly, why he expects to receive it. The reason of his expecting to be answered is contained in the title by which he addresses the Lord his God - "The GOD OF ALL GRACE who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus."

I. First, then, WHAT THE APOSTLE ASKS FOR ALL TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN. He asks for them four sparkling jewels set in a black foil. The four jewels are these: - Perfection, Establishment, Strengthening, Settling. The jet-black setting is this - "After that ye have suffered awhile." Worldly compliments are of little worth; for as Chesterfield observes, "They cost nothing but ink and paper." I must confess, I think even that little expense is often thrown away. Worldly compliments generally omit all idea of sorrow. "A merry Christmas! A happy new year!" There is no supposition of anything like suffering. But Christian benedictions look at the truth of matters. We know that men must suffer, we believe that men are born to sorrow as the spark flieth upwards; and therefore in our benediction we include the sorrow. Nay, more than that, we believe that the sorrow shall assist in working out the blessing which we invoke upon your heads. We, in the language of Peter, say, "After that ye have suffered a while, may the God of all grace make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." Understand, then, as I take each of these four jewels, that you are to look upon them, and consider

that they are only desired for you "after that ye have suffered awhile." We must not discard the sufferings. We must take them from the same hand from which we receive the mercy; and the blessing bears date, "after that ye have suffered a while."

1. Now the first sparkling jewel in this ring is perfection. The apostle prays that God would make us perfect. Indeed, though this be a large prayer, and the jewel is a diamond of the first water, and of the finest size, yet is it absolutely necessary to a Christian that he should ultimately arrive at perfection. Have ye never on your bed dreamed a dream, when your thoughts roamed at large and the bit was taken from the lip of your imagination, when stretching all your wings, your soul floated through the Infinite, grouping strange and marvelous things together, so that the dream rolled on in something like supernatural splendor? But on a sudden you were awakened, and you have regretted hours afterwards that the dream was never concluded. And what is a Christian, if he do not arrive at perfection, but an unfinished dream? A majestic dream it is true, full of things that earth had never known if it had not been that they were revealed to flesh and blood by the Spirit. But suppose the voice of sin should startle us ere that dream be concluded, and if as when one awaketh, we should despise the image which began to be formed in our minds, what were we then? Everlasting regrets, a multiplication of eternal torment must be the result of our having begun to be Christians, if we do not arrive at perfection. If there could be such a thing as a man in whom sanctification began but in whom God the Spirit ceased to work, if there could be a being so unhappy as to be called by grace and to be deserted before he was perfected, there would not be among the damned in hell a more unhappy wretch. It were no blessing for God to begin to bless if he did not perfect. It were the grandest curse which Omnipotent hatred itself could pronounce, to give a man grace at all, if that grace did not carry him to the end, and land him safely in heaven. I must confess that I would rather endure the pangs of that dread archangel, Satan, throughout eternity, than have to suffer as one whom God once loved, but whom he cast away. But such a thing shall never be. Whom once he hath chosen he doth not reject. We know that where he hath begun a good work he will carry it on, and he will complete it until the day of Christ. Grand is the prayer, then, when the apostle asks that we may be perfected. What were

a Christian if he were not perfected? Have you never seen a canvas upon which the hand of the painter has sketched with daring pencil some marvellous scene of grandeur? You see where the living color has been laid on with an almost superhuman skill. But the artist was suddenly struck dead, and the hand that worked miracles of art was palsied, and the pencil dropped. Is it not a source of regret to the world that ever the painting was commenced, since it was never finished? Have you never seen the human face divine starting out from the chiselled marble? You have seen the exquisite skill of the sculptor, and you have said within yourself, "What a marvellous thing will this be! what a matchless specimen of human skill!" But, alas! it never was completed, but was left unfinished. And do you imagine, any of you, that God will begin to sculpture out a perfect being and not complete it? Do you think that the hand of divine wisdom will sketch the Christian and not fill up the details? Hath God taken us as unhewn stones out of the quarry, and hath he begun to work upon us, and show his divine art, his marvellous wisdom and grace and will he afterwards cast us away? Shall God fail? Shall he leave his works imperfect? Point, if you can, my hearers, to a world which God has cast away unfinished. Is there one speck in his creation where God hath begun to build but was not able to complete? Hath he made a single angel deficient? Is there one creature over which it cannot be said, "This is very good?" And shall it be said over the creature twice made - the chosen of God, the blood-bought - shall it be said, "The Spirit began to work in this man's heart, but the man was mightier than the Spirit, and sin conquered grace; God was put to rout, and Satan triumphed, and the man was never perfected?" Oh, my dear brethren, the prayer shall be fulfilled. After that ye have suffered a while, God shall make you perfect, if he has begun the good work in you.

But, beloved, it must be after that ye have suffered awhile. Ye cannot be perfected except by the fire. There is no way of ridding you of your dross and your tin but by the names of the furnace of affliction. Your folly is so bound up in your hearts, ye children of God, that nothing but the rod can bring it out of you. It is through the blueness of your wounds that your heart is made better. Ye must pass through tribulation, that through the Spirit it may act as a refining fire to you; that pure, holy, purged, and washed, ye may stand before the face of your God, rid of every

imperfection, and delivered from every corruption within.

2. Let us now proceed to the second blessing of the benediction - establishment. It is not enough even if the Christian had received in himself a proportional perfection, if he were not established. You have seen the arch of heaven as it spans the plain: glorious are its colors, and rare its hues. Though we have seen it many and many a time, it never ceases to be "A thing of beauty and a joy for ever." But alas for the rainbow, it is not established. It passes away and lo it is not. The fair colors give way to the fleecy clouds, and the sky is no longer brilliant with the tints of heaven. It is not established. How can it be? A thing that is made of transitory sunbeams and passing rain-drops, how can it abide? And mark, the more beautiful the vision, the more sorrowful the reflection when that vision vanishes, and there is nothing left but darkness. It is, then, a very necessary wish for the Christian, that he should be established. Of all God's known conceptions, next to his incarnate Son, I do not hesitate to pronounce a Christian man the noblest conception of God. But if this conception is to be but as the rainbow painted on the cloud, and is to pass away for ever, woe worth the day that ever our eyes were tantalized with a sublime conception that is so soon to melt away. What is a Christian man better than the flower of the field, which is here to day, and which withers when the sun is risen with fervent heat, unless God establish him - what is the difference between the heir of heaven, the blood-bought child of God, and the grass of the field? Oh, may God fulfill to you this rich benediction, that you may not be as the smoke out of a chimney, which is blown away by the wind: that your goodness may not be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away; but may ye be established, may every good thing that you have be an abiding thing. May your character be not a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock. May your faith be no "baseless fabric of a vision," but may it be builded of stone that shall endure that awful fire which shall consume the wood, hay, and stubble of the hypocrite. May ye be rooted and grounded in love. May your conviction be deep. May your love be real. May your desires be earnest. May your whole life be so settled, fixed and established, that all the blasts of hell and all the storms of earth shall never be able to remove you. You know we talk about some Christian men as being old established Christians. I

do fear there are a great many that are old, who are not established. It is one thing to have the hair whitened with years, but I fear it is another thing for us to obtain wisdom. There be some who grow no wiser by all their experience. Though their fingers be well rapped by experience, yet have they not learned in that school. I know there are many aged Christians who can say of themselves, and say it sorrowfully too, they wish they had their opportunities over again, that they might learn more, and might be more established. We have heard them sing -

"I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide."

The benediction however of the apostle is one which I pray may be fulfilled in us whether we be young or old, but especially in those of you who have long known your Lord and Savior. You ought not now to be the subject of those doubts which vex the babe in grace. Those first principles should not always be laid again by you: but you should be going forward to something higher. You are getting near to heaven; oh, how is it that you have not got to the land Beulah yet? to that land which floweth with milk and honey? Surely your wavering in beseemeth those grey hairs. Methought they had been whitened with the sunlight of heaven. How is it that some of the sunlight does not gleam from your eyes? We who are young look up to you old-established Christians; and if we see you doubting, and hear you speaking with a trembling lip then we are exceedingly cast down. We pray for our sakes as well as for yours, that this blessing may be fulfilled in you, that you may be established; that you may no longer be exercised with doubt; that you may know your interest in Christ, that you may feel you are secure in him; that resting upon the rock of ages you may know that you cannot perish while your feet are fixed there. We do pray, in fact, for all, of whatever age, that our hope may be fixed upon nothing less than Jesu's blood and righteousness, and that it may be so firmly fixed that it may never shake; but that we may be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed, and which abideth for ever.

Thus have I remarked upon the second blessing of this benediction. But mark, we cannot have it until after we have suffered a while. We cannot be established except by suffering. It is of no use our hoping that we shall

be well-rooted if no March winds have passed over us. The young oak cannot be expected to strike its roots so deep as the old one. Those old gnarlings on the roots, and those strange twistings of the branches, all tell of many storms that have swept over the aged tree. But they are also indicators of the depths into which the roots have dived; and they tell the woodman that he might as soon expect to rend up a mountain as to tear up that oak by the roots. We must suffer a while, then shall we be established.

3. Now for the third blessing, which is strengthening. Ah, brethren, this is a very necessary blessing too for all Christians. There be some whose characters seem to be fixed and established. But still they lack force and vigor. Shall I give you a picture of a Christian without strength? There he is. He has espoused the cause of King Jesus. He hath put on his armor; he hath enlisted in the heavenly host. Do you observe him? He is perfectly panoplied from head to foot, and he carries with him the shield of faith. Do you notice, too, how firmly he is established? He keeps his ground, and he will not be removed. But notice him. When he uses his sword it falls with feeble force. His shield, though he grasps it as firmly as his weakness will allow him, trembles in his grasp. There he stands, he will not move, but still how tottering is his position. His knees knock together with affright when he heareth the sound and the noise of war and tumult. What doth this man need? His will is right, his intention is right, and his heart is fully set upon good things. What doth he need? Why he needeth strength. The poor man is weak and childlike. Either because he has been fed on unsavoury and unsubstantial meat, or because of some sin which has straitened him, he has not that force and strength which ought to dwell in the Christian man. But once let the prayer of Peter be fulfilled to him, and how strong the Christian becomes. There is not in all the world a creature so strong as a Christian when God is with him. Talk of Behemoth! he is but as a little thing. His might is weakness when matched with the believer. Talk of Leviathan that maketh the deep to be hoary! he is not the chief of the ways of God. The true believer is mightier far than even he. Have you never seen the Christian when God is with him? He smelleth the battle afar off, and he cries in the midst of the tumult, "Aha! aha! aha!" He laugheth at all the hosts of his enemies. Or if you compare him to the Leviathan - if he be cast into a sea of trouble, he

lashes about him and makes the deep hoary with benedictions. He is not overwhelmed by the depths, nor is he afraid of the rocks; he has the protection of God about him, and the floods cannot drown him; nay, they become an element of delight to him, while by the grace of God he rejoiceth in the midst of the billows. If you want a proof of the strength of a Christian you have only to turn to history, and you can see there how believers have quenched the violence of fire, have shut the mouths of lions, have shaken their fists in the face of grim death, have laughed tyrants to scorn, and have put to flight the armies of aliens, by the all-mastering power of faith in God. I pray God, my brethren, that he may strengthen you this year.

The Christians of this age are very feeble things. It is a remarkable thing that the great mass of children now-a-days are born feeble. You ask me for the evidence of it. I can supply it very readily. You are aware that in the Church of England Liturgy it is ordered and ordained that all children should be immersed in baptism except those that are certified to be of a weakly state. Now, it were uncharitable to imagine that persons would be guilty of falsehood when they come up to what they think to be a sacred ordinance; and, therefore, as nearly all children are now sprinkled, and not immersed, I suppose they are born feeble. Whether that accounts for the fact that all Christians are so feeble I will not undertake to say, but certain it is that we have not many gigantic Christians now-a-days. Here and there we hear of one who seems to work all but miracles in these modern times, and we are astonished. Oh that ye had faith like these men! I do not think there is much more piety in England now than there used to be in the days of the Puritans. I believe there are far more pious men; but while the quantity has been multiplied, I fear the quality has been depreciated. In those days the stream of grace ran very deep indeed. Some of those old Puritans, when we read of their devotion, and of the hours they spent in prayer, seem to have as much grace as any hundred of us. The stream ran deep. But now-a-days the banks are broken down, and great meadows have been flooded therewith. So far so good. But while the surface has been enlarged I fear the depth has been frightfully diminished. And this may account for it, that while our piety has become shallow our strength has become weak. Oh, may God strengthen you this year! But remember, if he does do so, you will then have to suffer. "After

that ye have suffered a while," may he strengthen you. There is sometimes an operation performed upon horses which one must consider to be cruel - the firing of them to make their tendons strong. Now, every Christian man before he can be strengthened must be fired. He must have his nerves and tendons braced up with the hot iron of affliction. He will never become strong in grace, unless it be after he has suffered a while.

4. And now I come to the last blessing of the four - "Settling." I will not say that this last blessing is greater than the other three, but it is a stepping-stone to each; and strange to say, it is often the result of a gradual attainment of the three preceding ones. "Settle you!" Oh, how many there are that are never settled. The tree which should be transplanted every week would soon die. Nay, if it were moved, no matter how skilfully, once every year, no gardener would expect fruit from it. How many Christians there be that are transplanting themselves constantly, even as to their doctrinal sentiments. There be some who generally believe according to the last speaker; and there be others who do not know what they do believe, but they believe almost anything that is told them. The spirit of Christian charity, so much cultivated in these days, and which we all love so much, has, I fear, assisted in bringing into the world a species of latitudinarianism; or in other words, men have come to believe that it does not matter what they do believe; that although one minister says it is so, and the other says it is not so; yet we are both right; that though we contradict each other flatly, yet we are both correct. I know not where men have had their judgments manufactured, but to my mind it always seems impossible to believe a contradiction. I can never understand how contrary sentiments can both of them be in accordance with the Word of God, which is the standard of truth. But yet there be some who are like the weathercock upon the church steeple, they will turn just as the wind blows. As good Mr. Whitfield said, "You might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as tell their doctrinal sentiments," for they are always shifting and ever changing. Now, I pray that this may be taken away from any of you, if this be your weakness, and that you may be settled. Far from us be bigotry removed; yet would I have the Christian know what he believes to be true and then stand to it. Take your time in weighing the controversy, but when you have once decided, be not easily moved. Let God be true though every man be a liar,

and stand to it, that what is according to God's Word one day cannot be contrary to it another day, that what was true in Luther's day and Calvin's day must be true now; that falsehoods may shift, for they have a Protean shape; but the truth is one, and indivisible, and evermore the same. Let others think as they please. Allow the greatest latitude to others, but to yourself allow none. Stand firm and steadfast by that which ye have been taught, and ever seek the spirit of the apostle Paul, "If any man preach any other gospel than that which we have received, let him be accursed." If, however, I wished you to be firm in your doctrines, my prayer would be that you may be especially settled in your faith. You believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and you rest in him. But sometimes your faith wavers, then you lose your joy and comfort. I pray that your faith may become so settled that it may never be a matter of question with you, whether Christ is yours or not, but that you may say confidently, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Then I pray that you may be settled in your aims and designs. There are many Christian people who get a good idea into their heads, but they never carry it out, because they ask some friend what he thinks of it. "Not much," says he. Of course he does not. Whoever did think much of anybody else's idea? And at once the person who conceived it gives it up, and the work is never accomplished. How many a man in his ministry has begun to preach the gospel, and he has allowed some member of the church, some deacon possibly, to pull him by one ear, and he has gone a little that way. By-and-bye, some other brother has thought fit to pull him in the other direction. The man has lost his manliness. He has never been settled as to what he ought to do; and now he becomes a mere lacquey, waiting upon everybody's opinion, willing to adopt whatever anybody else conceives to be right. Now, I pray you be settled in your aims. See what niche it is that God would have you occupy. Stand in it, and don't be got out of it by all the laughter that comes upon you. If you believe God has called you to a work, do it. If men will help you thank them. If they will not, tell them to stand out of your road or be run over. Let nothing daunt you. He who will serve his God must expect sometimes to serve him alone. Not always shall we fight in the ranks. There are times when the Lord's David must fight Goliath singly, and must take with him three stones out of the brook amid the laughter of his brethren, yet still in his weapons is he confident of victory

through faith in God. Be not moved from the work to which God has put you. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not. Be ye settled. Oh, may God fulfill this rich blessing to you.

But you will not be settled unless you suffer. You will become settled in your faith and settled in your aims by suffering. Men are soft molluscous animals in these days. We have not the tough men that know they are right and stand to it. Even when a man is wrong one does admire his conscientiousness when he stands up believing that he is right and dares to face the frowns of the world. But when a man is right, the worst thing he can have is inconstancy, vacillation, the fear of men. Hurl it from thee O knight of the holy cross, and be firm if thou wouldst be victorious. Faint heart never stormed a city yet, and thou wilt never win nor be crowned with honor, if thy heart be not steeled against every assault and if thou be not settled in thy intention to honor thy Master and to win the crown.

Thus have I run through the benediction.

II. I come now, asking your attention for a few minutes more, to observe THE REASONS WHY THE APOSTLE PETER EXPECTED THAT HIS PRAYER WOULD BE HEARD. He asked that they might be made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled. Did not Unbelief whisper in Peter's ear, "Peter, thou askest too much. Thou wast always headstrong. Thou didst say 'Bid me come upon the water.' Surely, this is another instance of thy presumption. If thou hadst said, 'Lord, make them holy,' had it not been a sufficient prayer? Hast thou not asked too much?" "No," saith Peter; and he replies to Unbelief, "I am sure I shall receive what I have asked for; for I am in the first place asking it of the God of all grace - the God of all grace." Not the God of the little graces we have received already alone, but the God of the great boundless grace which is stored up for us in the promise, but which as yet we have not received in our experience. "The God of all grace;" of quickening grace, of convincing grace, of pardoning grace, of believing grace, the God of comforting, supporting, sustaining grace. Surely, when we come to him we cannot come for too much. If he be the God, not of one grace, or of two graces, but of all graces, if in him there is stored up an infinite, boundless, limitless supply, how can we ask too much, even though we ask that we

may be perfect? Believer, when you are on your knees, remember you are going to a king. Let your petitions be large. Imitate the example of Alexander's courtier, who when he was told he might have whatever he chose to ask as a reward for his valor, asked a sum of money so large that Alexander's treasurer refused to pay it until he had first seen the monarch. When he saw the monarch, he smiled and said, "It is true it is much for him to ask, but it is not much for Alexander to give. I admire him for his faith in me; let him have all he asks for." And dare I ask that I may be perfect, that my angry temper may be taken away, my stubbornness removed, my imperfections covered? May I ask that I may be like Adam in the garden - nay more, as pure and perfect as God himself? May I ask, that one day I may tread the golden streets, and "With my Savior's garments on, holy as the holy one," stand in the mid-blaze of God's glory, and cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Yes, I may ask it; and I shall have it, for he is the God of all grace.

Look again at the text, and you see another reason why Peter expected that his prayer would be heard: - "The God of all grace who hath called us." Unbelief might have said to Peter, "Ah, Peter, it is true that God is the God of all grace, but he is as a fountain shut up, as waters sealed." "Ah," saith Peter, "get thee hence Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God. It is not a sealed fountain of all grace, for it has begun to flow" - "The God of all grace hath called us." Calling is the first drop of mercy that trickleth into the thirsty lip of the dying man. Calling is the first golden link of the endless chain of eternal mercies. Not the first in order of time with God, but the first in order of time with us. The first thing we know of Christ in his mercy, is that he cries, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden," and that by his sweet Spirit he addresses us, so that we obey the call and come to him. Now, mark, if God has called me, I may ask him to stablish and keep me; I may ask that as year rolls after year my piety may not die out, I may pray that the bush may burn, but not be consumed, that the barrel of meal may not waste, and the cruse of oil may not fail. Dare I ask that to life's latest hour I may be faithful to God, because God is faithful to me? Yes, I may ask it, and I shall have it too: because the God that calls, will give the rest. "For whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate; and whom he did predestinate, them

he also called; and whom he called he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Think of thy calling Christian, and take courage, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." If he has called thee he will never repent of what he has done, nor cease to bless or cease to save.

But I think there is a stronger reason coming yet: - "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory." Hath God called thee, my hearer? Dost thou know to what he has called thee? He called thee first into the house of conviction, where he made thee feel thy sin. Again he called thee to Calvary's summit, where thou didst see thy sin atoned for and thy pardon sealed with precious blood. And now he calls thee. And whither away? I hear a voice to-day - unbelief tells me that there is a voice calling me to Jordan's waves. Oh, unbelief! it is true that through the stormy billows of that sea my soul must wade. But the voice comes not from the depths of the grave, it comes from the eternal glory. There where Jehovah sits resplendent on his throne, surrounded by cherubim and seraphim, from that brightness into which angels dare not gaze, I hear a voice: - "Come unto me, thou blood-washed sinner, come unto my eternal glory." O heavens! is not this a wondrous call? - to be called to glory - called to the shining streets and pearly gates - called to the harps and to the songs of eternal happiness - and better still, called to Jesu's bosom - called to his Father's face - called, not to eternal glory, but to HIS eternal glory - called to that very glory and honor with which God invests himself for ever? And now, beloved, is any prayer too great after this? Has God called me to heaven, and is there anything on earth he will deny me? If he has called me to dwell in heaven is not perfection necessary for me? May I not therefore ask for it? If he has called me to glory, is it not necessary that I should be strengthened to fight my way thither? May I not ask for strengthening? Nay, if there be a mercy upon earth too great for me to think of, too large for me to conceive, too heavy for my language to carry it before the throne in prayer, he will I do for me exceeding abundantly above what I can ask, or even I can think. I know he will, because he has called me to his eternal glory.

The last reason why the apostle expected that his benediction would be fulfilled was this: "Who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ

Jesus." It is a singular fact that no promise is ever so sweet to the believer as those in which the name of Christ is mentioned. If I have to preach a comforting sermon to desponding Christians, I would never select a text which did not enable me to lead the desponding one to the cross. Does it not seem too much to you, brethren and sisters, this morning, that the God of all grace should be your God? Does it not surpass your faith that he should actually have called you? Do you not sometimes doubt as to whether you were called at all? And when you think of eternal glory, does not the question arise, "Shall I ever enjoy it? Shall I ever see the face of God with acceptance?" Oh, beloved, when ye hear of Christ, when you know that this grace comes through Christ, and the calling through Christ, and the glory through Christ, then you say, "Lord, I can believe it now, if it is through Christ." It is not a hard thing to believe that Christ's blood was sufficient to purchase every blessing for me. If I go to God's treasury without Christ, I am afraid to ask for anything, but when Christ is with me I can then ask for everything. For sure I think he deserves it though I do not. If I can claim his merits then I am not afraid to plead. Is perfection too great a boon for God to give to Christ? Oh, no. Is the keeping, the stability, the preservation of the blood-bought ones too great a reward for the terrible agonies and sufferings of the Savior? I trow not. Then we may with confidence plead, because everything comes through Christ.

I would in concluding make this remark. I wish, my brothers and sisters, that during this year you may live nearer to Christ than you have ever done before. Depend upon it, it is when we think much of Christ that we think little of ourselves, little of our troubles, and little of the doubts and fears that surround us. Begin from this day, and may God help you. Never let a single day pass over your head without a visit to the garden of Gethsemane, and the cross on Calvary. And as for some of you who are not saved, and know not the Redeemer, I would to God that this very day you would come to Christ. I dare say you think coming to Christ is some terrible thing: that you need to be prepared before you come; that he is hard and harsh with you. When men have to go to a lawyer they need to tremble; when they have to go to the doctor they may fear; though both those persons, however unwelcome, may be often necessary. But when you come to Christ, you may come boldly. There is no fee required; there

is no preparation necessary. You may come just as you are. It was a brave saying of Martin Luther's, when he said, "I would run into Christ's arms even if he had a drawn sword in his hand." Now, he has not a drawn sword, but he has his wounds in his hands. Run into his arms, poor sinner. "Oh," you say, "May I come?" How can you ask the question? you are commanded to come. The great command of the gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Those who disobey this command disobey God. It is as much a command of God that man should believe on Christ, as that we should love our neighbor. Now, what is a command I have certainly a right to obey. There can be no question you see; a sinner has liberty to believe in Christ because he is told to do so. God would not have told him to do a thing which he must not do. You are allowed to believe. "Oh," saith one, "that is all I want to know. I do believe that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. May I rest my soul on him, and say, sink or swim, most blessed Jesus, thou art my Lord?" May do it! man? Why you are commanded to do it. Oh that you may be enabled to do it. Remember, this is not a thing which you will do at a risk. The risk is in not doing it. Cast yourself on Christ, sinner. Throw away every other dependence and rest alone on him. "No," says one, "I am not prepared." Prepared! sir? Then you do not understand me. There is no preparation needed; it is, just as you are. "Oh, I do not feel my need enough." I know you do not. What has that to do with it? You are commanded to cast yourself on Christ. Be you never so black or never so bad, trust to him. He that believeth on Christ shall be saved, be his sins never so many, he that believeth not must be damned be his sins never so few. The great command of the gospel is, "Believe." "Oh," but saith one, "am I to say I know that Christ died for me?" Ah, I did not say that, you shall learn that by-and-bye. You have nothing to do with that question now, your business is to believe on Christ and trust him; to cast yourself into his hands. And may God the Spirit now sweetly compel you to do it. Now, sinner, hands off your own righteousness. Drop all idea of becoming better through your own strength. Cast yourself flat on the promise. Say -

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee;
Oh, Lamb of God! I come, I come."

You cannot trust in Christ and find him still deceive you.

Now, have I made myself plain? If there were a number of persons here in debt, and if I were to say, "If you will simply trust to me your debts shall be paid, and no creditor shall ever molest you," you would understand me directly. How is it you cannot comprehend that trusting in Christ will remove all your debts, take away all your sins, and you shall be saved eternally. Oh, Spirit of the living God, open the understanding to receive, and the heart to obey, and may many a soul here present cast itself on Christ. On all such, as on all believers, do I again pronounce the benediction, with which I shall dismiss you. "May the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you!"

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A New Year's Benediction (Hebrews)

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. - Hebrews 13:5

Observe the way in which the apostles were accustomed to incite believers in Christ to the performance of their duties. They did not tell them, "You must do this or that, or you will be punished; you must do this, and then you shall obtain a reward for it." They never cracked the whip of the law in the ears of the child of God. They knew the difference between the man who was actuated by sordid motives and the fear of punishment, and the new-born man who is moved by sublimer motives, namely, motives that touch his heart, that move his regenerated nature, and that constrain him, out of affection, to do the will of him that sent him. Hence the address here is not, "Be content, or else God will take away what you have," but "Be content, and have naught to do with covetousness, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The promise is made the argument for the precept. Obedience is enforced by a covenant blessing. He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"; what then? Shall I be discontented and covetous? Nay! but for the very reason that he has made, by his promise, my very safety absolute and unconditional, assuring me, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," for that reason I will keep out of my conversation covetousness and every other evil thing, and will seek to walk contentedly and happy in the presence of my God. See, brethren, this gospel motive. It is a free grace argument. It is not a weapon taken from the arsenal of Mount Sinai, but taken from the region of the cross, and from the council-chamber of the covenant of love.

Another thing in the text, to which I would call your notice is this: that an inspired apostle, who might very well have used his own original words, nevertheless in this case, as indeed in many others, quotes the Old

Testament. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Behold, then, the value of Holy Scripture. If an inspired man quotes the text, as of divine authority, much more should we so regard it, who are without such inspiration. We should be much in searching the Scriptures, and when we want to clench an argument, or answer an opponent, it would always be well for us to take our weapon from the grand old Book, and come down with "He hath said." Oh! there is nothing like this for force and power. We may think a thing, but what of that? Our thinkings are but of little worth. General authority and universal opinion may sustain it, but what of that? The world has been more frequently wrong than right, and public opinion is a fickle thing. But "He hath said," that is to say, God hath said—immutable truth and eternal fidelity have said; God that made heaven and earth, and that changeth not, though nations melt like the hoar frost of the morning; God who ever liveth when hills, and mountains, and this round world, and everything upon it shall have passed away—"He hath said." Oh! the power there is in this, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So, then, let us be much in searching the Scriptures, much in feeding upon them, much in diving into their innermost depths, and then afterwards much in the habit of quoting them, using them as arguments for the defence of truth, as weapons against error, and as reasons to call us to the path of duty, and to pursue it.

But now to come to the promise itself, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I shall call your attention, first of all, to: -

I. THE REMARKABLE CHARACTER OF THIS PROMISE.

Is it not a wonderful and arrestive fact that, whilst others do leave us and forsake us, that God never does? It is to each one of his own redeemed people that he says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How often do men play false, and forsake those whom they call their friends when those friends fall into poverty! Ah! the tragedies of some of these cruel forsakings! May you never know them! These so-called friends knew their friends when that suit of black was new, but how sadly their eyesight fails them now it is turned to a rusty brown! They knew them extremely well when once a week they sat with their legs under their table and shared

their generous hospitality, but they know them not now that they knock at their door and crave help in a time of need.

Matters have changed altogether, and friends that once were cherished are now forgotten. In fact, the man almost pities himself to think that he should have been so unfortunate to have a friend who has so come down, and he has no pity for his friend, because he is so much occupied in pitying himself. In hundreds, and thousands, and tens of thousands of cases, as soon as the gold has gone, the pretended love has gone, and when the dwelling has been changed from the mansion to the cottage, the friendship which once promised to last for ever, has suddenly disappeared.

But, brethren, God will never leave us on account of poverty: however low we may be brought, there it always stands, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Scant may be your board; you may have hard work to provide things honest in the sight of all men; you may sometimes have to look , and look again, and wonder by what straits you will be enabled to escape out of your present difficulty. But when all friends have turned their backs, and when acquaintances have fallen from you like leaves in autumn, he hath said, "I will never leave, nor forsake thee." Then beneath his bounty you shall find a shelter, and when these other hands are shut his hands shall be out-stretched still in loving-kindness and tender mercy, to help and deliver the soul of the needy.

Sometimes, and very often, too, men lose all their friends if they fall into any temporary disgrace. They may really have done no wrong; they may even have done right, but public opinion may condemn the course they took, or slander may be propagated, which casts them into the shade, and then men suddenly grow forgetful. They do not know the man; how should they? He is not the same man, to them at any rate, and as the world gives him the cold shoulder, his friends serve him the same. The old proverb, "The devil take the hindmost," seems to be generally the custom with our friends when we get into seeming disgrace. They are all off, seeing who can run away first, for they fear that they shall be left to share in our dishonour. But it is never so with our God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Thou mayest be put into the dungeon, like Paul

and Silas, but God will make thee sing there, even at midnight. Thou mayest be set in the stocks, but even there God will cause thee to rejoice greatly. Thou mayest be cast into the fiery furnace, but he will tread the flames with thee there. Thou mayest be so dishonoured that men shall treat thee as they did God's only Son, and lift thee up upon the cross of shame, and put thee to death; but thou shalt never say, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thy Lord said it when he bore thy guilt, but thou shalt never need to say it, for thy guilt is put away for ever, and Jehovah will stand by thee in all thy dishonour. And let me here say, that there is never a child in the family that is dearer to the great Father than the child that is suffering shame and contempt from others. He loves them dearest when they suffer reproach for his sake. These are nearer to his heart than any other, and he bids them rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great shall be their reward in heaven if thus they bear and endure for his name. "I will never leave thee, my persecuted one: I will pour such joy into thy heart that thou shalt forget all the dishonour. I will send an angel to minister to thee: yea, I will myself be with thee, and thou shalt rejoice in my salvation, while thy heart is glad and calm in the midst of the tumult and the strife around."

Blessed be God, all the shame and spitting that men can put upon us can never put our God away, for "He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Alas! sad is it for human nature that we must say it— how many have been forsaken when they have been no longer able to minister to the pleasure and comfort of those who admired them while they profitted by them? Some are thus thrown aside, just as men throw away household stuff that is worn out, and is of no further use. Depend upon it, men will not forsake us while they can get anything out of us; but when there is no longer anything to profit by, when the poor woman becomes so decrepit that she can scarcely move from her bed to her chair, when the man becomes so laid aside by accident, or is so weak that he cannot take his place in the great march of life, then he is like the soldiers in Napoleon's march, he drops out of the line to die, and thousands either march over him, or if they are a little more merciful, march by and round him, but few are those who will stop to care for such, and attend to them. How often are the incurable forsaken and left! But he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If we should get so old that we cannot

serve the church of God, even by a single word; if we should become so sick that we are only a burden to those of our house who have to nurse us; if we should grow so feeble that we could not lift our hand to our lip, yet the eternal love of Jehovah would not have diminished, no, not so much as by a single jot, towards the souls whom he had loved from before the foundation of the world. However low your condition, you shall find God's love is ever underneath for your uplifting. However weak you are, his strength shall be revealed in the everlasting arms that will not permit you to sink into disaster, and your soul into perdition. This, then, is a very precious text. Others may forsake us, for different reasons, too many to be mentioned now, but he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Well, then, let the rest go. If the Lord Jehovah standeth at our right hand, we can well afford to see the backs of all our friends, for we shall find friends enough in the Triune God, whom we delight to serve.

Again, this is a very remarkable promise, if we think of our own conduct towards God. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And have not we often said the same to him? We were like Peter: we felt we did love our Saviour: we were sure we did, and we did not, could not believe that we could ever be so false, so faithless, as to forsake him. We almost longed for some temptation to prove how true we should be. We felt very vexed with other professors that they should prove so untrue. We felt in our heart that we could not do like that, and that we should stand firm under any imaginable pressure. But what became of us, my brethren? Charge your memories a moment. Did the cock that accused Peter never accuse you? Did you never deny your Lord and Master, and at last, hearing the warning voice, go out and weep bitterly because you had forgotten him, him whom you had declared so solemnly you never would forsake? Oh! yes, I fear we, many and many a time, we have said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and yet under some sarcasm, some ridicule, or some pressing trial, we have been like the children of Ephraim, and, though armed and carrying bows, we have turned our back in the day of battle. If the voice has never denied Christ, has the heart never done so? If the tongue has remained silent, has not the soul sometimes gone back to the old flesh-pots of Egypt, and said, "I would fain find comfort once again where I did find it, with my old companions and in the old ways"? Ah! well, as you think of this, how unkindly and

ungenerously you have treated your Lord, let this text stand out in bold relief, "He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Although you have often forgotten him, yet his loving-kindness changes not. Though you have been fickle, he has been firm; though you have sometimes believed him not, yet he has remained faithful, glory be to his name.

Again, this promise is a very remarkable one, if we notice how it overrides all the suggestions that might arise from a mere view of strict and severe justice. It might be said, "Surely a child of God might justly be forsaken: he might so sin against God that it would only be just to leave him utterly to himself." Now, I am free to grant that a child of God might do so, nay, that all the children of God do so, and that God would be just if he acted upon the stern principle of law, to forsake his children as soon as ever they were converted, for it is not long after their conversion that they sin, and that sin is a special kind of treason against God. He would be just, even if he cast them away. But what I desire to enforce is this, that the promise is remarkable because it makes no kind of provision for this in any sort or degree, and under no imaginable circumstances. It does not say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, if—" as certain brethren are prone to put it—"if—thou dost not forsake me." Nor does it say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, if thou doest so-and-so and so-and-so." It is an absolute promise without any peradventures, ifs, buts, conditions, or promises. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

He that believeth in Jesus shall never be so left of God as to fall finally from grace. He shall never be so deserted as to give up his God, for his God will never give him up so far as to let him give up his confidence, or his hope, or his love, or his trust. The Lord, even our God, holds us with his strong right hand, and we shall not be moved, and even if we sin—sweet thought!—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Over the heads of all our sins and iniquities, this promise sounds like a sweet silver bell, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, there are some that would make licentiousness out of this, and go into sin, but in doing so they prove themselves not to be the children of

God. They show at once that they know nothing of the matter, for the genuine child of God, when he has a promise which is unconditional, finds holiness in it. Being moved by gratitude, he wants no buts, and ifs, and conditions, and racks, and scourges, in order to do right. He is ruled by love, and not by fear, governed by a holy gratitude which becomes a stronger bond to sacred obedience than any other bond that could be invented. Hence to the child of God, the knowledge that God will not leave nor forsake him, never suggests the thought of plunging into sin; he were an awful monster, indeed, if he did any such thing, but he hates it, and he says:—

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of him ere time began,
I choose him in return."

Observe, then, how remarkable is the promise—so contrary to the manner of men, so contrary to our own conduct, and so absolute and unconditional, that it is, indeed, marvellous that such a word should be on record. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

I cannot leave this part of the subject without remarking that such a promise as this seems to me that it makes a clean sweep of every suggestion to the child of God to be depressed in mind. You tell me you do not feel just now as you did some time ago: you are not anything like so earnest and lively in the divine ways.

When a believer is in this state, it is sometimes suggested to him that doubtless he is not a Christian at all, and that he must go back altogether to Egypt, in order to get gospel liberty, which is foolishness. But this promise comes in, and says to him, "God has not left thee, nor forsaken thee"; whatever may be your present state of thought and feeling, however low you may have fallen, the Eternal God is still faithful: he has not forgotten you. Go to him now: ask for revivings and refreshings, for he will surely give them to you. Conscience will, perhaps, say to some child of God to-night, indeed I hope it will, "There has been much to-day in business that has not been what it should have been, and as you look

back upon the day you will see much to mourn over," and then, perhaps, conscience will add, "Therefore, God will leave you." Now, if you come to believe that, you will live worse to-morrow than to-day, and the next day worse still. But if you can answer, "No, he has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' and can go with child-like confidence to your God, and confess the sin of the day, and begin again, washing once more in the precious fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, to-morrow there will be a better day. The joy of the Lord will be your strength against the sin, and your confidence in your Father's immutable affection will inspire you with zeal to trample down your temptations. Perhaps the devil may be injecting into your soul to-night all sorts of strange things, that God has forsaken you quite, and that he will be gracious no more to you, and other lies of that kind. But he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and if you can get hold of this, it will be a sufficient refutation of all the suggestions of your own fear; and of the infernal power. No, Satan! I will cast myself upon the precious blood of Jesus, and if God should take all my property away, yet he has not left me, nor forsaken me. I am sure of that, and if my spirit sinks so low that I dare not look up, yet still he has said he has not left me, and he never will. If my sins should roll over me, like a big billow, and my conscience should cry out against me, and I should feel no rest and no peace, yet still I will hold on to Jesus, sink or swim, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and let God be true, and every man, and every devil, and even my own conscience, prove a liar, sooner than God's Word should for a moment be placed in doubt. We now pass on to ponder upon:—

II. THE REMARKABLE COMFORT CONTAINED IN THIS PROMISE.

See how it abounds! I note, first its constancy. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." That is, not for a day, not for an hour, not for a minute. There are no breaks in the divine love. God does not depart from his people to return to them by-and-by, but he assures, "I will never, no never, leave thee." Perhaps that dear child of yours that is sickening is soon to die: well, God will not leave you in the moment when she is taken from you. Possibly that dear one who is now your comfort and delight, your husband, may sicken, and it will be a terrible stroke for you to be

visited with, but "I will never leave thee, not even for an instant, then: in that trying time thou shalt prove the power and solace of my presence."

Perhaps, business man, that great commercial project, that great transaction, of yours may prove to be a losing one; that bill may be dishonoured; you may come to bankruptcy without any fault on your part, but "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Yes, you may have to go to Australia, and you may greatly dread the leaving your native land, but even then "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It may be you may be so misrepresented as to become suspected by those whom you love best, and you may be even put out of the church of God, without any fault, but entirely through error. Well, but then, even then, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," not even for a minute. Oh! brethren, what would be the consequences if the Lord left us for one-quarter of an hour? I solemnly believe that, if God were to leave his people even on their knees for one twenty minutes, they would be brought to the deepest hell; but he will not leave them even there. And if it were dangerous to leave them on their knees alone, how much more so in the market, or in business, amidst enemies—seeking to catch them in their speech and deed! But he will never for a moment leave his people, nor forsake them. He will be at all times, at all hours, at all seasons, in all days of emergency, at their right hand, and they shall not be moved.

I notice in the promise, next to constancy, endurance. As there shall be no breaks in God's love for his own, so there shall be no end to it. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Yes, it may not be desirable to live to extreme old age, when infirmities may abound, and all strength may decay, but if you should reach it, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It certainly is a painful thing, that last stroke, to pass to the throne of God, but "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There shall never be a time when the Lord will cast away one of his people. He shall never grow weary of them. He has espoused them unto himself, married them, taken them into eternal union with himself, and never, let the ages revolve as they may, and time change as it will, never will God leave or forsake his people. Comfort yourselves, therefore, with the confidence of the endurance, as well as the constancy of this love.

We are most pleased, however, with the fulness of the promise. The text means, manifestly means from its connection, a great deal more than it says. We are told not to be covetous. Why? Why should we be covetous? God has said he will never leave us, and if we have him we possess all things. Who has need to be covetous when all things are his, and God is his? We are told to be contented, not to seek to hoard up so much for the future, because God has provided for the future in the very promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God guarantees to his servants that they shall have enough; well, let that guarantee prevent both covetousness and discontent. How shall this promise apply to temporal things? "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," does not look at first sight as if it had anything to do with our ordinary expenses, but, according to the text, it has, for we are told not to be covetous, but to be content with such things as we have. So, then, the text applies to the ordinary working-man, to the merchant, to every Christian, even in his money matters, as well as in his soul matters. "I will not leave thee, even in these." He that doth not let a sparrow fall to the ground without his permission will not let his children want. If they should for a little time be in need, that shall work their lasting good, but they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed. The fulness that lies in the promise is perfectly unbounded. When God says he will be with his servants, he means this, "My wisdom shall be with them to guide them; my love shall be with them to cheer them; my Spirit shall be with them to sanctify them; my power shall be with them to defend them; my everlasting might shall be put forth on their behalf so that they may not fail nor be discouraged." To have God with you were better than to have an army of ten thousand men, and a host of friends were not equal to that one name, the name of Jehovah, for he is a host in himself. When God is with a man, he is not there asleep, negligent, indifferent, regardless in his time of suffering, but he is there intensely sympathizing, bearing the trouble, helping and sustaining the sufferer, and in due time—his own good time—delivering him in triumph. Oh! precious word of heartening promise! Plunge ye into it, for it is a sea without a bottom, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Better still, perhaps, in the promise is the certain truth of it. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," has been proved by God's saints in all the

ages that are past. Turn to the pages of your Bibles, and see if ever a man was ashamed that put his trust in Christ: see if he that wrestled with the invisible God was ever confounded. Hath not the Lord kept with his people at all hazards—broken the necks of kings, and scattered empires like chaff before the wind, sooner than that one of his faithful ones should come to ruin?

It has been so, even in your own experience. You, too, have found the text to be true. You have gone through fire and through water, but he has never left you nor forsaken you. Your vessel scarcely had enough draught of water to keep off the bottom, but through she has almost grated on the gravel, yet she has kept afloat, and though, perhaps, you have been wrecked, yet you have come safe to shore. You have lost much, you say, but you have been a gainer by your loss, and where you are to-day you are by eternal mercy and covenant grace, and you could not well be in a better position than God has put you in. Goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life up till now, and you are obliged to confess it, and to say:—

"Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise."

So fear not now that at this particular season God is about to alter his previous dispensation. Out with them, poor Little-Faith; away with thy doubts; put away those black suspicions. He is a God that changeth not, and, having helped you until now, he will help you even to the end. Why, how true this must be! "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How can God forsake that which has cost him so much already? He has given his Son's blood to redeem us, and his Spirit's power to renew us, and if he were to leave undone the work which he has begun, why, a tower has been commenced, and he has not been able to finish it! A man who has spent much money upon one enterprise will spend yet more to finish it, because of what he has already spent. Now, God will not lose the work of Christ, and the precious blood of his Son, but, having begun, he will certainly carry on, even to the end. Besides this, also: God cannot leave his people, because he calls them his children, and how could he leave his child? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have

compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Even when the son has dishonoured his father's name, and lost his own character, that father's love still holds on, and follows that child still with tears of sorrow, but still with faithfulness and truth. And God will not cast away his own begotten sons, whom he has begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Beloved, Christ is married to his people, and therefore how can he leave them? He says, "As a young man rejoiceth over his bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," and will he leave them to whom he is knit by so near and dear, so tender and affectionate a union? It cannot be. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Now, see, if he did leave his people, what would it be? It would be giving up the whole quarrel between himself and Satan. It is in his people's hearts that the great battle is being fought out between good and evil. To give them up would be to give up the battle-ground to his great enemy, and what laughter there would be in the vaults of hell, what mockery in the halls of Pandemonium, if it could be said, "God has forsaken his people, given up his elect, suffered his redeemed to perish, cast away his regenerate, and forsaken the souls that trusted him"! The very thought of it is blasphemy. Far, far from us let us put it away. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

I cannot enlarge further upon the promise, and need not do so, because it opens up itself, or rather God the Holy Ghost will open it up to you if you sit awhile in your chamber and meditate upon it. I do not know of a richer text, or one more full of consolation. It is a long skein of truth; unwind it. It is a precious granary, full as Joseph crammed the granaries of Egypt; open you the door, and feed to the full; there will be no fear of your ever exhausting it. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, the third thing to be noticed concerning this promise is:—

III. THE REMARKABLE EFFECTS THAT SUCH A PROMISE SHOULD PRODUCE.

Surely the first blessed fruit of such a glorious promise should be perfect contentment. It is said to be hard to be contented. I have the pleasure of knowing some brethren who I am sure are perfectly content. They even

say, and I think without the slightest mental reservation, that they have not an unfulfilled wish or desire so far as this world goes. They have all that heart could wish. And yet these are not the richest people in the world, and they are not persons who are much to be envied for their mere external circumstances: yet they are perfectly contented. The fact is that the grace of God makes the people of God to sing sweetly, where other people would murmur. They are satisfied where others would find easy ground for discontent. But how easy it is, how easy it must be, for a man to be contented when he knows that God has promised to be with him in all circumstances and at all times! Surely, if anything could be a kind of conservatory, a hot-house, in which to grow the delicate plant of contentment to perfection, it must be this full belief that high or low, rich or poor, well or sick, God hath said, "I will never leave, nor forsake thee." Surely it was this that made Bunyan's Pilgrim sing in the Valley of Humiliation:—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

Christian did thereby say that he was content, whether he had little or much, and that he left everything in his lot to his God. Oh! get then, my friends, my text fully into your souls, and keep it there, as marrow and fatness, and you will be content.

Well, then, in the next place, it will cure your covetousness. A man does not need to go on scraping, and to use that muck-rake forever, when he knows "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It was not a bad argument which one used with Alexander when he said to him, "When are you going to enjoy yourself fully?" Alexander did not answer the question, but the philosopher said, "What are you going to do next?" "First, we shall conquer Greece." "Yes, and then will you rest?" "No; we shall then attack Asia Minor." "And when you have conquered that, I suppose you will rest?" "No; we shall then take Persia." "And when you have overcome Persia, what then?" "We shall march to India." "And when you have taken India, what then?" "Why, then we shall sit down and

make ourselves merry." "Well," said the philosopher, "I think we had better begin before we go to Greece, or Persia, or Asia Minor, or any of them." And truly so, it were as well for us to be content with that moderate income which God gives us. Let us enjoy what God bestows upon us now, in gratitude to him, and give ourselves up to his service; lest, perhaps, in seeking more, we become spiritually poorer while literally richer, and become less content with the great load on our back than we are to-day, when we have enough and no more. It is a sweet quietus to covetousness when God saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

And, beloved, what a promise this is to make a man confident in his God. In his works, in his sufferings, in his enterprises, what a stay of soul is here!

I know what it is to fall back upon this promise sometimes to keep from depression of spirit, and to find reviving in it. Perhaps you may suppose that those of us who are always before the public, and are speaking concerning the blessed promises of God, never have any moments of downcasting, and never any times of heartbreaking; but you are quite mistaken. We may have passed through all this, perhaps, that we may know how to say a word in season to any who are now passing through similar experiences. With many enterprises upon my hands, far too great for my own unaided strength, I am often driven to fall flat upon the promise of my God, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If I feel that any scheme has been of my own devising, and that I seek my own honour in it, I know it must come to the ground, and rightly so. But when I can prove that God has thrust it upon me, and that I am moved by a divine impulse, and not by my own monitions and wishings, then how can my God forsake me? How can he lie, however weak I may be? How is it possible for him to send his servant out to battle, and not succour him with reinforcements in the day when the battle goes hard? God is not David when he put Uriah in the front, and then left him that he might die. He will never put any of his servants forward and then desert them. Dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord shall call some of you even to things you cannot do, he will give you strength enough to do them; and if he should push you still forwarder till your difficulties increase and your burdens

become heavy, still, as your days, your strength shall be, and you shall go on with the tramp of soldiers, with the indomitable spirit of men who have tried and trusted the naked arm of the Eternal God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Then what matters it? Though all the world were against you, you could shake all the world as Samson shook the lion, and rent him as a kid. If God be for you, who can be against you? Though earth, and hell, and all their crew, come against you, and should combine together, yet if the God of Jacob stood at your back, you would thresh them as though they were but wheat, and winnow them as though they were but chaff, and the wind should carry them away. Oh! roll this promise under your tongue as a sweet morsel!

How I wish that it belonged to you all! Oh! that everyone of you had a share in it! But some of you, alas! have never fled to Jesus. Oh! that you would do so! Whoever trusts him to pardon by his atoning sacrifice, is saved. To look to the great Substitute, and depend upon him for salvation, this gives salvation, and then come the promises that belong to the saved.

The Lord of his infinite mercy bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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No Compromise

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt

take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. - Genesis 24:5-8

Genesis is both the book of beginnings and the book of dispensations. You know what use Paul makes of Sarah and Hagar, of Esau and Jacob, and the like. Genesis is, all through, a book instructing the reader in the dispensations of God towards man. Paul saith, in a certain place, "which things are an allegory," by which he did not mean that they were not literal facts, but that, being literal facts, they might also be used instructively as an allegory. So may I say of this chapter. It records what actually was said and done; but at the same time, it bears within it allegorical instruction with regard to heavenly things. The true minister of Christ is like this Eleazar of Damascus; he is sent to find a wife for his Master's son. His great desire is, that many shall be presented unto Christ in the day of his appearing, as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

The faithful servant of Abraham, before he started, communed with his master; and this is a lesson to us, who go on our Lord's errands. Let us, before we engage in actual service, see the Master's face, talk with him, and tell to him any difficulties which occur to our minds. Before we get to work, let us know what we are at, and on what footing we stand. Let us hear from our Lord's own mouth what he expects us to do, and how far he will help us in the doing of it. I charge you, my fellow-servants, never to go forth to plead with men for God until you have first pleaded with God for men. Do not attempt to deliver a message which you have not first of all yourself received by his Holy Spirit. Come out of the chamber of fellowship with God into the pulpit of ministry among men, and there will be a freshness and a power about you which none shall be able to resist. Abraham's servant spoke and acted as one who felt bound to do exactly what his master bade him, and to say what his master told him; hence his one anxiety was to know the essence and measure of his commission. During his converse with his master he mentioned one little point about which there might be a hitch; and his master soon removed the difficulty from his mind. It is about that hitch, which has occurred lately on a very large scale, and has upset a good many of my Master's servants, that I am going to speak this morning: may God grant that it may be to the benefit

of his church at large!

I. Beginning our sermon, we will ask you, first, to THINK OF THE SERVANT'S JOYFUL BUT WEIGHTY ERRAND. It was a joyful errand: the bells of marriage were ringing around him. The marriage of the heir should be a joyful event. It was an honourable thing for the servant to be entrusted with the finding of a wife for his master's son. Yet it was every way a most responsible business, by no means easy of accomplishment. Blunders might very readily occur before he was aware of it; and he needed to have all his wits about him, and something more than his wits, too, for so delicate a matter. He had to journey far, over lands without track or road; he had to seek out a family which he did not know, and to find out of that family a woman whom he did not know, who nevertheless should be the right person to be the wife of his master's son: all this was a great service.

The work this man undertook was a business upon which his master's heart was set. Isaac was now forty years old, and had shown no sign of marrying. He was of a quiet, gentle spirit, and needed a more active spirit to urge him on. The death of Sarah had deprived him of the solace of his life, which he had found in his mother, and had, no doubt, made him desire tender companionship. Abraham himself was old, and well stricken in years; and he very naturally wished to see the promise beginning to be fulfilled, that in Isaac should his seed be called. Therefore, with great anxiety, which is indicated by his making his servant swear an oath of a most solemn kind, he gave him the commission to go to the old family abode in Mesopotamia, and seek for Isaac a bride from thence. Although that family was not all that could be desired, yet it was the best he knew of; and as some heavenly light lingered there, he hoped to find in that place the best wife for his son. The business was, however, a serious one which he committed to his servant. My brethren, this is nothing compared with the weight which hangs on the true minister of Christ. All the Great Father's heart is set on giving to Christ a church which shall be his beloved for ever. Jesus must not be alone: his church must be his dear companion. The Father would find a bride for the great Bridegroom, a recompense for the Redeemer, a solace for the Saviour: therefore he lays it upon all whom he calls to tell out the

gospel, that we should seek souls for Jesus, and never rest till hearts are wedded to the Son of God. Oh, for grace to carry out this commission!

This message was the more weighty because of the person for whom the spouse was sought. Isaac was an extraordinary personage; indeed, to the servant he was unique. He was a man born according to promise, not after the flesh, but by the power of God; and you know how in Christ, and in all that are one with Christ, the life comes by the promise and the power of God, and springeth not of man. Isaac was himself the fulfillment of promise, and the heir of the promise. Infinitely glorious is our Lord Jesus as the Son of man! Who shall declare his generation? Where shall be found a helpmeet for him? a soul fit to be espoused unto him? Isaac had been sacrificed; he had been laid upon the altar, and although he did not actually die, his father's hand had unsheathed the knife wherewith to slay him. Abraham in spirit had offered up his son; and you know who he is of whom we preach, and for whom we preach, even Jesus, who has laid down his life a sacrifice for sinners. He has been presented as a whole burnt-offering unto God. Oh! by the wounds, and by the bloody sweat, I ask you where shall we find a heart fit to be wedded to him? How shall we find men and women who can worthily recompense love so amazing, so divine, as that of him who died the death of the cross? Isaac had also been, in a figure, raised from the dead. To his father he was "as good as dead," as said the apostle; and he was given back to him from the dead. But our blessed Lord has actually risen from an actual death, and stands before us this day as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. Who shall be joined to this Conqueror? Who is fit to dwell in glory with this glorious One? One would have thought that every heart would aspire to such happiness, and leap in prospect of such peerless honour, and that none would shrink back except through a sense of great unworthiness. Alas! it is not so, though so it ought to be.

What a weighty errand have we to fulfil to find those who shall be linked for ever in holy union with the Heir of the promise, even the sacrificed and risen One! Isaac was everything to Abraham. Abraham would have said to Isaac, "All that I have is thine." So is it true of our blessed Lord, whom he hath made Heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What a

dignity will be put upon any of you who are married to Christ! To what a height of eminence will you be uplifted by becoming one with Jesus! O preacher, what a work hast thou to do to-day, to find out those to whom thou shalt give the bracelet, and upon whose face thou shalt hang the jewel! To whom shall I say, "Wilt thou give thy heart to my Lord! Wilt thou have Jesus to be thy confidence, thy salvation, thine all in all? Art thou willing to become his that he may be thine?"

Said I not truly that it was a joyful, but a weighty errand, when you think what she must be to whom his master's son should be espoused? She must, at least, be willing and beautiful. In the day of God's power, hearts are made willing. There can be no marriage to Jesus without a heart of love. Where shall we find this willing heart? Only where the grace of God has wrought it. Ah, then, I see how I may find beauty, too, among the sons of men! Marred as our nature is by sin, only the Holy Spirit can impart that beauty of holiness which will enable the Lord Jesus to see comeliness in his chosen. Alas! in our hearts there is an aversion to Christ, and an unwillingness to accept of him, and at the same time a terrible unfitness and unworthiness! The Spirit of God implants a love which is of heavenly origin, and renews the heart by a regeneration from above; and then we seek to be one with Jesus, but not till then. See, then, how our errand calls for the help of God himself.

Think what she will become who is to be married to Isaac? She is to be his delight; his loving friend and companion. She is to be partner of all his wealth; and specially is she to be a partaker in the great covenant promise, which was peculiarly entailed upon Abraham and his family. When a sinner comes to Christ, what does Christ make of him? His delight is in him: he communes with him; he hears his prayer, he accepts his praise; he works in him and with him, and glorifies himself in him. He makes the believing man joint-heir with himself of all that he has, and introduces him into the covenant treasure-house, wherein the riches and glory of God are stored up for his chosen. Ah, dear friends! it is a very small business in the esteem of some to preach the gospel; and yet, if God is with us, ours is more than angels' service. In a humble way you are telling of Jesus to your boys and girls in your classes; and some will despise you as "only Sunday-school teachers"; but your work has a

spiritual weight about it unknown to conclaves of senators, and absent from the counsels of emperors. Upon what you say, death, and hell, and worlds unknown are hanging. You are working out the destinies of immortal spirits, turning souls from ruin to glory, from sin to holiness.

"'Tis not a work of small import
Your loving care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled the Saviour's hands."

In carrying out his commission, this servant must spare no exertion. It would be required of him to journey to a great distance, having a general indication of direction, but not knowing the way. He must have divine guidance and protection. When he reached the place, he must exercise great common-sense, and at the same time a trustful dependence upon the goodness and wisdom of God. It would be a wonder of wonders if he ever met the chosen woman, and only the Lord could bring it to pass. He had all the care and the faith required. We have read the story of how he journeyed, and prayed, and pleaded. We should have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" but we see that the Lord Jehovah made him sufficient, and his mission was happily carried out. How can we put ourselves into the right position to get at sinners, and win them for Jesus? How can we learn to speak the right words? How shall we suit our teaching to the condition of their hearts? How shall we adapt ourselves to their feelings, their prejudices, their sorrows, and their temptations? Brethren, we who preach the gospel continually may well cry, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." To seek for pearls at the bottom of the sea is child's play compared with seeking for souls in this wicked London. If God be not with us, we may look our eyes out, and wear our tongues away in vain. Only as the Almighty God shall lead, and guide, and influence, and inspire, can we perform our solemn trust; only by divine help shall we joyfully come back, bringing with us the chosen of the Lord. We are the Bridegroom's friends, and we rejoice greatly in his joy, but we sigh and cry till we have found the chosen hearts in whom he will delight, whom he shall raise to sit with him upon his throne.

II. Secondly, I would have you CONSIDER THE REASONABLE FEAR

WHICH IS MENTIONED. Abraham's servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land." This is a very serious, grave, and common difficulty. If the woman be not willing, nothing can be done; force and fraud are out of the question; there must be a true will, or there can be no marriage in this instance. Here was the difficulty: here was a will to be dealt with. Ah, my brethren! this is our difficulty still. Let me describe this difficulty in detail as it appeared to the servant, and appears to us.

She may not believe my report, or be impressed by it. When I come to her, and tell her that I am sent by Abraham, she may look me in the face, and say, "There be many deceivers nowadays." If I tell her that my master's son is surpassingly beautiful and rich, and that he would fain take her to himself, she may answer, "Strange tales and romances are common in these days; but the prudent do not quit their homes." Brethren, in our case this is a sad fact. The great evangelical prophet cried of old, "Who hath believed our report?" We also cry in the same words. Men care not for the report of God's great love to the rebellious sons of men. They do not believe that the infinitely glorious Lord is seeking the love of poor, insignificant man, and to win it has laid down his life. Calvary, with its wealth of mercy, grief, love, and merit, is disregarded. Indeed, we tell a wonderful story, and it may well seem too good to be true; but it is sad indeed that the multitude of men go their ways after trifles, and count these grand realities to be but dreams. I am bowed down with dismay that my Lord's great love, which led him even to die for men, should hardly be thought worthy of your hearing, much less of your believing. Here is a heavenly marriage, and right royal nuptials placed within your reach; but with a sneer you turn aside, and prefer the witcheries of sin.

There was another difficulty: she was expected to feel a love to one she had never seen. She had only newly heard that there was such a person as Isaac, but yet she must love him enough to leave her kindred, and go to a distant land. This could only be because she recognized the will of Jehovah in the matter. Ah, my dear hearers! all that we tell you is concerning things not seen as yet; and here is our difficulty. You have eyes, and you want to see everything; you have hands, and you want to

handle everything; but there is one whom you cannot see as yet, who has won our love because of what we believe concerning him. We can truly say of him, "Whom having not seen, we love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I know that you answer our request thus: "You demand too much of us when you ask us to love a Christ we have never seen." I can only answer, "It is even so: we do ask more of you than we expect to receive." Unless God the Holy Ghost shall work a miracle of grace upon your hearts, you will not be persuaded by us to quit your old associations, and join yourselves to our beloved Lord. And yet, if you did come to him, and love him, he would more than content you; for you would find in him rest unto your souls, and a peace which passeth all understanding.

Abraham's servant may have thought: She may refuse to make so great a change as to quit Mesopotamia for Canaan. She had been born and bred away there in a settled country, and all her associations were with her father's house; and to marry Isaac she must tear herself away. So, too, you cannot have Jesus, and have the world too: you must break with sin to be joined to Jesus. You must come away from the licentious world, the fashionable world, the scientific world, and from the (so-called) religious world. If you become a Christian, you must quit old habits, old motives, old ambitions, old pleasures, old boasts, old modes of thought. All things must become new. You must leave the things you have loved, and seek many of those things which you have hitherto despised. There must come to you as great a change as if you had died, and were made over again. You answer, "Must I endure all this for One whom I have never seen, and for an inheritance on which I have never set my foot?" It is even so. Although I am grieved that you turn away, I am not in the least surprised, for it is not given to many to see him who is invisible, or to choose the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life. The man or woman who will follow God's messenger to be married to so strange a Bridegroom is a rare bird.

Moreover, it might be a great difficulty to Rebekah, if she had had any difficulties at all, to think that she must henceforth lead a pilgrim life. She would quit house and farm for tent and gipsy life. Abraham and Isaac found no city to dwell in, but wandered from place to place, dwelling

alone, sojourners with God. Their outward mode of life was typical of the way of faith, by which men live in the world, and are not of it. To all intents and purposes Abraham and Isaac were out of the world, and lived on its surface without lasting connection with it. They were the Lord's men, and the Lord was their possession. He set himself apart for them, and they were set apart for him. Rebekah might well have said, "That will never do for me. I cannot outlaw myself. I cannot quit the comforts of a settled abode to ramble over the fields wherever the flocks may require me to roam." It does not strike the most of mankind that it would be a good thing to be in the world, and yet not to be of it. They are no strangers in the world, they long to be admitted more fully into its "society." They are not aliens here with their treasures in heaven, they long to have a good round sum on earth, and find their heaven in enjoying it themselves, and enriching their families. Earthworms as they are, the earth contents them. If any man becomes unworldly, and makes spiritual things his one object, they despise him as a dreamy enthusiast. Many men think that the things of religion are merely meant to be read of, and to be preached about; but that to live for them would be to spend a dreamy, unpractical existence. Yet the spiritual is, after all, the only real: the material is in deepest truth the visionary and unsubstantial. Still, when people turn away because of the hardness of holy warfare, and the spirituality of the believing life, we are not astonished, for we hardly hoped it could be otherwise. Unless the Lord renews the heart, men will always prefer the bird-in-the-hand of this life to the bird-in-the-bush of the life to come.

Moreover, it might be that the woman might not care for the covenant of promise. If she had no regard for Jehovah and his revealed will, she was not likely to go with the man, and enter upon marriage with Isaac. He was the Heir of the promises, the inheritor of the covenant privileges which the Lord by oath had promised. His chosen would become the mother of that chosen seed in whom God had ordained to bless the world throughout all the ages, even the Messiah, the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head.

Peradventure the woman might not see the value of the covenant, nor appreciate the glory of the promise. The things we have to preach of, such

as life everlasting, union with Christ, resurrection from the dead, reigning with him for ever and ever, seem to the dull hearts of men to be as idle tales. Tell them of a high interest for their money, of large estates to be had for a venture, or of honours to be readily gained, and inventions to be found out, they open all their eyes and their ears, for here is something worth knowing; but the things of God, eternal, immortal, boundless — these are of no importance to them. They could not be induced to go from Ur to Canaan for such trifles as eternal life, and heaven, and God.

So you see our difficulty. Many disbelieve altogether, and others cavil and object. A greater number will not even listen to our story; and of those who do listen, most are careless, and others dally with it, and postpone the serious consideration. Alas! we speak to unwilling ears.

III. In the third place, I would ENLARGE UPON HIS VERY NATURAL SUGGESTION. This prudent steward said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: Must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" If she will not come to Isaac, shall Isaac go down to her? This is the suggestion of the present hour: if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted, and come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it, and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world.

To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular; let us drop them out. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical infidels, who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of unpleasant truths, and moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation: say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes, and that the books which have been so long had in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith, and bring in the new doubt; for the times are altered, and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence, "Ye must be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with, to make way for entertainments, and Socialism, and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans. It is true, with the same breath they extol Oliver Cromwell; but then 1888 is not 1648. What was good and great three hundred years ago is mere cant to-day. That is what "modern thought" is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself; and above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable, and think with those who profess to be scientific—this is the first and great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it—do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbours. Thus is Isaac going down into Padan-aram: thus is the church going down to the world.

Men seem to say—It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process: let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith. "But," say you, "nobody talks so." Possibly they do not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this is the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world,

and so include a larger area within its bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make houses of prayer to approximate to the theatre; they turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays—in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre, and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's-day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord's house either a joss-house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me! the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is henceforth, no church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work.

This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people, and his Word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal.

IV. In the fourth place, NOTICE HIS MASTER'S OUTSPOKEN, BELIEVING REPUDIATION OF THE PROPOSAL. He says, shortly and sharply, "Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again." The Lord Jesus Christ heads that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing his disciples, he says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus, and those who are in him, constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts; yea, deadly to our noblest life. A voice from heaven cries, "Bring not my son thither again." Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage; but let their children come out, and be separate, and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them.

Notice how Abraham states the question. In effect, he argues it thus: this would be to forego the divine order. "For," says Abraham, "the Lord God of heaven took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred." What, then, if he brought Abraham out, is Isaac to return? This cannot be. Hitherto the way of God with his church has been to sever a

people from the world to be his elect—a people formed for himself, who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact, and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion. If God had meant to bless the family at Padan-aram by letting his chosen ones dwell among them, why did he call Abraham out at all? If Isaac may do good by dwelling there, why did Abraham leave? If there is no need of a separate church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great account? Brethren, there are two seeds—the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent—and the difference will be maintained even to the end; neither must we ignore the distinction to please men.

For Isaac to go down to Nahor's house for a wife would be placing God second to a wife. Abraham begins at once with a reference to Jehovah, "the God of heaven"; for Jehovah was everything to him, and to Isaac also. Isaac would never renounce his walk with the living God that he might find a wife. Yet this apostasy is common enough nowadays. Men and women who profess godliness will quit what they profess to believe in order to get richer wives or husbands for themselves or their children. This mercenary conduct is without excuse. "Better society" is the cry—meaning more wealth and fashion. To the true man God is first—yea, all in all; but God is placed at the fag-end, and everything else is put before him by the base professor. In the name of God I call upon you who are faithful to God and to his truth, to stand fast, whatever you lose, and turn not aside, whatever you might gain. Count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We want Abraham's spirit within us, and we shall have that when we have Abraham's faith.

Abraham felt that this would be to renounce the covenant promise. See how he puts it: "The God that took me from my father's house sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Are they, then, to leave the land, and go back to the place from which the Lord had called them? Brethren, we also are heirs of the promise of things not seen as yet. For

the sake of this we walk by faith, and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham dwelt among the Canaanites; but we are of a distinct race: we are born with a new birth, live under different laws, and act from different motives. If we go back to the ways of worldlings, and are numbered with them, we have renounced the covenant of our God, the promise is no longer ours, and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the church says, "I will be as the world," she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came, and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the church into its arms: then shall come some overwhelming judgment, and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire. The covenant promise and the covenant heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord.

Besides, dear friends, no good can come of trying to conform to the world. Suppose the servant's policy could have been adopted, and Isaac had gone down to Nahor's house, what would have been the motive? To spare Rebekah the pain of separating from her friends and the trouble of travelling. If those things could have kept her back, what would she have been worth to Isaac? The test of separation was wholesome, and by no means ought it to be omitted. She is a poor wife who would not take a journey to reach her husband. And all the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness, and we read that "the mixt multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring. Why is there such spiritual death to-day? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers, and especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of

silly amusements. These are the people who despise a prayer-meeting, but rush to see "living waxworks" in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard, and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church! No, no; if Isaac is to have a wife worthy of him, she will come away from Laban and the rest, and she will not mind a journey on camel-back. True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness—these, in fact, are the things which charm them.

Besides, Abraham felt that there could be no reason for taking Isaac down there, for the Lord would assuredly find him a wife. Abraham said, "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many. Brethren beloved, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes hither to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory, the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement, the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life! In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man's chine, and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard

of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way.

V. And now, fifthly, observe HIS RIGHTEOUS ABSOLUTION OF HIS SERVANT. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."

When we lie a-dying, if we have faithfully preached the gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it: we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool or the politician in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! our Master will give us full absolution, even if few be gathered in, so long as we have been true to him. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again." Do not try the dodges which debase religion. Keep to the simple gospel; and if the people are not converted by it, you will be clear. My dear hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would not belie my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and faithfulness; but he is not responsible for success or non-success. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness, you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand truth that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers, and if I persuade and entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life; if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads. When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told out his message of free grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say: "I am clear, I am clear!" It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's truth, so far as I know it, and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my

testimony I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them. What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ, and his gospel, and his rule, it is their own concern. If Rebekah had not come to Isaac she would have lost her place in the holy line. My beloved hearer, will you have Jesus Christ or not? He has come into the world to save sinners, and he casts out none. Will you accept him? Will you trust him? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Will you believe him? Will you be baptized into his name? If so, salvation is yours; but if not, he himself hath said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, do not expose yourselves to that damnation! Or, if you are set upon it; then, when the great white throne shall be seen in yonder skies, and the day of wrath has come, do me the justice to acknowledge that I bade you flee to Jesus, and that I did not amuse you with novel theories. I have brought neither flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music to please your ears, but I have set Christ crucified before you, and bidden you believe and live. If you refuse to accept the substitution of Christ, you have refused your own mercies. Clear me in that day of all complicity with the novel inventions of deluded men. As for my Lord, I pray of him grace to be faithful to the end, both to his truth, and to your souls. Amen.

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No Difference

On this night the Tabernacle was free to all comers, the regular congregation having vacated their seats.

He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. - Matthew 5:45

You see our Lord Jesus Christ's philosophy of nature. He believed in the immediate presence and working of God. As the great Son of God he had

a very sensitive perception of the presence of his Father in all the scenes around him, and hence he calls the sun God's sun- "He maketh his sun to rise." He does not speak of the daybreak as a thing which happens of itself as a matter of course, but he traces the morning light to his Father, and declares, "He maketh his sun to rise." As for the rain, our great Lord and Master does not speak of the laws of condensation causing the vapor to become fluid and fall to the earth in a beneficial shower, but he says of his Father, "He sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust." Jesus knew far better than any of us all the laws by which the great Creator governs the world of matter, and yet he never speaks of these laws as though they operated without the divine power making them to be effective. In Christ's philosophy the Lord God himself was everywhere present, working all things, yea, even numbering the hairs upon the heads of his chosen, and marking the falling of a sparrow to the ground. Let such be your philosophy and mine, for it is the true one. Dr. Watts taught us to sing when we were children:

"My God, who makes the sun to know
His proper hour to rise,
And, to give light to all below,
Doth send him round the skies."

So our mothers taught us, and they taught us the truth; but the very wise men of this proudly enlightened age seem to be spinning all sorts of theories to get rid of God, to turn our benefactor out of his own world, and put man's best friend as far away as possible. I am sometimes reminded by these schools of philosophy and science of Tom Hood's "I remember, I remember." Here is a verse of it -

"I remember, I remember,
The fir-trees dark and high
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky

It was a childish ignorance,
But now `tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven

Than when I was a boy."

It were a good thing for our sceptical teachers who have banished God out of his own universe if they could go back to their mothers' knees again and learn to talk simply and naturally after the fashion of the wisest man that ever lived, namely, our Lord and Master: then would they also confess that our heavenly Father "maketh his sun to rise and he sendeth the rain," for so it is. Laws of nature can do nothing without a power at the back of the laws. What is nature, about which many infidels speak so very plentifully?

Ask them to tell you what nature is, and they will reply, "Why, it is nature." Well, but what is that? And they can only say, "Why nature you know, you know, you know, nature is nature." Some such sensible reply was given to certain of our friends on Kennington Common by one who was there reviling his Maker. Now if men did but understand nature they would know that nature is simply God's creation, workshop, laboratory, storehouse, and banqueting-hall. In nature what God has made and what God is doing, are made visible before our eyes. God is among us still, blessed be his name. Believing this, we at once perceive that the Lord has been talking with us during the last few days very sweetly and delightfully.

The merciful Father speaks to us with charming eloquence on such a day as this, of which George Herbert would have said-

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky."

Coming just in the middle of this fair season of hope and promise, concerning which he sang-

"Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,"

it has a still small voice which all should wish to hear. What a blessing to have enjoyed such a May-day as this has been. We have had God speaking

to us according to the exact style of our text: he has made his sun to shine, and he has us sent rain. Our days for some little time have been made up of sunshine and shower, with every now and then that wondrous master-piece of glory in the sky which we call the rainbow, of which God has said, "I, even I, do set my bow in the cloud," "whose warp is the raindrop of earth, and whose woof is the sunbeam of heaven"; glorious ensign of his grace and faithfulness, who hung it on the cloud. Now what does God say to us in the sunshine and the shower which thus come the one after the other in such pleasant alternation, making the grass so green and causing flowers to deck both tree and herb? What says he in all these? There is a voice full of the music of love, to which we shall do well to listen.

There is one instruction in it and only one that I shall be able to expound to-night. It is the fact brought out in the text, "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

One of the most considerable heights anywhere near London is Leith Hill, near Dorking. And if you have ever stood there, as I often have done with delight, you may, perhaps, have thought over our text. Far around you see the distant lands, pasture, arable, park, wood, with here and there the laughing water, and beyond the blue hills the distant sea. Up comes a gleam of sunlight, where all was cloud before. By-and-by the sun bursts out in full beauty. Do you notice how impartial it is? Men have mapped out the country: so far is allotted to this squire, so far to that, with here and there an insignificant patch pilfered from the wayside or the common which may belong to some industrious peasant; but the sun shines on all, glances into the hall, peeps into the cottage, gleams from the white spire of the church, and flashes from the tavern signboard swinging in the breeze, shines on the wayside, floods the green where the children are at play with its golden light; sweeps over all, in fact. Now that farm over yonder belongs to a churl, who is sure to rake his stubble after the harvest, lest the poor should glean an ear or two—a man who fights and quarrels with his neighbor; yet the sun shines on his selfish heritage. Yonder farm belongs to one who would, if he could, rob the orphan and fatherless and the widow—a heartless wretch, unworthy to gather a sour

apple from the sharpest crab; yet the sun shines on his wheat and barley just the same as on that portion of land which belongs to the generous-hearted and the free, to the gracious and the godly. There is no distinction made between the meadows of the righteous and the pastures of the wicked. As you see the sunlight bathe the whole of the scene before you, the entire landscape smiles with universal joy. While you are watching, that cloud, which all day long you had suspected would turn to a shower, comes rushing up with the wind-the Great Father blowing with his breath this travelling fountain of the sky. Then it begins to pour. We seek the shelter of the lofty tower of Leith without a murmur, for we know that the rain is seasonable. The land wants it; it has been dry and parched for weeks. Down comes the blessed shower that shall fill our barns with plenty. Yes, yes, the Lord is pouring forth a shower of food-creating moisture, and, see, it is raining on the churl's piece of land just as much as on his liberal neighbor's. It is watering the farm of the man who would rob the fatherless of his shoes if the law permitted him; it is making his broad acres teem with plenty just as surely as it is fattening the poor man's patch, or falling upon the widow's scanty plot, or on the farm of the gracious godly man. As though he did not regard human character at all, God bids his sun shine on good and bad. As though he did not know that any men were vile, he bids the shower descend on just and unjust. Yet he does know, for he is no blind deity. He does know; and he knows when his sun shines on yonder miser's acres that it is bringing forth a harvest for a churl. He does it deliberately. When the rain is falling yonder upon the oppressor's crops, he knows that the oppressor will be the richer for it, and means that he should be; he is doing nothing by mistake and nothing without a purpose. It is of his own will that he thus scatters sunlight with both his hands, and pours the bounteous shower on all things that grow. He knows what he is doing, blessed be his name. He on purpose sends forth shine and shower on the evil and on the good, and that is the one lesson we want to bring out to-night. What is the meaning of this boundless generosity? Why this impartial bounty, this indiscriminate liberality?

What does God say to us when he acts thus? I believe that he says. this:- "This is the day of free grace; this is the time of mercy." The hour for judgment is not yet, when he will separate between the good and the bad;

when he will mount the judgment seat and award different portions to the righteous and to the wicked. Sheep and goats as yet feed together, and he giveth to them all their fodder; wheat and tares. grow in the same field and he ripens both for the harvest. This is not the day of justice, but the period of mercy-free rich mercy-mercy to the undeserving, grace to the worthless, sunlight of love for the evil, and showers of blessings for the unjust.

That is the teaching of the great Father to us to-night, and, in trying to bring it out, I shall first show how forcible it is made to appear by its being placed as an example; and secondly, I shall dwell upon the act itself, drawing inferences from the impartiality of sunshine and shower to encourage all who long to receive grace at the great Father's hand; and, lastly, I shall let the plants and grass and trees talk to you a little.

I. First, then, this which is spoken concerning God's causing his. sunshine to fall on the evil as well as on the good is set before us as AN EXAMPLE, AND HENCE THE EMPHASIS OF ITS MEANING. We are, according to the verses which precede our text, to love our enemies, to bless. them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us, because if we do so we shall be like our Father in heaven, who blesses with shine and shower the bad as well as the good. It must mean, then, that he, in causing his. sun to shine upon the bad, is rendering good for evil, is wishing well to those who treat him ill, is intending favor to those that despitefully use him, and persecute his cause. That is what the text means. God would not command us to do what he will not do himself, if placed in similar circumstances. He bids us forgive, because his sunshine and shower teach us that he is ready to forgive. He bids us do good to those who do us ill, because in shine and shower he is doing good to those who hate him and despitefully use him. Now suppose, my brethren, that we were all enabled by divine grace to follow out the precept which is set before us, our conduct would be regarded by most men as being very extraordinary; for the most of people say, "Well, I will do good to a man if he is a deserving character, but you cannot expect me to help. the undeserving. I will cheerfully render a measure of assistance to a person who is grateful, but to the ungrateful and the evil you do not expect me to be kind? Yes, I will be kind to my

neighbor, but that man who the other day was so contemptuous in his behavior as to treat me worse than a dog, and seemed as if he would tread me under his feet like dirt; would you have me do him kindness?" Now, suppose that you are able to rise to the example which is put before you, and that you persistently do good, and only good even to the worst of men; and when you are treated with evil suppose you are able to do only the more good, and thus heap coals of fire upon the offender's head by being more generous to him than ever-that will be very extraordinary conduct. You think so, I know, for you feel the proposal to be too hard for flesh and blood to carry out; and so indeed it is. If, however, you are enabled to rise to so great a height, you will astonish all around you and become a wonder unto many.

Admire, then, with all your hearts the marvellous conduct of your God. He is prepared to put away all the offenses of the past; and he is ready to forgive, and to do good to those who have been doing ill all their days; yea, to take into his very heart of love and make into his children the very persons who have hated him and spoken evil against him. Will it not be extraordinary if he does that to you, dear friend, if such has been your character? Know, then, that the Lord loves to do extraordinary things. "Who is a god like unto thee, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts." God is prepared to save extraordinary sinners by an extraordinary act of love; wiping out the past, and causing them to begin a new life in which they shall be enriched with his favor and preserved by his love.

Again, if a man should carry out what I have tried to set forth- the continuous rendering of good to the undeserving-he would be regarded by all thinking persons whose judgment is worth taking to be very noble. When a man has been abused, misrepresented, and slandered, and he simply smiles and says, "If you knew me better you would not treat me so"; and if the first time he finds an opportunity he helps the man who injured him, and if he gets no gratitude, but, on the contrary, worse treatment than before, he is still able to persevere in doing good, most of you would say, "What a noble fellow he is." Even the man who does not praise him is obliged to feel his greatness. There is about such a man a

superiority which covers him with honor in the consciences of those who observe his gentle spirit. Now, hearken, you that are conscious of great sin against God. If the Lord were to-night to put all your sins behind his back, and would take you into his family, as he took the poor returning prodigal; and make a great feast for you as he did when his son that was lost was found, would it not be noble of him? Would you not feel that his thoughts are far above your thoughts? Of course you would. Ay, but my God doth noble deeds such as make the harps of heaven ring with ecstatic music as the cherubim and seraphim behold his grace. O thrice noble God, there is none like unto thee, so ready to pardon and to receive each returning penitent and restore him to thy favor. To pardon you, my sinful brother, would be extraordinary and honorable to the last degree, but God is prepared to act after that noble fashion. Will you not accept such boundless love, and be at peace with such a Lord?

Do you not all feel that if you could act in so noble a style it would be very pleasurable to you? No doubt, there is some pleasure in knocking a fellow down who insults you, but it cannot last long. When the fire of passion goes out a man begins to think whether it was a good thing to do after all: but not to do it, to turn the other cheek when you have been smitten, to do good instead of evil, have you ever tried that? If you have done so, you have heard music in your heart at midnight at the remembrance of your forbearance. When you have been lying awake you have thought it over, and you have said to yourself, "It makes me happy to think that I did not reply to that angry man in an angry tone to think that I did not after all give him a smart blow when he gave me one; but that I showed patience and good temper, and endured ill treatment for Christ's sake." It is a pleasure as deep as it is noble. To be Christlike is to enjoy a heaven within your breast. Even so it is a pleasure to God to have mercy upon sinners: he delighteth in mercy. Nothing gives to God greater delight than to save those who have offended him. He is always ready for a gracious deed, and freely of his own will he meets those who seek his face; he does not want you. to melt his heart with tears in order to win his love, and he does not require the laceration of your body by penance, nor a long period of agonizing doubt, before he grants full and effectual pardon. It is his joy to pardon. He meets returning sinners when they are yet a great way off, and kisses them. So rejoiced is he to receive them that if they are glad to

be received, yet he is the gladder of the two. Joyous is the great Father's heart when he presses his Ephraims to his bosom.

Did I hear somebody say, "But this that you are talking about is not justice"? Listen: it is not unjust. Look at the conduct which our Lord commands us and see if that would be unjust. If a man has insulted me and I forgive him, am I unjust? If a man has slandered me, and I overlook it, am I unjust? If a man has done me an injury, and I refuse to take any revenge except that of doing good to him, am I unjust? Certainly I am not acting according to the laws of justice, but then I am not the judge, and not being the judge, why should I undertake an office to which I am not called? God is the judge of all by necessity of his nature, but he will not fully display that character till the day when in the person of his Son he shall come with all his holy angels to summon men to his bar: for the present he does not deal with living men after the rule of justice, but he deals with them according to his grace. If any one should question why he should give his grace to the undeserving, here is a sufficient answer for them: "May I not do as I will with my own? Is thine eye evil because mine is good?" If you choose to show kindness to those who do not deserve it, who shall say you "nay"? May not a man be as generous and forbearing as he pleases? What law, human or divine, forbids him? And if God, with infinite sovereignty of mercy, chooses to dispense his favors even to those who deserve nothing at his hands, let him be adored for ever, but let him not be questioned for so doing. At any rate it ill becomes the undeserving themselves to raise such a question; rather let them eagerly accept the bounty of the pardoning God.

And then note this thought-that to do good to the evil is, after all, promotive of righteousness. To be good to the unjust is to help on the cause of right, for goodness to the evil is one of the most wooing things in the world, wooing them, I mean, to repent and do good in return. Let me give you an anecdote. There was a farmer who lived in one of the new settlements of America. We will call him Mr. Wrath, for he was a man of a horrible temper, and everybody who lived near him was made to know it. He had an excellent Christian man living near him-a gentle, good, easy-tempered soul; and on one occasion this good man's hogs strayed into the bad man's wheat and caused damage. Mr. Wrath came down in a tearing

rage, and said what he would do and what he would not do; the other offered to pay for the damage, and said that he was very sorry for his neglect and would do his best that it should not happen again. However, it did happen again, and the owner of the wheat was in a great passion. He caught the swine and killed them all, put their bodies on a cart and took them back to his neighbor. "Your hogs," said he, "got into my corn: here they are"-and sure enough there they were, all dead. Of course, the owner of the hogs might have gone to law with Mr. Wrath and obtained damages at more or less cost of trouble and temper; but he merely said that he was exceedingly sorry that his hogs had transgressed again, and there ended the matter. Some time after it came to pass that Mr. Wrath's pigs went astray, as pigs will do, and they damaged this good man's wheat. What did he do? He had not sought a legal remedy against his adversary; would not it have been fair and straightforward to butcher Mr. Wrath's hogs, on the principle of tit for tat, as the proverb puts it? Of course it would have been, but a Christian does not act upon that worn-out legal principle. Instead of killing the creatures, he caught them all, tied their legs, put them on a cart, drove up to the door and said, "Friend Wrath, your hogs got into my corn: I have brought them to you: here they are,"-the very words that Mr. Wrath had used to him. He went to the cart, of course expecting to find his swine all dead; but there they were, all right enough, grunting in proof of their continued existence. "There," said he, "hogs are always troublesome. I dare say you could not help their getting into my corn: there they are." Mr. Wrath's temper was changed from that very day. How could he behave ill to such a neighbor who had vanquished him by forgiving him the injury that he had done him? Now, just as men can win upon men by their kindness, so does God win upon the hearts of men by his love when the Holy Spirit leads them to see and feel that he acts graciously towards them. There is no power to win a man like the power of love. If you have ever been converted, dear friends, I think that you have felt that you could say-

"I yield, by sovereign love subdued:
Who can resist its charms?"

The thunderbolts of God might have broken you down, but they could not have forced love into your terrified soul; yet, when Jesus came in love and

mercy, you were compelled to yield, and that most gladly and heartily. So God's goodness to the unjust is aiding and assisting the cause of righteousness and justice, and who, therefore, shall say a word against it? "Ah," says somebody, "but it is very liable to be abused. If you go and help the bad, and benefit the unjust, you will find that they will take your charity and spend it wrongly, or perhaps they will turn again and rend you." This is very true, but still the Master says, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you." He does not insert a clause to the effect that we are only to do this where we are sure that it will not be abused. No, it is absolute. If they make bad use of it, that is no business of yours. Your heavenly Father knows that the churl, when he reaps his harvest, will simply spend it on himself; yet he sends him the sunlight and the shower. He knows that yonder oppressive wretch will, with his wealth, go on to grind the poor; but he sends his crops the warm, genial sun, and the refreshing rain, notwithstanding it. But, dear friends, there is this thing to be said about divine grace, that if God gives it to you, you cannot misuse it, for grace will change your heart and renew your nature, and if he is so ready to give to men those benefits which they can and do abuse, much more will he bestow that grace which is liable to no such ill usage.

Let me add, however, if anybody does abuse God's mercy, just as if any man abuses your practical kindness, it involves him in great guilt. Men cannot do despite to goodness without becoming exceeding vile. You will soon see this if I mention one anecdote. In Holland, in the days when the Baptists were persecuted, it happened that the canals were frozen over, and one poor despised Baptist escaped from a person who was seeking to drag him before the magistrates to get blood money for his head. He ran across the river, which was wide and frozen. The ice was strong enough to bear him and he got safely to the other shore. The person who was seeking his life was a heavier man and he slipped through the ice and went into the water. And what did this poor hunted Christian man do? He turned round and at the peril of his own life he helped his persecutor out and landed him on the bank; and what did the wretch do but seize him and drag him before the magistrates and he was burnt as the result of his own act of generosity. There is not a man in the world who does not feel that the wretch deserves universal execration. Everybody denounces him

at once. So if after God's mercy to the unjust and the bad they still go on to sin against him I will leave the universal conscience of mankind to cry them down. I heard the other day an instance of a dog's returning good for evil, and this places the matter in an equally strong light. A man had taken a dog with the intention of drowning him,-a large Newfoundland dog. He went into a boat with a big stone intending to throw the dog out of the boat into the stream with the stone about his neck. Somehow or other before he had securely tied the stone, the dog had become free and in some little scuffle between them the boat was upset and dog and man were both in the water. The man sank and was nearly drowned; but the dog, noble creature, swam up and seized hold of the man and drew him safely to shore. Now suppose he had drowned the dog after that! Did I hear some indignant person say, "Let him be drowned himself." He would not deserve to live, surely. I would take such a dog as that home and say, "While I have a crust, there shall be a bit for you, good dog, who saved my life when I was destroying yours." Now, if even a dog when it renders good for evil gets a claim upon us, what shall I say of the great God who with generous liberality continues to feed and keep in life and health the undeserving sons of men, and who more than this has given his own Son to die, and sent a message of amazing love to mankind, in which he says, "Come to me: I am ready to forgive you. Come and accept my love and mercy. Let us be friends, for I delight to forgive sin"? Is it not clear that to abuse such love is black-hearted baseness? I beseech you, be not guilty of it.

II. Now, secondly, we may gather fresh hope and encouragement from **THE FACT ITSELF**. When the unlight comes upon a wicked man's field and the rain descends upon the farm of a blaspheming atheist, the man has done nothing to deserve either shower or sun, but yet they favor him. And, blessed be God, he gives his grace to those who have done nothing to deserve it. If all your life long you cannot think of one good action you have ever performed, nevertheless the grace of God is free to you if you will have it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" is preached to you; for deservings and merits are out of the question. God gives freely even to the evil and the unjust.

Showers from heaven and sunlight come to those who have not sought

them at the Lord's hands. That churl there never prayed for the sunlight. He does not believe in praying-not he. And that oppressor over yonder, that we spoke of, never asked God to send the rain: he said it was a matter of chance, and he did not see the good of praying about it. Yet it came. And oh, what a wonder it is that God is often found of them that sought him not! Persons have come into this Tabernacle, and the last thing they thought of was that they would be saved that night, and yet they have been. God's infinite mercy sometimes comes to those who do not ask for it: according to the text, "I am found of them that sought me not." Look at Colonel Gardiner. He had made an assignation, was about to perpetrate a gross act of vice, but the person whom he expected to meet had not come, and therefore he had to wait an hour or two; and while he waited he saw or thought he saw a vision of the Savior who said to him, "I did all this for thee, what hast thou done for me?" That question with the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, by divine grace, changed his heart: he never kept that assignation, but, as most of you know, he became one of the most devout Christians in the world. Oh, tell it the wide world over that as the rain tarrieth not for man nor waiteth for the sons of men, but cometh according to the good favor of God, so often does his grace visit those who knew not God and sought not after him. Let him be praised and extolled for ever and ever because of this.

Now, if grace sometimes comes to those who have not asked, do you not think that it will come to you who are asking for it? Oh you that are groaning for it sighing for it, and longing for it, do you think it will be denied to you? God forbid! He will be sure to bless you. Believe in the Lord Jesus and it is yours at once.

The rain comes to those who do not even acknowledge the existence of God. It waters the atheist's fields, and refreshes the pastures of the fool who saith in his heart, "There is no God." Even so, I have known the grace of God descend on those who have loudly denied his very existence. In our church there is one at least who not long ago was a loud spokesman against God, but upon his dropping into this house the word came with power to his soul, and again, and again, and again it described his case, till at last he said, "There is a God, for he has found me out. The preacher seems to know my case and character." Every time he came something

was said which so accurately described himself that he could not understand and interpret it in any other way than that God had spoken to his soul. Now, if God calls by his effectual grace some that even doubt his existence, how much more will he look on von who have been made to tremble before him, and who desire to be reconciled to him? Surely he will hear the cry of the humble, and grant your penitent request.

The Lord sends the rain to some that never thank him for it. "A heavy shower, William," says the churl. "Yes, sir," says his pious servant, "God be thanked for it." "I do not know much about that, William. I dare say the wind had a good deal to do with it. I knew it would come, for the glass was down." So he ends that talk. Ay, but, dear friend, if God sends temporal blessings to those who do not thank him, will he not give his grace to those of you who feel that you would bless him for ever, if he would but save you? A good woman said when she sought the Lord, "If he saves me he shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise him as long as ever I live, and then to all eternity." Well, now you may reckon quite surely that when a soul feels after that manner the Lord will not deny it the sun of his love, or the rain of his grace. He gives rain even to those whom he knows will remain thankless, will he not give his Spirit to those who will become his grateful children?

Recollect, too, dear friends, that God gives this rain, and this sunshine, year after year. If I were very kind to a man, and he treated me unthankfully I should think that I had a good deal of grace if I kept on being kind to him for twelve months. And supposing I kept on seven years, I fancy that I should think that I had endured a long enough trial of him, and should get a little tired of being grieved by him; would not you? Yet, see, God has sent sunshine and shower upon the fields of the wicked all their lives long; he has continued to be kind to them, and yet he has not grown weary. Perhaps some of you are fifty years old and yet have never yielded to the love of God. Ah, you have been hearing sermons these fifty years. Perhaps you are getting on for seventy now. Why, you have heard tender words of love that went further than your ears, and touched your conscience, but you have still held out against God. Oh, the patience of God to have borne with you from day to day! Now, if he has suffered you so long, and if tonight you turn to him with purpose of heart,

and say, "I have had enough of this rebellion. Lord, I would be at peace with thee," do you think that he will refuse you? Far from it, for his mercy endureth for ever.

One more remark only on this. The sunshine which you saw to-day, I do not doubt, was as bright a sunlight as that which Joshua saw when he bade the sun stand still; and the shower that fell the other day, especially as it fell in these quarters and at Brixton, I should say was quite as plentiful as any downpour which our grandsires can remember. It is evident that the sun's fire is not burnt out, and that the clouds are not exhausted. Well, it is so in heavenly things, for there the eternal fullness dwells. God has as much love as ever, and as much grace as ever; and as a thousand years ago he poured forth his grace to convert the bad and the unjust, he is just as able to pour them out now upon the most guilty, and the most worthless. His grace in conversion, pardon, adoption, and preservation is as large as ever. Glory be to his blessed name, he still rains his bounties on the unjust; and that Christ who when we were dead in sins died for us, and who while we were yet sinners manifested his great love to us-that Christ who came into the world to save sinners-still aboundeth in power to save and bless; and if you will go to him (and oh may his grace constrain you) you shall find it to be so.

III. Lest I should weary you, I will finish with the last head, under which I should like to MAKE THE EARTH, THE FLOWERS, AND THE TREES, WHICH HAVE BEEN WATERED AND WARMED, SPEAK TO YOU A LITTLE. And, first, I will suppose, dear friend, that you are here to-night, and feel that you cannot pray-feel as if you could not come to God, could not do anything. The flowers say, "We are cheered by the sun, and refreshed by the rain; we do nothing to deserve these blessings, but we do long for them." The little flowers say, "We do long for the rain." Look at them; they droop their heads during a long drought. See the grass, how brown it gets; see the leaves, how dry they are; see the earth, how chapped it is after a dry season. Now, soul, do long for the mercy of God; pine for it; sigh for it; cry for it. God help you to do that. To be forgiven, to get the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, is not that worth having? Do pant for it, I say, as the flowers sigh for the rain and the sun. And next, the flowers seem to say, "Do turn to it." If you keep a plant in your

window see how it grows the way the sun comes. Notice the trees how they put out their branches sunward. See the sunflower how it turns its head in the direction of the sun. The flowers love the sun. If you cannot do anything to get divine grace, at least turn your head that way. Look that way; long that way; grow that way. You will receive it, it will not be denied. It will come to you. It has come to you if you already begin to turn to it with longing gaze.

And then the flowers seem to say, "Drink it in when it does come." In January there was the crocus just peeping up from the soil, and the sun shone on it, and in gratitude it brought up from the deeps-from its cellar somewhere-a gold cup, and set it out to catch the sunbeams till the sun smiled and graciously filled it to the brim. And have you noticed when the soft April showers fall how the flowers seem each to have a cup to hold a share of heaven's bounty? and certainly beneath the soil each flower has its little travelling rootlets sucking up each drop of moisture they can find.

Now, dear hearers, when grace does come specially near to you, drink it in. Is the sermon blest to you? Do not go away and lose its influence. Do you feel some tender movements in your conscience? Yield to them. Is there an invitation? Accept it. Is there a threatening? Tremble at it. Open your bosom and say "Come in, my Savior, come in and reign and save my soul from the wrath to come."

But then the flowers say once more, "Do thank God for it." The last two or three days I have seemed to live in a temple. When I go into my garden I have a choir around me in the trees. They do not wear surplices, for their song is not artificial and official. Some of them are clothed in glossy black, but they sing like little angels; they sing the sun up, and wake me at break of day; and they warble on till the last red ray of the sun has departed, still singing out from bush and tree the praises of their God. And all the flowers-the primroses that are almost gone-these look into my heart deep meanings concerning God till the last one shuts his eye. And now the forget-me-nots and the wall-flowers and the lilacs and the guelder-roses and a host of sweet beauties are pouring out their incense of perfume, as if they said, "Thank the God that made us. Blessed be his

name. The earth is full of his goodness."

Now, dear hearers, if you do get the Lord's grace, thank him for it. Crow by it, blossom with it, be fragrant with it. If you only receive a little grace be very grateful for it, for a little grace is worth a great deal. If God gives you grace enough to be called starlight, thank him for it, and he will give you moonlight; and when you get moonlight grace, thank him for it, and he will give you sunlight; and when you have obtained sunlight grace, thank him for it, and he will give you the light of heaven which is as the light of seven days.

Lastly,-and this the flowers cannot teach you, because the flowers cannot do it-pray for grace. It will come; it will come. Do you remember George Herbert's pretty verse. With that I will finish. He says

"The dew doth every morning fall:
And shall the dew outstrip thy dove?
The dew for which grass cannot call-
Drops from above."

See his point? The dew comes every morning. The grass cannot ask for it, but it comes. And shall the dew be more free and swift than the Holy Ghost. No, saith the poet: I can pray for that holy Dove: will he not come to me who pray, since the dew comes to the grass which cannot call for it? Behold he visits the earth and waters it with the river of God which is full of water, and flings back the curtains of the sky and bids the sun shine out with genial face upon the poor dead soil; and if he does all this for the fields that cannot pray and for flowers that cannot speak, how much more will he do it for you who seek his face through Jesus Christ.

Come then to him. He will gladly welcome you. Come and trust his Son. Come and rest in the merit of Jesus' blood, and you shall find eternal life. May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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No Room For Christ In The Inn

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. - Luke 2:7

It was needful that it should be distinctly proven, beyond all dispute, that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It was necessary, also, that he should be born in Bethlehem-Ephratah, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by his servant Micah. But how could a public recognition of the lineage of an obscure carpenter and an unknown maiden be procured? What interest could the keepers of registers be supposed to take in two such humble persons? As for the second matter, Mary lived at Nazareth in Galilee, and there seemed every probability that the birth would take place there; indeed, the period of her delivery was so near that, unless absolutely compelled, she would not be likely to undertake a long and tedious journey to the southern province of Judea. How are these two matters to be arranged? Can one turn of the wheel effect two purposes? It can be done! It shall be done! The official stamp of the Roman empire shall be affixed to the pedigree of the coming Son of David, and Bethlehem shall behold his nativity. A little tyrant, Herod, by some show of independent spirit, offends the greater tyrant, Augustus. Augustus informs him that he shall no longer treat him as a friend, but as a vassal; and albeit Herod makes the most abject submission, and his friends at the Roman court intercede for him, yet Augustus, to show his displeasure, orders a census to be taken of all the Jewish people, in readiness for a contemplated taxation, which, however, was not carried out till some ten years after. Even the winds and waves are not more fickle than a tyrant's will; but the Ruler of tempests knoweth how to rule the perverse spirits of princes. The Lord our God has a bit for the wildest war horse, and a hook for the most terrible leviathan. Autocratical Caesars are but puppets moved with invisible strings, mere drudges to the King of kings. Augustus must be made offended with Herod; he is constrained to tax the people; it is imperative that a census be taken; nay, it is of necessity that

inconvenient, harsh, and tyrannical regulations should be published, and every person must repair to the town to which he was reputed to belong; thus, Mary is brought to Bethlehem, Jesus Christ is born as appointed, and, moreover, he is recognised officially as being descended from David by the fact that his mother came to Bethlehem as being of that lineage, remained there, and returned to Galilee without having her claims questioned, although the jealousy of all the women of the clan would have been aroused had an intruder ventured to claim a place among the few females to whom the birth of Messiah was now by express prophecies confined. Remark here the wisdom of a God of providence, and believe that all things are ordered well.

When all persons of the house of David were thus driven to Bethlehem, the scanty accommodation of the little town would soon be exhausted. Doubtless friends entertained their friends till their houses were all full, but Joseph had no such willing kinsmen in the town. There was the caravanserai, which was provided in every village, where free accommodation was given to travelers; this, too, was full, for coming from a distance, and compelled to travel slowly, the humble couple had arrived late in the day. The rooms within the great brick square were already occupied with families; there remained no better lodging, even for a woman in travail, than one of the meaner spaces appropriated to beasts of burden. The stall of the ass was the only place where the child could be born. By hanging a curtain at its front, and perhaps tethering the animal on the outer side to block: the passage, the needed seclusion could be obtained, and here, in the stable, was the King of Glory born and in the manner was he laid.

My business this morning is to lead your meditations to the stable at Bethlehem, that you may see this great sight—the Savior in the manger, and think over the reason for this lowly couch—"because there was no room for them in the inn."

I. I shall commence by remarking that **THERE WERE OTHER REASONS WHY CHRIST SHOULD BE LAID IN THE MANGER.**

1. I think it was intended thus to show forth his humiliation. He came,

according to prophecy, to be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" he was to be "without form or comeliness," "a root out of a dry ground." Would it have been fitting that the man who was to die naked on the cross should be robed in purple at his birth? Would it not have been inappropriate that the Redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb should be born anywhere but in the humblest shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manner? The manger and the cross standing at the two extremities of the Savior's earthly life seem most fit and congruous the one to the other. He is to wear through life a peasant's garb; he is to associate with fishermen; the lowly are to be his disciples; the cold mountains are often to be his only bed; he is to say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head;" nothing, therefore, could be more fitting than that in his season of humiliation, when he laid aside all his glory, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and condescended even to the meanest estate, he should be laid in a manger.

2. By being in a manger he was declared to be the king of the poor. They, doubtless, were at once able to recognize his relationship to them, from the position in which they found him. I believe it excited feelings of the tenderest brotherly kindness in the minds of the shepherds, when the angel said—"This shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger." In the eyes of the poor, imperial robes excite no affection, a man in their own garb attracts their confidence. With what pertinacity will workmen cleave to a leader of their own order, believing in him because he knows their toils, sympathizes in their sorrows, and feels an interest in all their concerns. Great commanders have readily won the hearts of their soldiers by sharing their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks. The King of Men who was born in Bethlehem, was not exempted in his infancy from the common calamities of the poor, nay, his lot was even worse than theirs. I think I hear the shepherds comment on the manger-birth, "Ah!" said one to his fellow, "then he will not be like Herod the tyrant; he will remember the manger and feel for the poor; poor helpless infant, I feel a love for him even now, what miserable accommodation this cold world yields its Savior; it is not a Caesar that is born to-day; he will never trample down our fields with his armies, or slaughter our flocks

for his courtiers, he will be the poor man's friend, the people's monarch; according to the words of our shepherd-king, he shall judge the poor of the people; he shall save the children of the needy." Surely the shepherds, and such as they—the poor of the earth, perceived at once that here was the plebeian king; noble in descent, but still as the Lord hath called him, "one chosen out of the people." Great Prince of Peace! the manger was thy royal cradle! Therein wast thou presented to all nations as Prince of our race, before whose presence there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but thou art Lord of all. Kings, your gold and silver would have been lavished on him if ye had known the Lord of Glory, but inasmuch as ye knew him not he was declared with demonstration to be a leader and a witness to the people. The things which are not, under him shall bring to nought the things that are, and the things that are despised which God hath chosen, shall under his leadership break in pieces the might, and pride, and majesty of human grandeur.

3. Further, in thus being laid in a manger, he did, as it were, give an invitation to the most humble to come to him. We might tremble to approach a throne, but we cannot fear to approach a manger. Had we seen the Master at first riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem with garments laid in the way, and the palm-branches strewed, and the people crying, "Hosanna!" we might have thought, though even the thought would have been wrong, that he was not approachable. Even there, riding upon a colt the foal of an ass, he was so meek and lowly, that the young children clustered about him with their boyish "Hosanna!" Never could there be a being more approachable than Christ. No rough guards pushed poor petitioners away; no array of officious friends were allowed to keep off the importunate widow or the man who clamored that his son might be made whole; the hem of his garment was always trailing where sick folk could reach it, and he himself had a hand always ready to touch the disease, an ear to catch the faintest accents of misery, a soul going forth everywhere in rays of mercy, even as the light of the sun streams on every side beyond that orb itself. By being laid in a manger he proved himself a priest taken from among men, one who has suffered like his brethren, and therefore can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Of him it was said "He doth eat and drink with publicans and sinners;" "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Even as an

infant, by being laid in a manger, he was set forth as the sinner's friend. Come to him, ye that are weary and heavy-laden! Come to him, ye that are broken in spirit, ye who are bowed down in soul! Come to him, ye that despise yourselves and are despised of others! Come to him, publican and harlot! Come to him, thief and drunkard! In the manger there he lies, unguarded from your touch and unshielded from your gaze. Bow the knee, and kiss the Son of God; accept him as your Savior, for he puts himself into that manger that you may approach him. The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you.

4. Methinks there was yet another mystery. You remember, brethren, that this place was free to all; it was an inn, and please to remember the inn in this case was not like our hotels, where accommodation and provision must be paid for. In the early and simple ages of the world every man considered it an honor to entertain a stranger; afterwards, as travelling became more common, many desired to shift the honor and pleasure upon their neighbors; wherefore should they engross all the dignity of hospitality? Further on still, some one person was appointed in each town and village, and was expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest; but, as the ages grew less simple, and the pristine glow of brotherly love cooled down, the only provision made was the erection of a huge square block, arranged in rooms for the travelers, and with lower stages for the beasts, and here, with a certain provision of water and in some cases chopped straw for the cattle, the traveler must make himself as comfortable as he could. He had not to purchase admittance to the caravanserai, for it was free to all, and the stable especially so. Now, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free he his to all comers. The Gospel is preached to every creature and shuts out none. We may say of the invitations of Holy Scripture,

"None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.

Though Jesus' grace can save the prince,

The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despairs."

Class exclusions are unknown here, and the prerogatives of caste are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable; it cannot be an offense to enter the stable of a public caravanserai. So, if you desire to come to Christ you may come to him just as you are; you may come now. Whosoever among you hath the desire in his heart to trust Christ is free to do it. Jesus is free to you; he will receive you; he will welcome you with gladness, and to show this, I think, the young child was cradled in a manger. We know that sinners often imagine that they are shut out. Oftentimes the convicted conscience will write bitter things against itself and deny its part and lot in mercy's stores. Brother, if God hath not shut thee out, do not shut thyself out. Until thou canst find it written in the Book that thou mayest not trust Christ; till thou canst quote a positive passage in which it is written that he is not able to save thee, I pray thee take that ether word wherein it is written—"He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Venture on that promise; come to Christ in the strength and faith of it, and thou shalt find him free to all comers.

5. We have not yet exhausted the reasons why the Son of Man was laid in a manger. It was at the manger that the beasts were fed; and does the Savior lie where weary beasts receive their provender, and shall there not be a mystery here? Alas, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own consciences every thing manlike has departed, but even to such the remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply. We are constantly reading in our papers of men who are called incorrigible, and it is fashionable just now to demand ferociously, that these men should be treated with unmingled severity. Some few years ago all the world went mad with a spurious humanity, crying out that gentleness would reform the brutal thief whom harsh punishments would harden hopelessly; now the current has turned, and everybody is demanding the abandonment of the present system. I am no advocate for treating criminals daintily; let

their sin bring them a fair share of smart; but if by any means they can be reformed, pray let the means be tried. The day will come when the paroxysm of this garrotting fever is over, we shall blush to think that we were frightened by silly fears into a dangerous interference with a great and good work which hitherto has been successfully carried on. It is a fact that under the present system, which (abating some faults that it may be well to cure) is an admirable one, crime is growing less frequent, and the class of gross offenders has been materially lessened. Whereas in 1844 18,490 convicts were transported, in 1860 the corresponding number was 11,533, and that notwithstanding the increase of the population. The ticket-of-leave system, when the public would employ the convicts and so give them a chance of gaining a new character, worked so well that little more than one percent in a year were re-convicted, and even now only five per cent, per annum are found returning to crime and to prison. Well, now, if the five percent receive no good, or even become worse, ought we not to consider the other ninety-five, and pause awhile before we give loose to our vengeance and exchange a Christian system of hopeful mercy for the old barbarous rule of unmitigated severity. Beware, fellow citizens, beware of restoring the old idea that men can sin beyond hope of reformation, or you will generate criminals worse than those which now trouble us. The laws of Draco must ever be failures, but fear not for the ultimate triumph of plans which a Christian spirit has suggested. I have wandered from the subject,—I thought I might save some from the crime of opposing true philanthropy on account of a sudden panic; but I will return at once to the manger and the babe. I believe our Lord was laid in the manger where the beasts were fed, to show that even beast-like men may come to him and live. No creature can be so degraded that Christ cannot lift it up. Fall it may, and seem to fall most certainly to hell, but the long and strong arm of Christ can reach it even in its most desperate degradation; he can bring it up from apparently hopeless ruin. If there be one who has strolled in here this morning whom society abhors, and who abhors himself, my Master in the stable with the beasts presents himself as able to save the vilest of the vile, and to accept the worst of the worst even now. Believe on him and he will make thee a new creature.

6. But as Christ was laid where beasts were fed, you will please to recollect that after he was gone beasts fed there again. It was only his

presence which could glorify the manger, and here we learn that if Christ were taken away the world would go back to its former heathen darkness. Civilisation itself would die out, at least that part of it which really civilizes man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished. If Christ were taken away from the human heart, the most holy would become debased again, and those who claim kinship with angels would soon prove that they have relationship to devils. The manger, I say, would be a manger for beasts still, if the Lord of Glory were withdrawn, and we should go back to our sins and our lusts if Christ should once take away his grace and leave us to ourselves. For these reasons which I have mentioned, methinks, Christ was laid in a manger.

II. But still the text says that he was laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn, and this leads us to the second remark, THAT THERE WERE OTHER PLACES BESIDES THE INN WHICH HAD NO ROOM FOR CHRIST.

The palaces of emperors and the halls of kings afforded the royal stranger no refuge? Alas! my brethren, seldom is there room for Christ in palaces! How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace, and they delight in war! He breaks their bows and cuts their spears in sunder; he burneth their war-chariots in the fire. How could kings accept the humble Savior? They love grandeur and pomp, and he is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenter's son, and the fisherman's companion. How can princes find room for the new-born monarch? Why he teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the knavish tricks of politics and the grasping designs of ambition. O great ones of the earth, I am but little astonished that amid your glories, and pleasures, and wars, and councils, ye forget the Anointed, and cast out the Lord of All. There is no room for Christ with the kings. Look throughout the kingdoms of the earth now, and with here and there an exception it is still true—"The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed." In heaven we shall see here and there a monarch; but ah! how few; indeed a child might write them. "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." State-chambers, cabinets, throne-rooms, and royal palaces, are

about as little frequented by Christ as the jungles and swamps of India by the cautious traveler. He frequents cottages far more often than regal residences, for there is no room for Jesus Christ in regal halls.

"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine he turns his eyes
From towers of haughty kings.

He bids his awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
With pleasure in his eyes."

But there were senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws, was there no room for Christ there? Alas! my brethren, none, and to this day there is very little room for Christ in parliaments. How seldom is religion recognised by politicians! Of course a State-religion, if it will consent to be a poor, tame, powerless thing, a lion with its teeth all drawn, its mane all shaven off, and its claws all trimmed—yes, that may be recognised; but the true Christ and they that follow him and dare to obey his laws in an evil generation, what room is there for such? Christ and his gospel—oh! this is sectarianism, and is scarcely worthy of the notice of contempt. Who pleads for Jesus in the senate? Is not his religion, under the name of sectarianism, the great terror of all parties? Who quotes his golden rule as a direction for prime ministers, or preaches Christ-like forgiveness as a rule for national policy? One or two will give him a good word, but if it be put to the vote whether the Lord Jesus should be obeyed or no, it will be many a day before the ayes have it. Parties, policies, place-hunters, and pleasure-seekers exclude the Representative of Heaven from a place among representatives of Earth.

Might there not be found some room for Christ in what is called good society? Were there not in Bethlehem some people that were very respectable, who kept themselves aloof from the common multitude;

persons of reputation and standing—could not they find room for Christ? Ah! dear friends, it is too much the case that there is no room for Him in what is called good society. There is room for all the silly little forms by which men choose to trammel themselves; room for the vain niceties of etiquette; room for frivolous conversation; room for the adoration of the body, there is room for the setting up of this and that as the idol of the hour, but there is too little room for Christ, and it is far from fashionable to follow the Lord fully. The advent of Christ would be the last thing which gay society would desire; the very mention of his name by the lips of love would cause a strange sensation. Should you begin to talk about the things of Christ in many a circle, you would be tabooed at once. "I will never ask that man to my house again," so-and-so would say—"if he must bring his religion with him." Folly and finery, rank and honor, jewels and glitter, frivolity and fashion, all report that there is no room for Jesus in their abodes.

But is there not room for him on the exchange? Cannot he be taken to the marts of commerce? Here are the shop-keepers of a shop-keeping nation—is there not room for Christ here? Ah! dear friends, how little of the spirit, and life, and doctrine of Christ can be found here! The trader finds it inconvenient to be too scrupulous; the merchant often discovers that if he is to make a fortune he must break his conscience. How many there are—well, I will not say they tell lies directly, but still, still, still—I had better say it plainly—they do lie indirectly with a vengeance. Who does not know as he rides along that there must be many liars abroad? for almost every house you see is "The cheapest house in London," which can hardly be; full sure they cannot all be cheapest! What sharp practice some indulge in! What puffery and falsehood! What cunning and sleight of hand! What woes would my Master pronounce on some of you if he looked into your shop windows, or stood behind your counters. Bankruptcies, swindlings, frauds are so abundant that in hosts of cases there is no room for Jesus in the mart or the shop.

Then there are the schools of the philosophers, surely they will entertain him. The wise men will find in him incarnate wisdom; he, who as a youth is to become the teacher of doctors, who will sit down and ask them questions and receive their answers, surely he will find room at once

among the Grecian sages, and men of sense and wit will honor him. "Room for him, Socrates and Plato! Stoics and Epicurians give ye way; and you, ye teachers of Israel, vacate your seats; if there is no room for this child without your going, go; we must have him in the schools of philosophy if we put you all forth." No, dear friends, but it is not so; there is very little room for Christ in colleges and universities, very little room for him in the seats of learning. How often learning helps men to raise objections to Christ! Too often learning is the forge where the nails are made for Christ's crucifixion; too often human wit has become the artificer who has pointed the spear and made the shaft with which his heart should be pierced. We must say it, that philosophy, falsely so called. (for true philosophy, if it were handled aright, must ever be Christ's friend) philosophy, falsely so called, hath done mischief to Christ, but seldom hath it served his cause. A few with splendid talents, a few of the erudite and profound have bowed like children at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, and have been honored in bowing there, but too many, conscious of their knowledge, stiff and stern in their conceit of wisdom, have said,—"Who is Christ, that we should acknowledge him?" They found no room for him in the schools.

But there was surely one place where he could go—it was the Sanhedrim, where the elders sit. Or could he not be housed in the priestly chamber where the priests assemble with the Levites. Was there not room for him in the temple or the synagogue? No, he found no shelter there; it was there, his whole life long, that he found his most ferocious enemies. Not the common multitude, but the priests were the instigators of his death, the priests moved the people to say "Not this man, but Barabbas." The priests paid out their shekels to bribe the popular voice, and then Christ was hounded to his death. Surely there ought to have been room for him in the Church of his own people; but there was not. Too often in the priestly church, when once it becomes recognised and mounts to dignity, there is no room for Christ. I allude not now to any one denomination, but take the whole sweep of Christendom, and it is strange that when the Lord comes to his own his own receives him not. The most accursed enemies of true religion have been the men who pretended to be its advocates. It is little marvel when bishops undermine the popular faith in revelation; this is neither their first nor last offense. Who burned the

martyrs, and made Smithfield a field of blood, a burning fiery furnace, a great altar for the Most High God? Why, those who professed to be anointed of the Lord, whose shaven crowns had received episcopal benediction. Who put John Bunyan in prison? Who chased such men as Owen and the Puritans from their pulpits? Who harried the Covenanters upon the mountains? Who, Sirs, but the professed messengers of heaven and priests of God? Who have hunted the baptized saints in every land, and hunt them still in many a Continental state? The priests ever; the priests ever; there is no room for Christ with the prophets of Baal, the servants of Babylon. The false hirelings that are not Christ's shepherds, and love not his sheep, have ever been the most ferocious enemies of our God and of his Christ. There is no room for him where his name is chanted in solemn hymns and his image lifted up amid smoke of incense. Go where ye will, and there is no space for the Prince of peace but with the humble and contrite spirits which by grace he prepares to yield him shelter.

III. But now for our third remark, THE INN ITSELF HAD NO ROOM FOR HIM; and this was the main reason why he must be laid in a manger. What can we find in modern times which stands in the place of the inn? Well, there is public sentiment free to all. In this free land, men speak of what they like, and there is a public opinion upon every subject; and you know there is free toleration in this country to everything—permit me to say, toleration to everything but Christ. You will discover that the persecuting-spirit is now as much abroad as ever. There are still men at whom it is most fashionable to sneer. We never scoff at Christians now-a-days; we do not sneer at that respectable title, lest we should lose our own honor; we do not now-a-days, talk against the followers of Jesus under that name. No; but we have found out a way of doing it more safely. There is a pretty word of modern invention—a very pretty word—the word "Sectarian." Do you know what it means? A sectarian means a true Christian; a man who can afford to keep a conscience, and does not mind suffering for it; a man who, whatever he finds to be in that old Book, believes it, and acts upon it, and is zealous for it. I believe that the men aimed at under the term, "sectarians," are the true followers of Christ, and that the sneers and jeers, and all the nonsense that you are always reading and hearing, is really aimed at the Christian, the true

Christian, only he is disguised and nick-named by the word sectarian. I would give not a farthing for your religion, nay, not even the turn of a rusty nail, unless you will sometimes win that title. If God's Word be true, every atom of it, then we should act upon it; and whatsoever the Lord commandeth, we should diligently keep and obey, remembering that our Master tells us if we break one of the least of his commandments, and teach men so, we shall be least in his kingdom. We ought to be very jealous, very precise, very anxious, that even in the minutiae of our Savior's laws, we may obey, having our eyes up to him as the eyes of servants are to their mistresses. But if you do this, you will find you are not tolerated, and you will get the cold shoulder in society. A zealous Christian will find as truly a cross to carry now-a-days, as in the days of Simon the Cyrenian. If you will hold your tongue, if you will leave sinners to perish, if you will never endeavor to propagate your faith, if you will silence all witnessing for truth, if, in fact, you will renounce all the attributes of a Christian, if you will cease to be what a Christian must be, then the world will say, "Ah! that is right; this is the religion we like." But if you will believe, believe firmly, and if you let your belief actuate your life, and if your belief is so precious that you feel compelled to spread it, then at once you will find that there is no room for Christ even in the inn of public sentiment, where everything else is received. Be an infidel, and none will therefore treat you contemptuously; but be a Christian, and many will despise you. "There was no room for him in the inn."

How little room is there for Christ, too, in general conversation, which is also like an inn. We talk about many things; a man may now-a-days talk of any subject he pleases; no one can stop him and say, "There is a spy catching your words; he will report you to some central authority." Speech is very free in this land; but, ah! how little room is there for Christ in general talk! Even on Sunday afternoon how little room there is for Christ in some professed Christian's houses. They will talk about ministers, tell queer anecdotes about them—perhaps invent a few, or, at least, garnish the old ones, and add to them, and make them a little more brilliant; they will talk about the Sunday school, or the various agencies in connection with the Church, but how little they say about Christ! And if some one should in conversation make this remark, "Could we not speak upon the Godhead and manhood, the finished work and righteousness,

the ascension, or the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ," why we should see many, who even profess to be followers of Christ, who would hold up their heads and say, "Why, dear, that man is quite a fanatic, or else he would not think of introducing such a subject as that into general conversation." No, there is no room for him in the inn; to this day he can find but little access there.

I address many who are working-men. You are employed among a great many artisans day after day; do you not find, brethren—I know you do—that there is very little room for Christ in the workshop? There is room there for everything else; there is room for swearing; there is room for drunkenness; there is room for lewd conversation; there is room for politics, slanders, or infidelities, but there is no room for Christ. Too many of our working men think religion would be an incumbrance, a chain, a miserable prison to them. They can frequent the theater, or listen in a lecture-hall, but the house of God is too dreary for them. I wish I were not compelled to say so, but truly in our factories, workshops, and foundries, there is no room for Christ. The world is elbowing and pushing for more room, till there is scarce a corner left where the Babe of Bethlehem can be laid.

As for the inns of modern times—who would think of finding Christ there? Putting out of our catalogue those hotels and roadside houses which are needed for the accommodation of travelers, what greater curse have we than our taverns and pot-houses? What wider gates of hell? Who would ever resort to such places as we have flaring with gas light at the corners of all our streets to find Christ there? As well might we expect to find him in the bottomless pit! We should be just as likely to look for angels in hell, as to look for Christ in a gin palace! He who is separate from sinners, finds no fit society in the reeking temple of Bacchus. There is no room for Jesus in the inn. I think I would rather rot or feed the crows, than earn my daily bread by the pence of fools, the hard-earnings of the poor man, stolen from his ragged children, and his emaciated wife. What do many publicans fatten upon but the flesh, and bones, and blood, and souls of men. He who grows rich on the fruits of vice is a beast preparing for the slaughter. Truly, there is no room for Christ among the drunkards of Ephraim. They who have anything to do with Christ should

hear him say—"Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." There is no room for Christ now-a-days even in the places of public resort.

IV. This brings me to my fourth head, which is the most pertinent, and the most necessary to dwell upon for a moment. **HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST?**

As the palace, and the forum, and the inn, have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have you room for Christ? "Well," says one, "I have room for him, but I am not worthy that he should come to me." Ah! I did not ask about worthiness; have you room for him? "Oh," says one, "I have an empty void the world can never fill!" Ah! I see you have room for him. "Oh! but the room I have in my heart is so base!" So was the manger. "But it is so despicable!" So was the manger a thing to be despised. "Ah! but my heart is so foul!" So, perhaps, the manger may have been. "Oh! but I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ!" Nor was the manger a place fit for him, and yet there was he laid." Oh! but I have been such a sinner; I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils!" Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. Have you room for him? Never mind what the past has been; he can forget and forgive. It mattereth not what even the present state may be if thou mournest it. If thou hast but room for Christ he will come and be thy guest. Do not say, I pray you, "I hope I shall have room for him;" the time is come that he shall be born; Mary cannot wait months and years. Oh! sinner, if thou hast room for him let him be born in thy soul to-day. "To day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "To-day is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation." Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus now! "Oh!" saith one, "I have room for him, but will he come?" Will he come indeed! Do you but set the door of your heart open, do but say, "Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean I look to thee; come, lodge within my heart," and he will come to thee, and he will cleanse the manger of thy heart, nay, will transform it into a golden throne, and there he will sit and reign for ever and for ever. Oh! I have such a free Christ to preach this morning! I would I could preach him better. I have such a precious loving, Jesus to preach, he is willing to

find a home in humble hearts. What! are there no hearts here this morning that will take him in? Must my eye glance round these galleries and look at many of you who are still without him, and are there none who will say, "Come in, come in?" Oh! it shall be a happy day for you if you shall be enabled to take him in your arms and receive him as the consolation of Israel! You may then look forward even to death with joy, and say with Simeon—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." My Master wants room! Room for him! Room for him! I, his herald, cry aloud, Room for the Savior! Room! Here is my royal Master—have you room for him? Here is the Son of God made flesh—have you room for him? Here is he who can forgive all sin—have you room for him? Here is he who can take you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—have you room for him? Here is he who when he cometh in will never go out again, but abide with you for ever to make your heart a heaven of joy and bliss for you—have you room for him? 'Tis all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your want of feeling, your want of goodness, your want of grace—all these will be but room for him. Have you room for him? Oh! Spirit of God, lead many to say, "Yes, my heart is ready." Ah! then he will come and dwell with you.

"Joy to the world the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne
And every voice a song."

V. I conclude with the remark, that if you have room for Christ, then from this day forth remember **THE WORLD HAS NO ROOM FOR YOU**; for the text says not only that there was no room for him, but look—"There was no room for them,"—no room for Joseph, nor for Mary, any more than for the babe. Who are his father, and mother, and sister, and brother, but those that receive his word and keep it? So, as there was no room for the blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father, remember henceforth there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ. There is no room for you to take your ease; no, you are to be a soldier of the cross, and you will find no ease in all your life-warfare. There is no

room for you to sit down contented with your own attainments, for you are a traveler, and you are to forget the things that are behind, and press forward to that which is before; no room for you to hide your treasure in, for here the moth and rust doth corrupt; no room for you to put your confidence, for "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." From this day there will be no room for you in the world's good opinion—they will count you to be an offscouring; no room for you in the world's polite society—you must go without the camp, bearing his reproach. From this time forth, I say, if you have room for Christ, the world will hardly find room of sufferance for you; you must expect now to be laughed at; now you must wear the fool's cap in men's esteem; and your song must be at the very beginning of your pilgrimage.

"Jesus, I thy cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shall be."

There is no room for you in the worldling's love. If you expect that everybody will praise you, and that your good actions will all be applauded, you will quite be mistaken. The world, I say, has no room for the man who has room for Christ. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." "Ye are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." Thank God, you need not ask the world's hospitality. If it will give you but a stage for action, and lend you for an hour a grave to sleep in, 'tis all you need; you will require no permanent dwelling-place here, since you seek a city that is to come, which hath foundations; whose builder and maker is God. You are hurrying through this world as a stranger through a foreign land, and you rejoice to know that though you are an alien and a foreigner here, yet you are a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household to God. What say you, young soldier, will you enlist on such terms as these? Will you give room for Christ when there is to be henceforth no room for you—when you are to be separated for ever, cut off from among the world's kith and kin mayhap—cut off from carnal confidence for ever? Are you willing, notwithstanding all this, to receive the traveler in? The Lord help you to do so, and to him shall be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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Noah's Faith, Fear, Obedience And Salvation

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. - Hebrews 11:7

The apostle could not avoid mentioning Noah; for in him faith shone forth eminently. He has placed him in due order of time after Abel and Enoch; but he had also another reason for the arrangement. These three ancient believers are declared in Holy Writ to have pleased God. Of Abel, it is said that God testified of his gifts. Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he pleased God: and Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Again, it was meet that Noah should follow close upon Enoch, as one of two who are described as having "walked with God." "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him"; and we read in the sixth chapter of Genesis, verse eight, that Noah also "walked with God." These two spent their lives in such constant communion with the Most High that they could be fully described as walking with God. Oh, that we may, through almighty grace, be so pleasing unto the Lord that we may abide in fellowship with him!

We may take pleasure in thinking of Noah as a kind of contrast to Enoch. Enoch was taken away from the evil to come: he saw not the flood, nor heard the wailing of those who were swept away by the waterfloods. His was a delightful deliverance from the harvest of wrath which followed the universal godlessness of the race. It was not his to fight the battle of righteousness to the bitter end; but by a secret rapture he avoided death, and escaped those evil days in which his grandson's lot was cast. Noah is the picture of one who is the Lord's witness during evil days, and lives

through them faithfully, enduring unto the end. It was his to be delivered from death by death. The ark was, so to speak, a coffin to him: he entered it, and became a dead man to the old world; and within its enclosure he was floated into a new world, to become the founder and father of a new race. As in the figure of baptism we see life by burial, so was it with this chosen patriarch; he passed by burial in the ark into a new life. In Enoch we see a type of those of God's people who will go home peacefully before the last closing struggle. Ere the first clash of swords at Armageddon, such Enochs will be taken from the evil to come. But in Noah we see those who will engage in the conflict, and bear themselves bravely amid backsliding and apostasy, until they shall see the powers of evil trodden under their feet as straw is trodden for the dunghill. The fire-flood will devour the wicked, and only the righteous shall inherit the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let these few words stand as the preface to my discourse; and now let us carefully consider Noah's faith, trusting that the Holy Spirit may bless its teaching to our own souls.

I. First, notice that in Noah's case FAITH WAS THE FIRST PRINCIPLE. The text begins, "By faith Noah." We shall have to speak about his fear—being "moved by fear"; we shall also remember his obedience, for he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." But you must take distinct note that at the back of everything was his faith in God. His faith begat his fear: his faith and his fear produced his obedience. Nothing in Noah is held up before us as an example, but that which grew out of his faith. To begin with, we must look well to our faith. May I pass the question round these galleries, and put it to you also in this vast area? Have you faith? Let each one hear the question in the singular number. "Hast thou faith? Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Art thou resting in the promise of a faithful God?" If not, thou art nothing as to spiritual things. Without faith thou art out of the kingdom of grace, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter if thou hast no faith. But if thou hast even a trembling faith, thou hast the root of the matter within thee. Even if other gracious things be not in thee as yet, they will be ere long produced by faith. Faith is the acorn, from which the oak of holiness will grow. Faith is that handful of corn, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but with faith we become "accepted in the Beloved."

Notice, first, that Noah believed in God in his ordinary life. Before the great test came, before he heard the oracle from the secret place, Noah believed in God. We know that he did, for we read that he walked with God, and in his common conduct he is described as being "a just man, and perfect in his generations." To be just in the sight of God is never possible apart from faith; for "the just shall live by faith." It is a great thing to have faith in the presence of a terrible trial; but the first essential is to have faith for ordinary every-day consumption. Hast thou faith in God as to thy daily bread? Hast thou faith as to thy children and thy house? Hast thou faith about thy trade and business? Hast thou faith in the God of providence?—faith in the God who answers prayer? Is it habitual with thee to roll thy burden upon the Lord? If it be not so with thee, what wilt thou do when the floods break forth? Faith will not come to thee all of a sudden, in the dark night, if thou hast shut it out through all the bright days. Faith must be a constant tenant, not an occasional guest. I have heard of Latter-day Saints, and I do not think much of them: I far more admire Every-day Saints. Thou needest faith this Sabbath-day: have it, and come to the communion-table with it. But thou needest faith on Monday, when the shutters are taken down to begin another six days' trading. Thou wilt need faith the next day; for who can tell thee what will happen? To the end of the week thou wilt need to look to the hills whence cometh thine help. Thou needest faith anywhere and everywhere. A man of God alone in his chamber still needs faith, or solitude may be a nest for temptation. When the servant of Christ is at his ease, and has no work pressing upon him, he has need of faith to keep him, lest, like David, he fall into temptation, and commit folly. Rest days or work days, we alike need faith. By faith Noah did everything before he entered the ark. This is an important observation, though it may appear a very simple one. I could not omit it; for I feel that a practical work-day faith is what we most of all need. Men think that they need faith in building a temple; but faith is also needed in building a haystack. We need faith for ploughing, for buying, for selling, for working, quite as much as for praying, and singing, and preaching. We want faith on the market as well as in the prayer-meeting. We wish everywhere to please God, and we cannot do it anywhere unless we have unfeigned faith in him. The Lord teach us to have faith seven days in the week!

Note, next, that Noah had faith in the warning and threatening of God. Faith is to be exercised about the commandments; for David says, "I have believed thy commandments." Faith is to be exercised upon the promises; for there its sweetest business lies. But, believe me, you cannot have faith in the promise unless you are prepared to have faith in the threatening also. If you truly believe a man, you believe all that he says. He who does not believe that God will punish sin, will not believe that God will pardon it through the atoning blood. He who does not believe that God will cast unbelievers into hell, will not be sure that he will take believers into heaven. If we doubt God's Word about one thing, we shall have small confidence in it upon another thing. Sincere faith in God must treat all God's Word alike; for the faith which accepts one word of God and rejects another is evidently not faith in God, but faith in our own judgment, faith in our own taste. Only that is true faith which believes everything that is revealed by the Holy Spirit, whether it be joyous or distressing. Noah had, in this case, received a promise; but, as the dark background to it, he had listened to the terrible threatening that God would destroy all living things with a flood: his faith believed both the warning and the promise. If he had not believed the threat, he would not have prepared an ark, and so would not have received the promise. Men do not prepare an ark to escape from a flood unless they believe that there will be a flood. I charge you who profess to be the Lord's not to be unbelieving with regard to the terrible threatenings of God to the ungodly. Believe the threat, even though it should chill your blood; believe, though nature shrinks from the overwhelming doom; for, if you do not believe, the act of disbelieving God about one point will drive you to disbelieve him upon the other parts of revealed truth, and you will never come to that true, child-like faith which God will accept and honour. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." With solemn awe believe the bitter word of judgment, that the word of mercy may be sweet to you.

Furthermore, Noah believed what seemed highly improbable, if not absolutely impossible. There was no sea where Noah laid the keel of his ark: I do not even know that there was a river there. He was to prepare a sea-going vessel, and construct it on dry land. How could water be

brought there to float it? O mad old man! how canst thou play the fool on so huge a scale as to build a three-decked vessel of vast dimensions where no waters can ever come? Yet he was bidden of the Lord to do it, and he was persuaded that the Lord's command involved no blunder. The floods would fill the valley, rise up the hills, and prevail above the tops of the mountains. He believed all this, although it did seem an unlikely thing. That faith which believes in the probable is anybody's faith: publicans and sinners can so believe. The faith which believes that which is barely possible is in better form; but that faith which cares nothing for probability or possibility, but rests alone in the Word of the Lord, is the faith of God's elect. God deserves such faith, "for with God all things are possible." Not probability, but certainty, is the groundwork of faith when God has spoken. Noah believed firmly, and therefore prepared his ship on dry land, quite as cheerfully as he would have built it by the sea.

At times you and I are assailed as to our faith in the Bible, by people who say, "How do you make that out? It is in the Scriptures, certainly, but how do you reconcile it with science?" Let your reply be—We no longer live in the region of argument as to the Word of the Lord; but we dwell in the realm of faith. We are not squabblers, itching to prove our superiority in reasoning, but we are children of light, worshipping our God by bowing our whole minds to the obedience of faith. We would be humble, and learn to believe what we cannot altogether comprehend, and to expect what we should never have looked for, had not the Lord declared it. It is our ambition to be great believers, rather than great thinkers; to be child-like in faith, rather than subtle in intellect. We are sure that God is true! Like Noah, we stagger not at the Word of God, because of evident improbability and apparent impossibility. What the Lord has spoken he is able to make good; and none of his words shall fall to the ground.

Note well, that Noah believed alone, and preached on though none followed him. There were no other believers, if you except his wife and his sons and daughters. There were eight in all; but I am afraid that some of these rather believed in father Noah than in the living God. Noah shone as a lone star. He stood like yonder solitary column in the midst of a ruined temple. He believed with an unbuttressed faith. How pleasant it is to associate with our fellow-believers! It is a great refreshment for a

solitary Christian to get into a large congregation, and to feel in unison with the child's hymn—

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
A great assembly worship thee!
At once they sing, at once they pray,
They hear of heaven and learn the way.

I have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."

But how would you fare if you were alone, or were surrounded by those who called you a fool for believing in the Lord? To dwell where everybody is sceptical is as injurious to faith as for a man to live where the yellow fever is raging. To have your faith pulled to pieces, and held up to ridicule, is an ordeal which some cannot stand. What if you should be like Noah, a preacher of righteousness; how stern the duty of being a solitary witness! He preached for one hundred and twenty years, and at the end of it not one person was ready to go with him into the ark. His own family was saved, but nobody else—not a solitary one. What a trial! How it has made my heart glad, during the month of May, to see and propose for church-fellowship no less than sixty-nine! But if I had to preach for a year with no converts, what should I do? I hope I should persevere, in the name of the Lord God; but what a trial! What if life were prolonged for one hundred and twenty years, and after all that preaching nobody believed your word! That would be an infliction indeed. Many people may have been converted under Noah, and may have died before the deluge came; but he had not one convert in the ark with him. His wife had not even a servant to help her in domestic work, and his sons' wives had to wait on themselves. There was not even a boy to clean the shoes, or help feed the animals. Many were called, but only the eight were chosen. Noah had preached apparently in vain, and yet he believed with none the less of dogged resolve. The old man was not to be moved. That ark of his would float; he knew it would. The world would be destroyed; he was sure of it; as sure as if he had seen it. "Things not seen as yet" were to his faith substantial and evident.

Noah believed through a hundred and twenty solitary years! It was a long martyrdom. Our life is quite long enough for the trial of faith. Even if a man lives to be eighty, and has sixty years of that life spent in the exercise of faith, it is only by almighty grace that he holds out. Noah lived two of our lives in this way. If a little flood had happened and moved his ark a little, he would have had some evidence for his faith; but there was no flood at all; and his ark lay high and dry for a century and a quarter! How few could endure this! Yonder dear friend has been praying for the last six months, and the Lord has not heard him, and he begins to doubt whether the Lord does hear prayer at all. You are not much like Noah. You can hardly believe for one hundred and twenty days. "Alas!" says one, "I have prayed for my husband these twenty years!" It is a long time to wait; but what would you do with a hundred added on to it? Years made Noah's faith more mature, and not more feeble. This grey father of the age went on with his preaching, went on with his intercession, and, without a doubt, waited for God in his own time to justify his servant before the eyes of men.

Once more: Noah believed even to separation from the world. See Noah and his family entering the ark! I do not think I should have selected the ark as a place of residence myself, nor would you have chosen to live in a place pitched within and without with pitch, with only one door and one window to it, and a great menagerie of birds, and beasts, and reptiles inside it. Whether that window ran all round the top just under the roof, so as to let light into the whole structure, I cannot tell; but I have no doubt that the jeering world said to Noah, "Well, old man, you have built a prison for yourself, and the sooner you go inside and shut yourself in the better; for we have had enough of your preaching!" When the good man and his family went in, and the Lord shut the door, they were dead to the world. Had Mrs. Noah been like some of you she would have said, "The girls cannot go out to any more parties, and our sons are shut out from all society. We are out of the world, and shall soon be forgotten." Yes, yes, and Noah was glad of it, since it was the Lord that shut him in. When the Lord shuts you off from the world, you are best alone. Nowadays professors have not faith enough to dwell alone. They want two or three doors in the back of the ark, so that they may slip out every now and then, and do a little pleasuring with the world, and then glide

back again and look like saints. As to being shut in with God and separated from the world—religious and irreligious—how few will endure it! How little is ever heard of that cry—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate!" "You might as well be dead," cries one, "as be out of society." Exactly so: and that is what the child of God looks for. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Buried with him by baptism into death." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That separatedness which Noah took upon himself so willingly was involved in his salvation; for if he had lived with the world, he would have died with the world. Only in separation is salvation.

Thus have I worked out the idea that the first principle which actuated Noah's heart was faith in the living God.

II. Secondly, FEAR WAS THE MOVING FORCE. Faith was the living principle, but fear was the moving power; for the text puts it, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear." Faith moulded him, but fear moved him. How was this? "I thought," says one, "that perfect love casteth out fear." Yes, fear of a certain sort; but there is another fear which perfect love embraces and nourishes.

Noah had no evil fear. He had not a servile fear: he was not afraid of God as a culprit is afraid of a judge, or a convict of the hangman. He knew whom he believed, and was persuaded that he had a favour towards him. Noah had not a careless fear, as some here have. Fools say, "We never shall be saved, and therefore it would be useless to care about it. We may as well gather the rosebuds while we may. There is no heaven for us hereafter, let us make the best of the present." No, Noah was a witness against such sensual carelessness. He so believed, that fear came upon him, and that fear made him act as God bade him. Beware of the unbelief which enables you to trifle; for trifling with eternal things is the suicide of the soul. Noah, on the other hand, had not a despairing fear, as some have. They say, "There is no hope. We have gone too far in sin already to dream of pardon and favour. We may as well let things take their course." Beware of the poison-cup of despair. While life lasts hope lasts; and we beseech you not to lie down in sullen hopelessness. Noah was a stranger

to this paralyzing fear: he bestirred himself, and built an ark. Some allow a presuming fear: "If I am to be saved," say they, "I shall be saved; and if I am to be lost, I shall be lost. I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and so I will have my fling, and go into sin even as I please." Noah never spoke thus; for with his fear he had a good hope. He prepared an ark. He knew that none could save him but God; but as God bade him prepare an ark, an ark he prepared, and thus he was saved and his house.

What kind of fear was that of Noah? Well, Noah had a loyal reverence of God. He feared him as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and when he went about through the wicked world Noah often said to himself, "I wonder the Judge of all the earth does not destroy these rebels, who dare to be so vile and violent." When he saw their gluttony, their infidelity, their lasciviousness, their oppression of one another, the preacher of righteousness had a holy fear of judgment. Often his righteous spirit indignantly cried, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" He wondered how God could be so long-suffering. When it was revealed to him that God was going to destroy the whole race from off the face of the earth by a flood, he said to himself, "I thought he would." He felt exceedingly afraid; for he knew that when God once makes bare his arm for vengeance, the pillars of the earth must shake, and the stars of heaven cease their shining. Thus the holy man of God passed the time of his sojourning here in fear. Who among us would not fear if we were to consider at this time the holiness of God, and the provocations inflicted upon him by our guilty race? What sin defiles this earth! Oh, the wrath to come! How awful will the judgment be! It has not come yet; it may not come for years; but, when the Lord begins to deal with men in justice, how will that day burn as an oven! "Who may abide the day of his coming?" Noah by faith heard the cries of men and women swept from their feet by the torrent. He heard the cries of strong swimmers in their agony yielding to the overflowing death, and sinking to their doom. Do you wonder that his heart sank within him, and that he was moved with fear? He had a holy awe of God, and a solemn dread of the judgments which sin was drawing down upon the giddy world.

Noah had a very humble distrust of himself. I wish we all had such a fear. Let us fear God because of his greatness; let us fear ourselves because of

our sinfulness. Let us fear lest we should fall into sin, and perish with the rest of the sinners. Let no man say, "I shall never fall." Alas! those are the most likely to slip. Did you never note that those who seem least likely to fall into a sin are the very people who commit it? You would not have dreamed that sober Noah should be found drunk; nor that righteous Lot should commit incest; nor that David, whose heart smote him when he only cut off the lap of Saul's garment, should be guilty of murder; nor that Peter, who said, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I," would have denied his Master with oaths and cursing. Ah, friends! we may not trust ourselves; but we ought to stand in daily fear lest we be guilty before God. Here was Noah filled with such a holy fear of himself, that he took care to do what the Lord bade him, even to the most minute particular. He did not choose another sort of wood, nor alter the shape of the vessel, nor make more stories, nor more windows, nor more doors; but he distrusted his own judgment, and leaned not to his own understanding. He did exactly what he was told to do, and thus left the consequences with the Lord who commanded him. He feared his own wisdom: for he knew that man is like to vanity, and no more to be relied upon than the mist of the morning.

Fear made Noah hew the trees and square the timbers, and wield the axe and the hammer. Fear wrought in him diligence and speed. It made him despise the observations of onlookers, and build for his life in brave defiance of the spirit of the age, and the judgment of the wise. Perhaps I speak to persons who are in fear of the wrath to come. I rejoice that you have faith enough to fear. By the way of that faith which brings you unto fear, you will be brought out of it. Believe God in justice till you tremble; then see that justice vindicated in the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and rest in the mercy of God, which, through the cross, comes justly down to guilty men. A holy fear will put wings upon your heels, and help you to fly to Jesus. Moved by fear, may you be drawn and driven to the Lord Jesus!

III. Thirdly, OBEDIENCE WAS THE GRACIOUS FRUIT. Faith and fear together led Noah to do as God commanded him. When fear is grafted upon faith, it brings forth good fruit, as in this case.

Noah obeyed the Lord exactly. How often does the Scripture say, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he"! See again and again, "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him." Those who have faith in God should show it by a holy fear, which makes them zealous to leave nothing undone which is commanded of the Lord, and to add nothing of will-worship to the perfect law of God. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it;" was the wise word of the Virgin. Obey the Lord with all your mind and all your heart, in the way of faith, if you would find salvation. Prove that you have grace, by your accurate obedience.

Noah obeyed the Lord very carefully. God said to him, "Make an ark"; and we read in answer thereto that he prepared an ark. There was careful preparation, and not hurried, thoughtless activity. He prepared the right materials; he prepared the different parts so as to fit together: he prepared his mind, and then prepared his work. In seeking the Lord, let us exercise our best thoughts. People do not go to heaven in the fashion of "hop, skip, and jump." Carelessness cannot tread the highway of holiness. If you would know the way to hell, you may shut your eyes and find it: a little matter of neglect will surely ruin you—"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" But if you desire to go to heaven, I beg you to remember that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be determination, thought, care, attention; and faith must work with all these to produce obedience to the will of the Lord. Men are never right by accident, nor obedient to the Lord by chance; preparation of heart is wanted, and this the Lord must give. Alas! I fear some of you will miss eternal life, for you trifle about it! If you had a business to settle which involved the gain or loss of ten thousand pounds, how particular you would be; but when your whole soul is at stake, how many take up such matters at haphazard and risk eternal destruction! Not so Noah: he was precise in his obedience, and careful to remain so.

Noah obeyed at all costs. To build the huge vessel called "the ark" must have cost Noah a great deal of money and labour. He could not get everybody to work at the absurd task of building a vessel on dry land. As they would be laughed at, his workmen would be sure to demand extra pay. Possibly he had to pay double wages to every wright employed on the

ark. The patriarch was content to sink all his capital and all his income in this singular venture. It was a poor speculation—so everybody told him; and yet he was quite willing to put all his eggs into that one basket. God had bidden him build, and build he would, feeling that the divine command insured him against risk. Can we do the same?

Noah went on obeying under daily scorn. The men of that generation mocked him. He went out and preached to them; but many would not hear him, for they thought him mad. Those who did listen to him said to each other, "He is building a vessel upon dry land: is he sane? We are scientific, and therefore we know how absurd his preaching is; for none ever heard of the world being drowned by a flood." They called his warning "an old wives' fable," and he himself was "an old fossil." Doubtless he was the frequent subject of sarcastic remark. I cannot reproduce the letters that were written about the sturdy patriarch, nor can I recount the spiteful things which were said by the gossips; but I have no doubt they were very clever, and very sarcastic. Those productions of genius are all forgotten now; but Noah is remembered still. For all the scorning of many he went on obeying his God: he stuck to the lines on which God had placed him, and he could not be turned to the right hand or to the left, because he had a real faith in God.

Noah's obedience followed the command as he learned it. I admire his going into the ark without a question. All the cattle and the beasts and flying things are in the ark with him, and he does not pray to be let out. We may equally admire him for coming out again when called upon to do so. After we have once been shut in, some of us had rather stop in. We are not fond of changes. We grow accustomed to a certain line of things, and find in use a second nature; and we wish to remain as we are. It is so safe in the ark, and we are so peaceful, so conscious of being in the hollow of God's hand, that we fear to come forth into a world so lately cursed. Noah came out without a question, and the first thing he did was to build an altar to the Lord, and so to prove that he was at home with God. Oh, for faith that will obey God anyhow and anywhere! You remember how God said to Elijah, "Hide thyself"; and away went the prophet to the brook Cherith, where none saw him but the fowls of heaven. A brave prophet like Elijah finds it hard to be in hiding; yet he does not disobey. Presently

comes the command, "Go, show thyself"; and out he comes from his exile and stands before King Ahab, according to the word of the Lord. Whether God bids his true servants show themselves or hide themselves, they do his will at once.

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to dare and die."

The will of the Lord is to be done by his servants, whether on earth or in heaven. If he saith, "Go," they go; if he saith, "Stay," they abide in their places. Oh, for such a faith as this! It was easier for Noah to build the ark than to render so complete an obedience; but the Lord wrought in him by his grace.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which hear me patiently. RESULTS DID NOT FAIL TO COME. One hundred and twenty years preaching, and no converts remaining! One hundred and twenty years building a ship, and yet no water to float it! One hundred and twenty years warning people that God is about to destroy them, and yet no flood! Surely, the good man's life is a failure. No doubt wise folks said of him, "He is a good old man, but he is uncharitable, and has become an alarmist." Some style him a "pessimist," others say, "He is a bigot"; others, again, affect to deplore that the good man has made such a great mistake, and is wasting his influence under a delusion. I hear fine gentlemen saying, "Do not take much notice of the old gentleman. No doubt he is a very good man, but at the same time he is only one, and his views are very peculiar. He has gone on chopping this logic for one hundred and twenty years, and the world is not drowned yet: it is really too ridiculous." The wilder spirits meet him in the morning, and they say, "Well, father Noah, when is this flood coming? The country would be improved by a good soaking. You have raised our expectations so long, that it ought to pour when it does come. You ought to have minded the old saying, 'Never prophesy till you are sure.'" Thus would they jest at the preacher of righteousness; but Noah knew what he was at, and was not silenced. All that he did was simply to repeat his warning, and go on with his ship-building. God's time was coming on: the storm was gathering, and before long the deluge would end the mirth of the godless.

What did come of it? The first result was, He was saved and his house. Oh, that God would give to every preacher of righteousness this full reward—himself and his house! O my brothers in the ministry, there is no greater joy for us than to know that our children walk in the truth! Perhaps some of you fear the Lord; and yet he has never given you your Shem, Ham, and Japhet. Alas! it may even happen that she that lieth in your bosom does not yet know the Lord. Nevertheless, be you faithful to your God, and to the souls of men. Hold the truth, if you stand alone. Even if in your own house you find your worst foes, hold on, and never doubt. Do not come down a stop or two as to holiness, nor seek a lower platform upon which to meet more cordially an ungodly world. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the ever-blessed gospel. That is the one business of your life; and I believe that if you have faith in the Lord as to your family, your beloved ones shall be given you as a prey. Remember the Philippian jailer, to whom Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Do not rest content with half the promise. Grasp firmly the words, "and thy house." Have you an Ishmael? then get alone, and, like Abraham, cry to God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" God will hear your prayer and bless Ishmael also. Oh, what a privilege it will be if you yourself and all your house are saved!

The next result was, that he condemned the world. Read, "By which he condemned the world." "Ha! ha! ha!" they said, "we judge the old man to be out of his mind." But he was their judge. The merriest jest that flashed forth at the banquet of wine was pointed with a sarcasm about old Noah and his dry-land ship; but all the while he was solemnly judging and condemning that ribald world. The Lord had made him serenely bear witness against iniquity; yes, and even to sit on the throne and condemn the world. I do not read that Noah ever entered into any dispute with the men of his times. He never argued or cavilled, much less did he wish them ill; he simply believed and told them the truth, kept his own faith intact, and went on building his ark; thus practising what he believed. In this way he condemned those who criticized him. Ah! you may laugh, ye worldlings; but the man of God is your master after all! His preaching condemned them: they know the way, and wickedly refused to run in it.

His warning condemned them: they would not regard it and escape. His life condemned them, for he walked with the God whom they despised. Most of all, the ark condemned them. Did none of them ever say, as he passed it in the morning, "This is the strangest fabric that ever was. There is not, in all the world besides, such another thing as this. Yet Noah is no fool. He can make a bargain, as I found to my cost, when he was buying nails, and I tried to get double their value from him. The man is cool and calm, shrewd and sharp. He bought my wood upon the hill; but he first made an accurate estimate of the timber in it, and its worth: he bought as well as any man could do. How is it that on this one particular point he is so strange?" Did not such men at times think that there must be something in it after all? If they did not think so, at any rate the fact that Noah carried out his principles to the full, and invested all he had in the building of this strange ark, would have forced them to conviction if they had not been hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. How his faith condemned them! When the floods began to rise, and the door was shut, how the sight of the ark condemned them! I can imagine, when the water began to get knee-deep, there would be frightened ones around the ark door; but it could not be opened, since God had shut it. When the ark began to float, some of them fled to the sides of the mountains; and what a condemnation the sight of the floating ark was to them! Noah could not help them then. The day in which they might have entered was gone by. If they ever saw Noah look out of the ark, how the face which once pleaded with them would condemn them! Oh, my hearers, how often have I warned you to flee from the wrath to come! I have warned you of those dread waves of fire, and of that horrible tempest, which will sweep over all the earth, and destroy ungodly men and their works. How often have I spoken of the pit which God hath digged for the wicked, into which your feet will slide in due time unless you seek the Saviour! May be, in those days of terror, the face of the preacher will condemn you, as you remember how he looked at you with earnest love, but you would have none of his pleading, and chose to perish in your sin. Your blood shall be upon your own heads. It is a solemn thought, that one lone man condemned a world. It was one against millions! Yet the one condemned the millions. If God is with a man, though that man be only one, he is in the majority. Men of the world wilt soon become a weeping, wailing, and despairing company; but he that stands alone for God shall be had in

honour, and shall both judge and condemn the guilty world.

The last thing Noah earned by his faith was this, he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith; for God said of him, when he bade him come into the ark, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." God declared him righteous; not righteous by his works, although his works, following upon his faith, proved him to be righteous; but righteous by his faith. He believed God, and found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He received the righteousness which God gives through Jesus Christ to all them that believe. Wrapt in this he stood before the Lord, justified and approved. By faith he was adopted and became a son, an heir. For him the promise of the woman's seed, though it was all the Bible that he had, was quite enough. The woman's seed, and the Lamb's sacrifice, which Abel had seen, these were almost all the revelation he had known. He had no Pentateuch, no Psalms, no Gospels, no Epistles; but he so believed that little Bible of his, that he expected that Christ in him would bruise the serpent in the world. God honoured his faith, and he condemned the world. He lived when the rest perished; he was secure in his ark when the myriads were sinking in the deluge: he became "heir of the righteousness which is by faith" when others were condemned. May God make us all so, and unto his name shall be the glory through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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None But Jesus

He that believeth on him is not condemned - John 3:18

The way of salvation is stated in Scripture in the very plainest terms, and yet, perhaps, there is no truth about which more errors have been uttered, than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience, that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries—

mysteries, not so much in themselves, but because they are hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture, that one would have said, "He that runs may read"; but so dim is man's eye, and so marred is his understanding, that the very simplest truth of Scripture he distorts and misrepresents. And indeed, my brethren, even those who know what faith is, personally and experimentally, do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark, and then afterwards they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another, and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into a worse error. So that I think I may say that, while faith is the simplest thing in all the world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very importance, our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it, and then we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God's help, to put together sundry thoughts upon faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times, but which have not been collected into one sermon before, and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the want of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order. I shall speak a little on each of these points; first, the object of faith, to what it looks; next, the reason of faith, whence it comes; thirdly, the ground of faith, or what it wears when it comes; fourthly, the warrant of faith, or why it dares to come to Christ; and fifthly, the result of faith, or, how it speeds when it doth come to Christ.

I. First, then, **THE OBJECT OF FAITH**, or to what faith looks.

I am told in the Word of God to believe—What am I to believe? I am bidden to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief, and confidence? The reply is simple. The object of Faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on God the Father! Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son. Many men say, "I would

believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect." This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father's work to elect; you cannot come directly to him, therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer, and then through redemption you can approach to the Father and know your election. Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God the Holy Spirit. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them their faith is strong, but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the object of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption, but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon the blood of the Mediator is the only plea. Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus, and to him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity, but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father nor God the Holy Ghost, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh, and offering atonement for sinners. Hast thou the eye of faith? Then, soul, look thou to Christ as God. If thou wouldst be saved, believe him to be God over all, blessed for ever. Bow before him, and accept him as being "Very God of very God," for if thou do not, thou hast no part in him. When thou hast this believed, believe in him as man. Believe the wondrous story of his incarnation; rely upon the testimony of the evangelists, who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal; that he who was King of heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of his incarnation, for unless thou believe this, thou canst not be saved thereby. Then, specially, if thou wouldst be saved, let thy faith behold Christ in his perfect righteousness. See him keeping the law without blemish, obeying his Father without error; preserving his integrity without flaw. All this thou are to consider as being done on thy behalf. Thou couldst not keep the law; he kept it for thee. Thou couldst not obey God perfectly—lo! his obedience standeth in the stead of thy obedience—by it, thou art saved. But take care that thy faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ as dying and as dead. View the Lamb of God as dumb before his shearers; view him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with

grief; go thou with him to Gethsemane, and behold him sweating drops of blood. Mark, thy faith has nothing to do with anything within thyself; the object of thy faith is nothing within thee, but a something without thee. Believe on him, then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out his life for sinners. There is the object of thy faith for justification; not in thyself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in thee, or anything he has promised to do for thee; but thou art to look to Christ and to Christ alone. Then let thy faith behold Christ as rising from the dead. See him—he has borne the curse, and now he receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt; he rises that he may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the cross. See him ascending up on high, and behold him this day pleading before the Father's throne. He is there pleading for his people, offering up to-day his authoritative petition for all that come to God by him. And he, as God, as man, as living, as dying, as rising, and as reigning above,—he, and he alone, is to be the object of thy faith for the pardon of sin.

On nothing else must thou trust; he is to be the only prop and pillar of thy confidence; and all thou addest thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care if your faith save you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters you view him as being a substitute. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time. God is just, he must punish sin; God is merciful, he wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can he be just and exact the penalty,—merciful, and accept the sinner? He doeth it thus: he taketh the sins of his people and actually lifteth them up from off his people to Christ, so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned, and Christ is looked upon by God as though he had been all the sinners in the world rolled into one. The sin of his people was taken from their persons, and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually laid on Christ. Then God came forth with his fiery sword to meet the sinner and to punish him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner himself; but the sins of his people were all imputed to him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though he had been the sinner—punished Christ for his people's sins—punished him as far as its rights could go,—exacted from him the last atom of the penalty, and left not a

dreg in the cup. And now, he who can see Christ as being his substitute, and puts his trust in him, is thereby delivered from the curse of the law. Soul, when thou seest Christ obeying the law—thy faith is to say, "He obeys that for his people." When thou seest him dying, thou art to count the purple drops, and say, "Thus he took my sins away." When thou seest him rising from the dead, thou art to say—"He rises as the head and representative of all his elect"; and when thou seest him sitting at the right hand of God, thou art to view him there as the pledge that all for whom he died shall most surely sit at the Father's right hand. Learn to look on Christ as being in God's sight as though he were the sinner. "In him was no sin." He was "the just," but he suffered for the unjust. He was the righteous, but he stood in the place of the unrighteous; and all that the unrighteous ought to have endured, Christ has endured once for all, and put away their sins for ever by the sacrifice of himself. Now this is the great object of faith. I pray you, do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in his life, and death, and sufferings, and resurrection, the substitute for all whom his Father gave him,—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying—"Oh, I should believe and I would be saved if"—If what? If Christ had died? "Oh no, sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ." I thought so. Then what is the doubt? "Why, I should believe if I felt this, or if I had done that." Just so; but I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself, and not in Christ. That is the English of it. If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your feelings, and confidence in your doings, and that is just the clear contrary of confidence in Christ. Faith is not to infer from something good within me that I shall be saved, but to say in the teeth, and despite of the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God and deserve his wrath, yet I do nevertheless believe that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth me from all sin; and though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness, and I do believe that "he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." To come to

Christ as a saint is very easy work; to trust to a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy; but to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin, and when the ulcer is gathering its venom—to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine—that is faith. And so, when sin gets the mastery of thee, when thou feelest that the law condemns thee, then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ, this is the most daring feat in all the world; and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho, the faith which raised the dead, the faith which stopped the mouths of lions, was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Do this, soul, then thou are saved, whosoever thou mayest be. The object of faith, then, is Christ as the substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus only must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. And now, secondly, THE REASON OF FAITH, or why doth any man believe, and whence doth his faith come?

"Faith cometh by hearing." Granted, but do not all men hear, and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, doth any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of a sense of need. He feels himself needing a Saviour; he finds Christ to be just such a Saviour as he wants, and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish, and therefore he doth it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner, and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of another; for he feels he cannot escape by any good deeds, or sufferings of his own, and he cometh to Christ and humbleth himself, because he cannot do without Christ, and must perish unless he lay hold of him. But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that he, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How doth he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the restorer? The reply is, this is the gift of God;

this is the work of the Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draw him, and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather, they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human merit, that we never would take Christ to be our all in all, if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all, and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But, then, the question goes further back still; how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need, and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ, while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord hath "hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes." According to the way in which Christ put it—"My sheep, hear my voice"; "ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Some divines would like to read that—"Ye are not my sheep, because ye do not believe." As if believing made us the sheep of Christ; but the text puts it—"Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given; for those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen of God the Father, and then redeemed by God the Son—these are led by the Spirit, through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ. No man yet ever did, or ever will believe in Christ, unless he feels his need of him. No man ever did, or will feel his need of Christ, unless the Spirit makes him feel, and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly, unless it be so written in that eternal book, in which God hath surely engraved the names of his chosen. So, then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point, that the reason of faith, or why men believe, is God's electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need, and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

III. But now I shall want your careful attention, while I come to another point, upon which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself, and that is, THE GROUND OF THE SINNER'S FAITH, or on what ground he

dares to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus, unless he feels his need of him. But you have often heard me say, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of him; my reason for believing in Christ, is not that I feel my need of him, but that I have a need of him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus, is not as a sensible sinner, but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened; but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to thee because I am an awakened sinner, save me." But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, save me." Not his awakening, but his sinfulness is the method and plan upon which he dares to come. You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic divines, they say to a sinner, "Now, if you feel your need of Christ, if you have repented so much, if you have been harrowed by the law to such-and-such a degree, then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false. No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner; he must come to him as a sinner. When I come to Jesus, I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of his cross to be washed because I have repented; I bring nothing when I come but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings, but I believe in him whether I have good feelings or not.

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God I come."

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavel, and several excellent divines, in the Puritanic age, and especially Richard Baxter, used to give descriptions of what a man must feel before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, another of those divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them—"I dare to say it, that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come,

but they do not come on the ground of having felt it; they come on the ground of being sinners, and on no other ground whatever." The gate of Mercy is opened, and over the door it is written, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Between that word "save" and the next word "sinners," there is no adjective. It does not say, "penitent sinners," "awakened sinners," "sensible sinners," "grieving sinners," or "alarmed sinners." No, it only says, "sinners," and I know this, that when I come, I come to Christ to-day, for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ to-day as it was to come ten years ago,—when I come to him I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands. I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect: the old man had been a Christian for years, and he said, "I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come; I say, 'Lord,

'Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, look to thee for dress;
Helpless, come to thee for grace;
Black'—
("Black enough," said the old man)
'I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.'"

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, "if you feel your need, you may come to Christ." "But," say they, "I do not feel my need enough; I am sure I do not." Many a score letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, "I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience; if I had a soft heart—but oh my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus." Oh! down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ; it is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart, and come to him with nothing

about you but sin. The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black; that he is dead, and not that he knows he is dead; that he is lost, and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands. Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I did not feel enough; and I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

"If aught is felt 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel."

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. Now when I look back I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally the people who repent the most, think they are impenitent, and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all, for we are no judges of our feelings, and hence the gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge; it is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners. "Well," says one, "but it says, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest'—then we must be weary and heavy-laden." Just so; so it is in the text, but then there is another. "Whosoever will let him come"; and that does not say anything about "weary and heavy-laden." Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them as weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them as coming to Christ. They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came; they thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be, and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were, and he saved them, not because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden, but he saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in his blood and made clean. My dear hearer, do let me put this truth home to thee. If thou wilt come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, he will not cast thee out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, "I dare to say it, but if thou dost come to Christ, whosoever thou mayest be, if he does not receive thee, then he is not true to his word, for he says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" If thou comest, never mind qualification or preparation. He needeth no qualification of duties or of feelings either. Thou art to come just as thou art, and if thou art the biggest sinner out of hell, thou art as fit to come to Christ as if thou wert the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath: who is fit to be washed? A man's blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be. When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, "I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief." Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All he asks is, that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ, you must come with nothing in your hand. Take him as all in all, and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner.

IV. But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with THE WARRANT OF FAITH, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him, and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, sirs, it is not. It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit for a man to give the lie to all his sins, and still to believe and set to his seal that God is true, and believe in the virtue of the blood of Jesus. But why does any man dare to believe in Christ I will ask you now. "Well," saith one man, "I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me." You do not believe in Christ at all. "Well," says another, "I thought that I had a right to believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat." You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warranty as that. What is a man's warrant then for believing in Christ. Here it is. Christ tells him to do it, that is his warrant. Christ's word is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ—not what he feels nor what he is, nor what he is not, but that

Christ has told him to do it. The Gospel runs thus: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned." Faith in Christ then is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege, and what a mercy it is that it is a duty; because there never can be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty. Now on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe; I am one of the every creatures, and that gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it for I was commanded to do so. I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God. Now it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. This is your warrant, sinner, and a blessed warrant it is, for it is one which hell cannot gainsay, and which heaven cannot withdraw. You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience, you need not be looking to your works, and to your feelings, to get some dull and insufficient warrants for your confidence in Christ. You may believe Christ because he tells you to do so. That is a sure ground to stand on, and one which admits of no doubt. I will suppose that we are all starving; that the city has been besieged and shut up, and there has been a long, long famine, and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one there to eat and drink; but we have grown foolish, and will not accept the invitation. Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us, and we prefer to die, and had rather starve than come. Suppose the king's herald should say, "Come and feast, poor hungry souls, and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not my warriors shall be upon you; they shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords." I think my dear friends, we should say, "We bless the great man for that threatening because now we need not say, 'I may not come,' while the fact is we may not stop away. Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am commanded to come, and I am threatened if I do not come; and I will even go." That awful sentence—"He that believeth not shall be damned," was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness, and that we should refuse our own mercies unless he thundered at us to make us come to the feast, "Compel them to come in"; this was the Word of the Master of old, and that text is part of the carrying out of that

exhortation, "Compel them to come in." Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust him, ay, and lost for not trusting him. I put it boldly now—sinner, not only may you come, but oh! I pray you, do not defy the wrath of God by refusing to come. The gate of mercy stands wide open; why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse his voice and perish in your sins? Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God's door, nor Christ's door, but at your own. He can say of you, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Oh! poor trembler, if thou be willing to come, there is nothing in God's Word to keep thee from coming, but there are both threatenings to drive thee, and powers to draw thee. Still I hear you say, "I must not trust Christ." You may, I say, for every creature under heaven is commanded to do it, and what you are commanded to do, you may do. "Ah! well," saith one, "still I do not feel that I may." There you are again; you say you will not do what God tells you, because of some stupid feelings of your own. You are not told to trust Christ because you feel anything, but simply because you are a sinner. Now you know you are a sinner. "I am," says one, "and that is my sorrow." Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. "Ay," saith one, "but I do not feel enough, and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should." Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not, you are a sinner, and "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Oh, but I am such an old sinner; I have been sixty years in sin." Where is it written that after sixty you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred—ay, if you were a Methuselah in guilt. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Whosoever will let him come." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "Yes," says one, "but I have been a drunkard, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane." Then you are a sinner, you have not gone further than the uttermost, and he is able to save you still. "Ay," saith another, "but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated." That only proves you to be a sinner, and that you are commanded to trust Christ and be saved. "Ay," cries yet another, "but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ." Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. "You do not know how hard my heart is." Just so, but that only proves you to be a sinner, and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save. "Oh, but, sir, I have not any good thing. If I had, you know,

I should have something to encourage me." The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to. Christ came to save that which was lost, and all you have said only proves that you are lost, and therefore he came to save you. Do trust him; do trust him. "But if I am saved," saith one, "I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved." Then the greater music in heaven when you get there; the more glory to Christ, for the bigger the sinner the more honour to Christ when at last he shall be brought home. "Ay, but my sin has abounded." His grace shall much more abound. "But my sin has reached even to heaven." Yes, but his mercy reaches above the heavens. "Oh! but my guilt is as broad as the world." Yes, but his righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds. "Ay, but my sin is scarlet." Yes, but his blood is more scarlet than your sins, and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet. "Ay! but I deserve to be lost, and death and hell cry for my damnation." Yes, and so they may, but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or hell; and it cries to-day, "Father, let the sinner live." Oh! I wish I could get this thought out of my own mouth, and get it into your heads, that when God saves you, it is not because of anything in you, it is because of something in himself. God's love has no reason except in his own bowels; God's reason for pardoning a sinner is found in his own heart, and not in the sinner. And there is as much reason in you why you should be saved as why another should be saved, namely, no reason at all. There is no reason in you why he should have mercy on you, but there is no reason wanted, for the reason lies in God and in God alone.

V. And now I come to the conclusion, and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one, and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ—THE RESULT OF FAITH, or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, "He that believeth is not condemned." There is a man there who has just this moment believed; he is not condemned. But he has been fifty years in sin, and has plunged into all manner of vice; his sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. He stands in the sight of God now as innocent as though he had never sinned. Such is the power of Jesus' blood, that "he that believeth is not condemned." Does this relate to what

is to happen at the day of Judgment? I pray you look at the text, and you will find it does not say, "He that believeth shall not be condemned," but he is not; he is not now. And if he is not now, then it follows that he never shall be; for having believed in Christ that promise still stands, "He that believeth is not condemned." I believe to-day I am not condemned; in fifty years' time that promise will be just the same—"He that believeth is not condemned." So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ, he is freed from all condemnation—past, present, and to come; and from that day he stands in God's sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "But he sins," you say. He does indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge. They were laid to the charge of Christ of old, and God can never charge the offence on two—first on Christ, and then on the sinner. "Ay, but he often falls into sin." That may be possible; though if the Spirit of God be in him he sinneth not as he was wont to do. He sins by reason of infirmity, not by reason of his love to sin, for now he hateth it. But mark, you shall put it in your own way if you will, and I will answer, "Yes, but though he sin, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him, and put on Christ,—positively, literally, and actually lifted off from him, and put upon Jesus Christ." Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out; the high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat's head. The sin is all gone from the people, and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there be, then the scapegoat has not carried it away. Because it cannot be here and there too. It cannot be carried away and left behind too. "No," say you, "Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin; there was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin. And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does he not? If he does not, then it is of no use our believing in him; but if he doth really take away our sin, then our sin cannot be on him and on us too; if it be on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified, and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith. As soon as a man believeth in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him, and gone away for ever. They are blotted out now. What if a man owe a hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free; it is blotted out; there is an erasure made in the book, and the debt is gone. Though the man commit sin, yet the debt having been paid before even the debt

was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the law of God. Doth not Scripture say, that God has cast his people's sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on his people too. Blessed be his name, in the day when he casts our sins into the depth of the sea, he views us as pure in his sight, and we stand accepted in the beloved. Then he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." They cannot be removed and be here still. Then if thou believest in Christ, thou art no more in the sight of God a sinner; thou art accepted as though thou wert perfect, as though thou hadst kept the law,—for Christ has kept it, and his righteousness is thine. You have broken it, but your sin is his, and he has been punished for it. Mistake not yourselves any longer; you are no more what you were; when you believe, you stand in Christ's stead, even as Christ of old stood in your stead. The transformation is complete, the exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even his Eternal Son is accepted; and they that believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness; but they abide under the law, and still shall they be under the curse. Now, ye that believe in Jesus, walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great truth. You are sinners in yourselves, but you are washed in the blood of Christ. David says, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You have lately seen the snow come down—how clear! how white! What could be whiter? Why, the Christian is whiter than that. You say, "He is black." I know he is as black as anyone—as black as hell—but the blooddrop falls on him, and he is as white—"whiter than snow." The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from heaven, look on them and say, "Ah! though I must confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, he hath given me his righteousness so completely, that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God." Oh! for faith to lay hold on this. Oh! for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears, and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Go home, ye that believe in Christ, and go to your beds this night, and say, "If I die in my bed I cannot be condemned." Should you wake the next morning, go into the world and say, "I am not condemned." When the devil howls at you, tell him, "Ah! you may accuse, but I am not condemned." And if sometimes your sins rise—say, "Ah, I

know you, but you are all gone for ever; I am not condemned." And when your turn shall come to die shut your eyes in peace.

"Bold shall you stand in that great day,
For who aught to your charge can lay?"

Fully absolved by grace you shall be found at last and all sin's tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done. I pray you do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there. Rest still in the substitution and the sacrifice. Be you what Christ was in his Father's sight, and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been, that he has suffered all your penalty; and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the cross of Christ. The Lord bless these words for his sake. Amen.

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None But Jesus - Second Part

He that believeth on him is not condemned - John 3:18

In [the morning sermon](#), our time was mainly taken up with the description of Faith—what it is. We had only a few minutes left at its close to describe what it leads to—the privilege of justification, which is a gift to the soul as the result of Faith. Let this high privilege, then, occupy our attention to-night. The text says, "He that believeth on him—[that is on Christ Jesus]—is not condemned."

To take up the subject in order, we shall notice first, the satisfactory declaration here made; then, secondly, we shall endeavour to correct certain misapprehensions respecting it, by reason of which the Christian is often cast down; and we shall close with some reflections, positive and negative, as to what this text includes, and what it excludes.

I. First of all, then, **WHAT A SATISFACTORY DECLARATION!**—"He that believeth on him is not condemned."

You are aware that in our courts of law, a verdict of "not guilty," amounts to an acquittal, and the prisoner is immediately discharged. So is it in the language of the gospel; a sentence of "not condemned," implies the justification of the sinner. It means that the believer in Christ receives now a present justification. Faith does not produce its fruits by-and-by, but now. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts him as its all in all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified to-night?—so are we, as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing his praises above. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus, who was just then, hanging by his side: and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was

the thief with no service at all. We are to-day accepted in the Beloved, to-day absolved from sin, to-day innocent in the sight of God. Oh, ravishing, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of this vine which we shall not be able to gather till we go to heaven; but this is one of the first ripe clusters and may be plucked and eaten here. This is not as the corn of the land, which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness, and part too of our daily raiment, with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are now—even now pardoned; even now are our sins put away; even now we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been guilty; innocent as father Adam when he stood in integrity, ere he had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree; pure as though we had never received the taint of depravity in our veins. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is not a sin in the Book of God, even now, against one of his people. There is nothing laid to their charge. There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth.

But to pass on, the text evidently means not simply present, but continual justification. In the moment when you and I believed, it was said of us, "He is not condemned." Many days have passed since then, many changes we have seen; but it is as true of us to-night, "He is not condemned." The Lord alone knows how long our appointed day shall be—how long ere we shall fulfill the hireling's time, and like a shadow flee away. But this we know, since every word of God is assured, and the gifts of God are without repentance, though we should live another fifty years, yet would it still be written here, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Nay, if by some mysterious dealing in providence our lives should be lengthened out to ten times the usual limit of man, and we should come to the eight or nine hundred years of Methuselah, still would it stand the same—"He that believeth on him is not condemned." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The just shall live by faith." "He that believeth on him shall never be confounded." All these promises go to show that the justification which Christ gives to our faith is a continual one, which will last as long as we shall live. And, remember, it will last in

eternity as well as in time. We shall not in heaven wear any other dress but that which we wear here. To-day the righteous stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They shall wear this same wedding dress at the great wedding feast. But what if it should wear out? What if that righteousness should lose its virtue in the eternity to come? Oh beloved! we entertain no fear about that. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this righteousness shall never wax old. No moth shall fret it; no thief shall steal it; no weeping hand of lamentation shall rend it in twain. It is, it must be eternal, even as Christ himself, Jehovah our righteousness. Because he is our righteousness, the self-existent, the everlasting, the immutable Jehovah, of whose years there is no end, and whose strength faileth not, therefore of our righteousness there is no end; and of its perfection, and of its beauty there shall never be any termination. The text, I think, very clearly teaches us, that he who believeth on Christ has received for ever a continual justification.

Again, think for a moment; the justification which is spoken of here is complete. "He that believeth on him is not condemned,"—that is to say, not in any measure or in any degree. I know some think it is possible for us to be in such a state as to be half-condemned and half-accepted. So far as we are sinners so far condemned; and so far as we are righteous so far accepted. Oh beloved, there is nothing like that in Scripture. It is altogether apart from the doctrine of the gospel. If it be of works, it is no more of grace; and if it be of grace, it is no more of works. Works and grace cannot mix and mingle any more than fire and water; it is either one or the other, it cannot be both; the two can never be allied. There can be no admixture of the two, no dilution of one with the other. He that believeth is free from all iniquity, from all guilt, from all blame; and though the devil bring an accusation, yet it is a false one, for we are free even from accusation, since it is boldly challenged, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It does not say, "Who shall prove it?" but "Who shall lay it to their charge?" They are so completely freed from condemnation, that not the shadow of a spot upon their soul is found; not even the slightest passing by of iniquity to cast its black shadow on them. They stand before God not only as half-innocent, but as perfectly so; not only as half-washed, but as whiter than snow. Their sins are not simply erased, they are blotted out; not simply put out of sight,

but cast into the depths of the sea; not merely gone, and gone as far as the east is from the west, but gone for ever, once for all. You know, beloved, that the Jew in his ceremonial purification, never had his conscience free from sin. After one sacrifice he needed still another, for these offerings could never make the comers thereunto perfect. The next day's sins needed a new lamb, and the next year's iniquity needed a new victim for an atonement. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God." No more burnt-offerings are needed, no more washing, no more blood, no more atonement, no more sacrifice. "It is finished!" hear the dying Saviour cry. Your sins have sustained their death-blow, the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread; it is done, complete, perfect. It needs no addition; it can never suffer any diminution. Oh, Christian, do lay hold of this precious thought; I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness. It is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were loaded with irons, and to make him sing though his mouth were gagged, to think that we are perfectly accepted in Christ, that our justification is not partial, it does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is covered; from condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free.

Once more. The non-condemnation is effectual. The royal privilege of justification shall never miscarry. It shall be brought home to every believer. In the reign of King George the Third, the son of a member of this church lay under sentence of death for forgery. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, after incredible exertions, obtained a promise that his sentence should be remitted. By a singular occurrence the present senior deacon—then a young man—learned from the governor of the gaol that the reprieve had not been received; and the unhappy prisoner would have been executed the next morning, had not Dr. Rippon gone post-haste to Windsor, obtained an interview with the king in his bed-chamber, and received from the monarch's own hand a copy of that reprieve which had been negligently put aside by a thoughtless officer. "I charge you, Doctor," said his majesty, "to make good speed." "Trust me, Sire, for that," responded your old pastor, and he returned to London in time, just in time, and only just in time, for the prisoner was being marched with many others on to the scaffold. Ay, that pardon might have been given,

and yet the man might have been executed if it had not been effectually carried out. But blessed be God our non-condemnation is an effectual thing. It is not a matter of letter, it is a matter of fact. Ah, poor souls, you know that condemnation is a matter of fact. When you and I suffered in our souls, and were brought under the heavy hand of the law, we felt that its curses were no mock thunders like the wrath of the Vatican, but they were real; we felt that the anger of God was indeed a thing to tremble at; a real substantial fact. Now, just as real as the condemnation which Justice brings, just so real is the justification which mercy bestows. You are not only nominally guiltless, but you are really so, if you believe in Christ; you are not only nominally put into the place of the innocent, but you are really put there the moment you believe in Jesus. Not only is it said that your sins are gone, but they are gone. Not only does God look on you as though you were accepted; you are accepted. It is a matter of fact to you, as much a matter of fact as that you sinned. You do not doubt that you have sinned, you cannot doubt that; do not doubt then that when you believe your sins are put away. For as certain as ever the black spot fell on you when you sinned, so certainly and so surely was it all washed out when you were bathed in that fountain filled with blood, which was drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

Come, my soul, think thou of this. Thou art actually and effectually cleared from guilt. Thou art led out of thy prison. Thou art no more in fetters as a bond-slave. Thou art delivered now from the bondage of the Law. Thou art freed from sin and thou canst walk at large as a freeman. Thy Saviour's blood has procured thy full discharge. Come, my soul,—thou hast a right now to come to thy Father's feet. No flames of vengeance are there to scare thee now; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the innocent. Come, my soul, thy disabilities are taken away. Thou wast unable once to see thy Father's face; thou canst see it now. Thou couldst not speak with him, nor he with thee; but now thou hast access with boldness to this grace wherein we stand. Once there was a fear of hell upon thee; there is no hell for thee now. How can there be punishment for the guiltless? He that believeth is guiltless, is not condemned, and cannot be punished. No frowns of an avenging God now. If God be viewed as a judge, how should he frown upon the guiltless? How should the Judge frown upon the absolved one? More than all the privileges thou

mightest have enjoyed if thou hadst never sinned, are thine now that thou art justified. All the blessings which thou couldst have had if thou hadst kept the law and more, are thine to-night because Christ has kept it for thee. All the love and the acceptance which a perfectly obedient being could have obtained of God, belong to thee, because Christ was perfectly obedient on thy behalf, and hath imputed all his merits to thy account that thou mightest be exceeding rich, through him who for thy sake became exceeding poor.

Oh that the Holy Spirit would but enlarge our hearts, that we might suck sweetness out of these thoughts! There is no condemnation. Moreover, there never shall be any condemnation. The forgiveness is not partial, but perfect; it is so effectual that it delivers us from all the penalties of the Law, gives to us all the privileges of obedience, and puts us actually high above where we should have been had we never sinned. It fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. We are not now where Adam was, for Adam might fall and perish. We are rather, where Adam would have been if we could suppose God had put him into the garden for seven years, and said, "If you are obedient for seven years, your time of probation shall be over, and I will reward you." The children of God in one sense may be said to be in a state of probation; in another sense there is no probation. There is no probation as to whether the child of God should be saved. He is saved already; his sins are washed away; his righteousness is complete: and if that righteousness could endure a million years' probation, it would never be defiled. In fact, it always stands the same in the sight of God, and must do so for ever and ever.

II. Let me now endeavour to CORRECT SOME MISAPPREHENSIONS, BY REASON OF WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN CAST DOWN.

What simpletons we are! Whatever our natural age, how childish we are in spiritual things! What great simpletons we are when we first believe in Christ! We think that our being pardoned involves a great many things which we afterwards find have nothing whatever to do with our pardon. For instance, we think we shall never sin again; we fancy that the battle is all fought; that we have got into a fair field, with no more war to wage; that in fact we have got the victory, and have only just to stand up and

wave the palm branch; that all is over, that God has only got to call us up to himself and we shall enter into heaven without having to fight any enemies upon earth. Now, all these are obvious mistakes. Though the text has a great meaning, it does not mean anything of this kind. Observe that although it does assert "He that believeth is not condemned"; yet it does not say that he that believeth shall not have his faith exercised. Your faith will be exercised. An untried faith will be no faith at all. God never gave men faith without intending to try it. Faith is received for the very purpose of endurance. Just as our Rifle Corps friends put up the target with the intention of shooting at it; so does God give faith with the intention of letting trials and troubles, and sin and Satan aim all their darts at it. When thou hast faith in Christ it is a great privilege; but recollect that it involves a great trial. You asked for great faith the other night; did you consider that you asked for great troubles too? You cannot have great faith to lay up and rust. Mr. Greatheart in John Bunyan's Pilgrim was a very strong man, but then what strong work he had to do. He had to go with all those women and children many scores of times up to the celestial city and back again; he had to fight all the giants, and drive back all the lions; to slay the giant Slaygood, and knock down the Castle of Despair. If you have a great measure of faith, you will have need to use it all. You will never have a single scrap to spare, you will be like the virgins in our Lord's parable, even though you be a wise virgin, you will have to say to others who might borrow of you, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you." But when your faith is exercised with trials, do not think you are brought into judgment for your sins. Oh no, believer, there is plenty of exercise, but that is not condemnation; there are many trials, but still we are justified; we may often be buffeted, but we are never accursed; we may oftentimes be cast down, but the sword of the Lord never can and never will smite us to the heart. Yea, more; not only may our faith be exercised, but our faith may come to a very low ebb, and still we may not be condemned. When thy faith gets so small that thou canst not see it, even then still thou art not condemned. If thou hast ever believed in Jesus, thy faith may be like the sea when it goes out a very long way from the shore, and leaves a vast track of mud, and some might say the sea was gone or dried up. But you are not condemned when your faith is most dried up. Ay! and I dare to say it,—when your faith is at the flood-tide, you are not more accepted then, than when your faith is at the

lowest ebb; for your acceptance does not depend upon the quantity of your faith, it only depends upon its reality. If you are really resting in Christ, though your faith may be but as a spark, and a thousand devils may try to quench that one spark, yet you are not condemned—you shall stand accepted in Christ. Though your comforts will necessarily decay as your faith declines, yet your acceptance does not decay. Though faith does rise and fall like the thermometer, though faith is like the mercury in the bulb, all weathers change it,—yet God's love is not affected by the weather of earth, or the changes of time. Until the perfect righteousness of Christ can be a mutable thing—a football to be kicked about by the feet of fiends—your acceptance with God can never change. You are, you must be, perfectly accepted in the Beloved.

There is another thing which often tries the child of God. He at times loses the light of his Father's countenance. Now, remember, the text does not say, "He that believeth shall not lose the light of God's countenance"; he may do so, but he shall not be condemned for all that. You may walk, not only for days but for months in such a state that you have little fellowship with Christ, very little communion with God of a joyous sort. The promises may seem broken to you, the Bible may afford you but little comfort; and when you turn your eye to heaven you may only have to feel the more the smarting that is caused by your Father's rod; you may have vexed and grieved his Spirit, and he may have turned away his face from you. But you are not condemned for all that. Mark the testimony, "He that believeth is not condemned." Even when your Father smites you and leaves a wale at every stroke, and brings the blood at every blow, there is not a particle of condemnation in any one stroke. Not in his anger, but in his dear covenant love he smites you. There is as unmixed and unalloyed affection in every love-stroke of chastisement from your Father's hand as there is in the kisses of Jesus Christ's lips. Oh! believe this; it will tend to lift up thy heart, it will cheer thee when neither sun nor moon appear. It will honour thy God, it will show thee where thy acceptance really lies. When his face is turned away, believe him still, and say, "He abideth faithful though he hide his face from me." I will go a little further still. The child of God may be so assaulted by Satan, that he may be well nigh given up to despair, and yet he is not condemned. The devils may beat the great hell-drum in his ear, till he thinks himself to be on the very brink of

perdition. He may read the Bible, and think that every threatening is against him, and that every promise shuts its mouth and will not cheer him; and he may at last despond, and despond, and despond, till he is ready to break the harp that has so long been hanging on the willow. He may say, "The Lord hath forsaken me quite, my God will be gracious no more"; but it is not true. Yea, he may be ready to swear a thousand times that God's mercy is clean gone for ever, and that his faithfulness will fail for evermore; but it is not true, it is not true. A thousand liars swearing to a falsehood could not make it true, and our doubts and fears are all of them liars. And if there were ten thousand of them, and they all professed the same, it is a falsehood that God ever did forsake his people, or that he ever cast from him an innocent man; and you are innocent, remember, when you believe in Jesus. "But," say you, "I am full of sin." "Ay," say I, "but that sin has been laid on Christ." "Oh," say you, "but I sin daily." "Ay," say I, "but that sin was laid on him before you committed it, years ago. It is not yours; Christ has taken it away once for all. You are a righteous man by faith, and God will not forsake the righteous, nor will he cast away the innocent." I say, then, the child of God may have his faith at a low ebb; he may lose the light of his Father's countenance, and he may even get into thorough despair; but yet all these cannot disprove my text—"He that believeth is not condemned."

"But what," say you, "if the child of God should sin?" It is a deep and tender subject, yet must we touch it and be bold here. I would not mince God's truth lest any should make a bad use of it. I know there are some, not the people of God, who will say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Their condemnation is just. I cannot help the perversion of truth. There be always men who will take the best of food as though it were poison, and make the best of truth into a lie, and so be damning their own souls. You ask, "What if a child of God should fall into sin?" I answer, the child of God does fall into sin; every day he mourns and groans because when he would do good, evil is present with him. But though he falls into sins, he is not condemned for all that—not by one of them, or by all of them put together, because his acceptance does not depend upon himself, but upon the perfect righteousness of Christ; and that perfect righteousness is not invalidated by any sins of his. He is perfect in Christ; and until Christ is imperfect, the imperfections of the creature do not mar the justification

of the believer in the sight of God. But oh! if he fall into some glaring sin, —O God, keep us from it!—if he fall into some glaring sin, he shall go with broken bones, but he shall reach heaven for all that. Though, in order to try him and let him see his vileness, he be suffered to go far astray, yet he that bought him will not lose him; he that chose him will not cast him away; he will say unto him, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." David may go never so far away, but David is not lost. He comes back and he cries, "Have mercy upon me, O God!" And so shall it be with every believing soul—Christ shall bring him back. Though he slip, he shall be kept, and all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne. If it were not for this last truth—though some may stick at it—what would become of some of God's people? They would be given up to despair. If I have been speaking to a backslider, I pray he will not make a bad use of what I have said. Let me say to him, "Poor backslider! thy Father's bowels yearn over thee; he has not erased thy name out of the registry. Come back, come back now to him and say, 'Receive me graciously, and love me freely'; and he will say, 'I will put you among the children.' He will pass by your backsliding and will heal your iniquities; and you shall yet stand once more in his favour, and know yourself to be still accepted in the Redeemer's righteousness and saved by his blood." This text does not mean that the child of God shall not be tried, or that he shall not even sometimes fall under the trial; but it does mean this, once for all: He that believeth on Christ is not condemned. At no time, by no means, is he under the sentence of condemnation, but is evermore justified in the sight of God.

III. Now dear brethren, but little time remains for the closing points, therefore, in a hurried manner, let me notice **WHAT THIS TEXT EVIDENTLY INCLUDES**; and may God grant that these few words may nevertheless do good to our souls!

"He that believeth on him is not condemned." If we are not condemned, then at no time does God ever look upon his children, when they believe in Christ, as being guilty. Are you surprised that I should put it so? I put it so again; from the moment when you believe in Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty; for he never looks upon you apart from Christ.

You often look upon yourself as guilty, and you fall upon your knees as you should do, and you weep and lament; but even then, while you are weeping over inbred and actual sin, he is still saying out of heaven, "So far as your justification is concerned, thou art all fair and lovely." You are black as the tents of Kedar—that is yourself by nature; you are fair as the curtains of Solomon—that is yourself in Christ. You are black—that is yourself in Adam; but comely, that is yourself in the second Adam. Oh, think of that!—that you are always in God's sight comely, always in God's sight lovely, always in God's sight as though you were perfect. For ye are complete in Christ Jesus, and perfect in Christ Jesus, as the apostle puts it in another place. Always do you stand completely washed and fully clothed in Christ. Remember this; for it is certainly included in my text.

Another great thought included in my text is this; you are never liable as a believer to punishment for your sins. You will be chastised on account of them, as a father chastises his child; that is a part of the Gospel dispensation; but you will not be smitten for your sins as the lawgiver smites the criminal. Your Father may often punish you as he punisheth the wicked. But, never for the same reason. The ungodly stand on the ground of their own demerits; their sufferings are awarded as their due deserts. But your sorrows do not come to you as a matter of desert; they come to you as a matter of love. God knows that in one sense your sorrows are such a privilege that you may account of them as a boon you do not deserve. I have often thought of that when I have had a sore trouble. I know some people say, "You deserved the trouble." Yes, my dear brethren, but there is not enough merit in all the Christians put together, to deserve such a good thing as the loving rebuke of our heavenly Father. Perhaps you cannot see that; you cannot think that a trouble can come to you as a real blessing in the covenant. But I know that the rod of the covenant is as much the gift of grace as the blood of the covenant. It is not a matter of desert or merit; it is given to us because we need it. But I question whether we were ever so good as to deserve it. We were never able to get up to so high a standard as to deserve so rich, so gracious a providence as this covenant blessing—the rod of our chastening God. Never at any time in your life has a law-stroke fallen upon you. Since you believed in Christ you are out of the law's jurisdiction. The law of England cannot touch a Frenchman while he lives

under the protection of his own Emperor. You are not under the law, but you are under grace. The law of Sinai cannot touch you, for you are out of its jurisdiction. You are not in Sinai or in Arabia. You are not the son of Hagar or the son of a handmaid, you are the son of Sarah, and are come to Jerusalem and are free. You are out of Arabia, and are come to God's own happy land. You are not under Hagar, but under Sarah; under God's covenant of grace. You are a child of promise, and you shall have God's own inheritance. Believe this, that never shall a law-stroke fall on you; never shall God's anger in a judicial sense drop on you. He may give you a chastising stroke, not as the result of sin, but rather as the result of his own rich grace, that would get the sin out of you, that you may be perfected in sanctification, even as you are now perfect and complete before him in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

IV. I was about to go into a list of things which this text includes, but the time fails me; therefore I must spend the last minute or two in saying **WHAT THIS TEXT EXCLUDES.**

What does it exclude! Well, I am sure it excludes boasting. "He that believeth is not condemned." Ah! if it said, "He that worketh is not condemned," then you and I might boast in any quantity. But when it says, "He that believeth,"—why, there is no room for us to say half a word for old self. No, Lord, if I am not condemned, it is thy free grace, for I have deserved to be condemned a thousand times since I have been in this pulpit to-night. When I am on my knees, and I am not condemned, I am sure it must be sovereign grace, for even when I am praying I deserve to be condemned. Even when we are repenting we are sinning, and adding to our sins while we are repenting of them. Every act we do, as the result of the flesh, is to sin again, and our best performances are so stained with sin, that it is hard to know whether they are good works or bad works. So far as they are our own, they are bad, and so far as they are the works of the Spirit they are good. But then the goodness is not ours, it is the Spirit's, and only the evil remains to us. Ah, then, we cannot boast! Begone, pride! begone! The Christian must be a humble man. If he lift up his head to say something, then he is nothing indeed. He does not know where he is, or where he stands, when he once begins to boast, as though his own right hand had gotten him the victory. Leave off boasting,

Christian. Live humbly before thy God, and never let a word of self-congratulation escape thy lips. Sacrifice self, and let thy song be before the throne—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory forever."

What next does the text exclude? Methinks it ought to exclude—now I am about to smite myself—it ought to exclude doubts and fears. "He that believeth is not condemned." How dare you and I draw such long faces, and go about as we do sometimes as though we had a world of cares upon our backs? What would I have given ten or eleven years ago if I could have known this text was sure to me, that I was not condemned. Why, I thought if I could feel I was once forgiven, and had to live on bread and water, and be locked up in a dungeon, and every day be flogged with a cat-o'-nine tails, I would gladly have accepted it, if I could have once felt my sins forgiven. Now you are a forgiven man, and yet you are cast down! Oh! shame on you. No condemnation! and yet miserable? Fie, Christian! Get thee up and wipe the tears from your eyes. Oh! if there be a person lying in gaol now, to be executed next week, if you could go to him and say, "You are pardoned," would he not spring up with delight from his seat; and although he might have lost his goods, and though it would be possible for him, after pardon, to have to suffer many things, yet, so long as life was spared, what would all this be to him? He would feel that it was less than nothing. Now, Christian, you are pardoned, your sins are all forgiven. Christ has said to you, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee"—and art thou yet miserable? Well, if we must be so sometimes, let us make it as short as we can. If we must be sometimes cast down, let us ask the Lord to lift us up again. I am afraid some of us get into bad habits, and come to make it a matter of practice to be downcast. Mind, Christian, mind, it will grow upon you—that peevish spirit—if you do not come to God to turn these doubts and fears out of you, they will soon swarm upon you like flies in Egypt. When you are able to kill the first great doubt, you will perhaps kill a hundred; for one great doubt will breed a thousand, and to kill the mother is to kill the whole brood. Therefore, look with all thy eyes against the first doubt, lest thou shouldest become confirmed in thy despondency, and grow into sad despair. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If this excludes boasting, it ought to exclude doubts too.

Once more. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." This excludes sinning any more. My Lord, have I sinned against thee so many times, and yet hast thou freely forgiven me all? What stronger motive could I have for keeping me from sinning again? Ah, there are some who are saying this is licentious doctrine. A thousand devils rolled into one, must the man be who can find any licentiousness here. What! go and sin because I am forgiven? Go and live in iniquity because Jesus Christ took my guilt and suffered in my room and stead? Human nature is bad enough, but methinks this is the very worst state of human nature, when it tries to draw an argument for sin from the free grace of God. It is far harder to sin against the blood of Christ, and against a sense of pardon, than it is against the terrors of the law and the fear of hell itself. I know that when my soul is most alarmed by a dread of the wrath of God, I can sin with comfort compared with what I could when I have a sense of his love shed abroad in my heart. What more monstrous! to read your title clear, and sin? Oh, vile reprobate! you are on the borders of the deepest hell. But I am sure if you are a child of God, you will say when you have read your title clear, and feel yourself justified in Christ Jesus,

"Now, for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain, I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross."

Yes, and I must, and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus' sake. O may my soul be found in him, perfect in his righteousness! This will make you live near to him: this will make you like unto him. Do not think that this doctrine by dwelling on it will make you think lightly of sin. It will make you think of it as a hard and stern executioner to put Christ to death; as an awful load that could never be lifted from you except by the eternal arm of God; and then you will come to hate it with all your soul, because it is rebellion against a loving and gracious God, and you shall by this means, far better than by any Arminian doubts or any legal quibbles, be led to walk in the footsteps of your Lord Jesus, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

I think this whole sermon, though I have been preaching to the children of God, is meant for sinners too. Sinner, I would that thou didst say so. If you know this, that he that believeth is not condemned, then, sinner if thou believest, thou wilt not be condemned; and may all I have said to-night help you to this belief in thy soul. Oh, but sayest thou, "May I trust Christ?" As I said this morning, it is not a question of whether you may or may not, you are commanded. The Scripture commands the gospel to be preached to every creature, and the gospel is—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I know you will be too proud to do it, unless God by his grace should humble you. But if ye feel to-night that you are nothing and have nothing of your own, I think you will be right glad to take Christ to be your all-in-all. If you can say with poor Jack the Huckster,—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,"

You may go on and say with him, this night,

"But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

God grant that it may be so, for his name's sake. Amen.

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North And South

I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, keep not back. - Isaiah 43:6

In the fullness of the promised days when the Jews shall be restored from their wanderings, and all the seed of Jacob shall again meet in their own land, God in his mighty providence will speak to all the nations, saying: "To the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back;" and at the divine bidding free passage shall be given, all lets and hindrances shall be

removed, and his own people shall come to their own land. Entailed on Abraham's seed by a covenant of salt, the Holy Land shall receive again its rightful heritors, the banished shall come to their own again, and no nation or people shall keep them back. So much for the literal meaning. I am unable to indulge you with fuller details, for I have no skill in guessing at the meaning of dark passages, but leave such things to those to whom it is given, or who think it is given to them. We shall now pursue the spiritual teaching of the passage.

At this moment, my brethren and sisters, we who follow the footsteps of King Jesus are soldiers of an army which has invaded this world. This land belongs to our great Leader, for he made it. It was right that everywhere, all round the globe, his name should be honored, for he is the King among the nations, and the governor thereof: But our race has revolted, set up another monarch, and bowed its strength to support another dynasty—the dynasty of darkness and death. Our race has broken the good and wholesome laws of the great Lord, the rightful King, and set up new laws and new customs altogether opposed to right and truth. This is the Great Rebellion the Revolt of Manhood, the Sedition of Sinners. Now, no king will willingly lose his dominions, and therefore the Great King of kings has sent his son to conquer this world by force of arms, though not by arms of steel, or weapons that cut and kill, and wound, yet by arms more mighty far; and this earth is to be yet subdued to the kingdom of the Crown Prince, the Prince Imperial of heaven, Jesus Christ, the Lord. We, his regenerated people, form part of the army of occupation. We have invaded the land. Hard and stern hath been the battle up to this point. We have had to win every inch of ground by sheer push of pike. Effort after effort has been put forth by the church of God under the guidance of her heavenly leader, and none has been in vain. Hitherto the Lord hath helped us, but there is much yet to be done. Canaanites and Hivites, and Jebusites have to be driven out; yea, in fact, the whole world seems still to lie in darkness, and under the dominion of the wicked one. We do but hold here and there a sacred fortress for truth and holiness in the land; but these we must retain till the Lord Jesus shall send us more prosperous times, and the battle shall be tamed against the foe, and the kingdom shall come unto our prince. Nor is there any fear but that such a time will come, therefore let us have courage. Soldiers of

the cross, have faith; have faith in your great leader, for behold he is still at the head of you, and is still omnipotent. The hour of his weakness is past. His sun set once in blood, but it has risen to go down no more. Once was it eclipsed at noon day; but now the Sun of Righteousness ariseth with healing beneath his wings. He who died once for all, is now life's source, center, and Lord. The living Christ is present among us as the commander-in-chief of the church militant. Let us refresh our souls by drawing, near to him by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The text has two grand matters in it:—First, here is the royalty of the word—where the word of this king is there is power. Secondly, here is the word of royalty, and that word we may well consider, for where the word of this king is there is wisdom.

I. First, here is THE ROYALTY OF THE WORD. It is more than an imperial edict; it is the fiat of onnipotence. Jesus Christ saith to the north, "Give up," and it does give up; and to the south, "Keep not back," and it cannot keep back.

I understand from reading this declaration, that there is a general opposition in the world to the cause and kingdom of God; for until he saith, "Give up," and "Keep not back," men do not crowd to Immanuel's feet, and even the chosen of God do not come forth from their hiding places. All the world over there is a general opposition to the cause of Christ, to the doctrine of truth, to the throne of God. Go where you may, in the highest places of the earth, you shall find true religion despised; among the lowest of the land you shall find that same religion blasphemed; and in the middle classes, where some seem to fancy that all virtue resides, you shall find carelessness about the things of the world to come, and carking carefulness about the selfishness of this present life. Jesus Christ is everywhere despised in comparison with the things that perish. They will not have this man to reign over them. The trees of the wood reject heaven's cedar, and choose hell's bramble. Even the eleven sell the true Joseph into Egypt, nor is there one found who will defend the chosen of God. Go amongst savage nations, and there the idol is worshipped, but Jesus is not known. Go among civilised nations, and, lo, they have only changed their idols; they have rebaptised their imates,

given new names to the objects of their superstitious reverence, but the true Christ is misunderstood and rejected. Go you to the swarthy Hindoo, the man of deep philosophy and sophistry, and you shall find his heart set against the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth; and then sail over the blue sea to the islands of the deep, and man in his simplicity worships he knows not what, but not the incarnate God. Traverse the central parts of continents where as yet civilization has scarcely reached, and you shall find that man is still opposed to his Maker, and hates the name of the only begotten Son of God. Nor need we travel or even look abroad; the opposition is universal among ourselves, among the old, among the young. Striking is that text, "They go astray from the womb, speaking lies." An old Puritan puts it; "They go astray before they go: they speak lies before they speak;" and so it is. Before it comes to acts, the evil propensity is in the heart; and before the lips can frame the falsehood, there is the lie within the soul. From the earliest infancy to palsied age, nothing seems to cure manhood of its rebellious disposition; the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither indeed while it remains what it is can it be. There is a general opposition to the cause and kingdom of Christ.

But the text seems to hint that there is a particular form of that opposition in each case. There is a word to the north, a different word from that which is given to the south. The north holds fast, and therefore the word is, "Give up:" the south retires, is despairing, therefore it is said, "Keep not back." The opposition takes different shapes, and there is a different word to meet its ever varying forms. How true is Dr. Watts's verse -

"We wander each a different way,
But all the downward road."

As each land has its own tribes of wild animals, so has each heart its indigenous sins. All land will grow weeds, but you will not find the same sort of weed equally abundant in every soil: so in one heart the deadly nightshade of ignorance chokes the seed, and in another the prickly thistle of malice crowds out the wheat. There are difficulties in reaching the heart of any man, but not the same difficulties in all men. Some, for instance, cannot be influenced because of their want of intelligence;

others because of their supposed learning. Some cannot be come at because of their presumption; others because of their despondency. Some spend their all upon the pleasures of this world, others spend nothing, but find their pleasure simply in hoarding, yet are they equally averse to heavenly things. Whatever form sin takes, it is the same opposition, but yet it may need a different mode of treatment, and by a different weapon will it have to be overcome. My dear brother in Christ, you perhaps have a different personal, spiritual difficulty from mine. I have no wish to change with you, and I should not advise you to change with me. The same is true with our trials in winning souls. We have each our difficulties, but they are not precisely alike in detail. You have to fight the north perhaps, and I the south; but the same Lord and Master can make us victorious, and without him we shall be equally defeated. The opposition which we encounter in serving our Lord is the same, depend upon it. You need not say, "Mine is a peculiarly hard task," or if you do, I may say the same of mine. After all, both tasks are impossibilities without God, and both labors shall be readily performed if Jesus speaks the divine fiat, and saith "to the north, Give up; arid to the south, Keep not back."

Further, as there is in all an opposition, and as there is in each a distinct opposition, so no power can in any case subdue any part of the world to Christ apart from him. It is possible that you may fall in with a family which seems to be naturally religious: you may even meet with tribes of people who appear to be spontaneously inclined to godliness; but if you bring the religion of Christ to them, you will find that their very religiousness is the greatest difficulty you have to deal with. Some, on the other hand, never could be superstitious: the conformation of their mind is that of practical, sound, common sense; but do not deceive yourself with the idea that their conversion is any the easier. You may preach the gospel in the most forcible way to them, and you will find that this very common sense of theirs will be the main difficulty to be overcome. Believe me, however intent you may be in winning souls to Christ, you shall never meet with one who can be subdued to him by any persuasions of yours apart from the working of his own power. I know the preacher has thought within himself, "I have only to put the truth in a reasonable way, and the man will see it." Ah! sir, but sinners are not reasonable: they are the most unreasonable of all creatures: none are so senseless, none

act so madly as they do. "But," saith one, "if I were to tell them of the love of Christ in an affectionate loving way, that would reach them." Yes; but you will find that all your affection and your tears, and earnest delineation of the love of Jesus, will be powerless against human hearts, unless the Eternal Spirit shall drive home your appeals. We know some who have been reasoned with, and if logic could win them, they ought to have been won long ago: they have also been persuaded, and if rhetoric could reach them, they ought to have turned away from their evil ways years ago; but all human art has been tried and tried, and tried in vain; yet there is no room for despair, for Jesus can conquer the unconquerables, and heal the incurables. Do not be disappointed, dear brother, if you have hitherto failed in your efforts; you have but proved that "vain is the help of man." You see now by experience that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." It is yours to try and bring that soul to Jesus; but it lies with him to perform the work. Duty is ours, the result is God's. If the soil of the field committed to me will never yield a harvest, I am yet bound to plough it, if my Lord commands. If I could foresee that my child would never turn to the Lord, yet I ought not to slacken my efforts for its conversion. I have to do with my Master's command, and what he bids me do I am bound to do. Never let us be surprised when we are defeated, for we ought to know that old Adam is far too strong for us, if we assail him single-handed. We cannot expect to cast out the devil: he laughs us to scorn if we attempt to exorcise him in our own name. We may speak as we will, but if it is only we that speak, the devil will say, "Jesus I know, and the Holy Ghost I know—but who are ye? I do not yield to you. I will not go out of this sinner, through all your persuasions and all your talkings." Do not forget then that there is a general opposition to the kingdom of Christ—such opposition as no human power can by any possibility overcome.

But, my brethren, here is the point of the text. That opposition, whatever form it assumes, though not to be subdued by our agency alone, shall assuredly yield before the fiat of our great King, when he saith "to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back." His word is a word of power wherever it comes. Let us rejoice then, whatever place we dwell in, that we have only to ask the King himself to come there, and to speak

with power, and we shall see conversions, conversions most numerous, that shall glorify his name. I fully believe that the darkest time of any true Christian church is just the period when it ought to have most hope, for when the Lord has allowed us to spin ourselves out till there is no more strength in us, then it is that he will come to our rescue. What could have been lower than the condition into which we, as a church, had sunk some seventeen years ago? But a little faithful band used to meet in that dreary chapel in Park Street, and cry unto the Lord, never ceasing their prayers. And, oh! how soon the house began to fill, and how speedily our tent was too strait for us, and we broke forth on the right hand and on the left, and God made the desolate places to be inhabited. Members of other churches, you have the same God to go to. Go to him, for he can work the same wonders for you. Look to the Most High, and not to man, or ministers, or modes, or methods, but only to him, and the guidance of his Spirit. "Well, but ours is a village," saith one. And is not he the Lord of the villages? Is he the Lord of the cities, and not the Lord of the hamlets? "But our chapel is ugly, and built in a back street," saith one. "Nobody knows of its existence. We shall never get the people within its obscure and dreary walls." Is God the God of the wide thoroughfares and not of the lanes? Does not the Lord know the back streets as well as the broad ones? Was not that the question in dispute of old? Is he the God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys? I have already put it in another shape to you. In his name I ask you, can anything be too hard for the Lord? Perhaps in your sphere of service you have grown so dispirited that you are inclined to say, "I may as well give up all further effort; no good will result from my endeavors." But what have you told the Master, and what have you sought at his hand? Have you told him all your discouragements? Have you asked him to speak with power, and has he refused you? If so, then give it up, but not till then, for he can even now "say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back;" and as when he said to the thick primaeval darkness, "Let there be light," and the light leaped into being, and the darkness fled, so can he, amid the gross darkness of our huge city, or the not less dense darkness of our villages, create light to our astonishment and to his glory. It is the king's word we want—nothing short of it, and nothing more. We must get that by prayer: we must wait upon him with importunity. If there be only two or three whose hearts break over the desolations of the church, if we have only

half a dozen that resolve to give the Lord no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, we shall see great things yet. A handful of people who resolve if a blessing is to be had they will have it, and that if souls are not saved it shall be the sovereignty of God that prevents it and nothing else: such a mere handful shall win the day. If they will have souls saved; if so they plead and agonize, oh! then the Lord will turn his gracious hand, and send a plenteous stream of blessing upon their district; for where he wills it the blessing must come, and he always wills to display his grace where and when he leads his people to pray for it.

Before I leave this point, let me say the power of the King's word is always exercised in full consistence with the free agency of man. You must not think when we say that Christ has his will, and works omnipotently in men's hearts, that we imagine that he violates the free agency which he has created. He says to the north, "Give up," and that word does it; for a word is a suitable instrument by which to rule a free agent. The way to make blocks of timber move would be to drag them, and if we wish to shape them we must hew them with the axe, or cut them with a saw; but the way to deal with men is to speak with them. That is how Jesus operates. His power is exerted in conformity with the laws of human mind. He does not violate the free agency of man, though he does as he wills with man: His word is an instrument consistent with our mental nature, and he uses that word wisely. He says to the north, "Give up:" he says to the south, "Keep not back." His word touches the secret spring, and sets all in motion. No man is ever taken to heaven against his will, though I do not believe any man ever went there of his own free will till God's sovereign grace enlightened him and made him willing. You must not suppose that Christ conquers human hearts by physical compulsion, such as the King of Prussia used, for instance, in subduing France, or such as a man uses in driving a horse. The Lord knows how to leave us free, and yet to make us do his bidding, and therein lies the beauty of gospel influences. Suppose man's will to be a room; if you and I want to open it, we break in the lock; we do not understand the true method; but the Lord has the key, and knows how to open the door without a wrench. Without violating even the most delicate spring in the watch, the maker knows how to regulate it. Grace draws, but it is with hands of a man; it

rules, but it is with a scepter of love. The fact is, the great dispute between Calvinists and Arminians has arisen very much through not understanding one another, and from one brother saying, "What I hold is the truth"—and the other saying, "What I hold is truth, and nothing else." The men need somebody to knock both their heads together, and fuse their beliefs into one. They need one capacious brain to hold both the truths which their two little heads contain; for God's word is neither all on one side nor altogether on the other: it overlaps all systems, and defies all formularies. It lays the full responsibility of his ruin on man, but all the power and glory of grace it ascribes to God; and it is wise of us to do the same. The great King doeth as he wills among men as well as among the armies of heaven. Who shall stay his hand or say unto him, "What doest thou?" He rules men as men, and not as inanimate stones. He has a scepter which is adapted to mind and spirit. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal: his forces rule the heart, the mind, the whole manhood as he has made it; and so he conquers, and becomes the happy king of willing subjects, who, though subdued by power, are happy to own his sway. Thus much on the first point—the royalty of the word.

II. How we will consider THE WORD OF ROYALTY. The King saith "to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back."

We will not spend many minutes over these words, but just briefly hint at what meaning may be drawn from them. There are some persons to whom, when the powerful word of grace comes, it speaks in this way—"Give up; give up." There are other persons in another state of mind to whom, whenever the word of salvation comes, it says, "Keep not back; keep not back." Now, to some we find that it comes in this way: "Give up; give up." You say, "I am righteous; I am no worse than others. I have broken the law, but not much; my sins are trivial. I cannot deserve to be cast into hell for my small offenses. I have been—not perfect, but as righteous as most. I have done this, I have done that, I have done the other." Ah, dear friend, the sword of divine grace will kill all this; and the message that God's mercy sends to you to-day is, "Give up." Renounce your fancied goodness and deceitful self-esteem. Oh, give up that spinning; it is a poor trade to spin cobwebs. Give it up. Your father, Adam, taught you to make aprons of fig-leaves; but it was after he had

fallen. It is a bad business: give it up. Your own works will never cover you as you should be covered; there is a better righteousness than yours to be had; there is a better footing to stand before God upon than anything you have done. Your refuges are all refuges of lies; give them up. That pretty righteousness of yours, which fools so white, is only white because your eyes are blind; if you could see it, it is all as black as filth can make it. You conceive your robe to be new and fair, but it is all riddled through and through with holes. The worms have devoured it; it is all moth-eaten and decayed. Give it up. Oh, give up that Pharisaic mouthful, "God, I thank thee," and betake thyself to the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Give up thy selftrust; it is a painted lie, a rotten plank, a foul deception, a false traitor; it promises salvation, but it brings sure damnation. Jesus is the sinner's only hope. Give up every other reliance.

Then, too, you have an opposition in your hearts to the gospel. Concerning that also the word saith to you, "Give up." Perhaps you were prejudiced against it foolishly and ignorantly; before you ever heard it you felt persuaded you should not like it. Possibly you have been brought up to a religion of forms; you hardly think that salvation can be by simple faith in Jesus Christ; you feel a great deal of attachment to that regeneration of yours which was wrought in your baptism, and to that confirmation of yours bestowed by the bishop's fingers. Besides, you have been so regular in your religion up till now, that you can hardly brook to be told that the whole bundle of it is mere rubbish, not worth the time you have spent on it. You cannot endure to be told that -

"None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good."

But rest assured, the sooner you give up all those flattering reliances of yours, the better for you, for there is nothing in them. Even ceremonies that God has commanded are only of spiritual use to spiritual men, and since you are not a spiritual man they cannot profit you. Have you in your heart an opposition to Christ? Can you not yield to him as God? Can you not stoop to be saved entirely by his merits, and acknowledge him for your Lawgiver, and Teacher, and Guide? Then as, the text saith so would I say, and may the Lord apply the word: "Give up; give up." There is no

salvation for thee till thou "give up" all ceremonial hopes and formal confidences. Strike the colors, man, before a broadside goes through thee; for depend upon it, if thou yield not in one way thou wilt in another. Thou shalt either break or bow; thou shalt either turn or burn; that is the alternative to every man of woman born: he must turn away from his enmity to Christ, and yield himself up to his love, or else he shall find the power of God in Christ to be his destruction.

It is possible, dear friends, that your opposition to Jesus Christ has taken the form of the love of a favourite sin. Now, there is nothing more certain than this, that you cannot be saved and keep your sins: they must be parted with. No man can carry fire in his bosom and yet be safe from burning. While you drink the poison, it must and will work death in you. The thief cannot expect mercy while he keeps the goods he has stolen. John Bunyan says that one day, when he was playing "cat" on a Sunday, on the village green, he thought he heard a voice saying to him: "Wilt thou have thy sins and go to hell, or leave thy sins and go to heaven?" That question is put to every man who hears the gospel faithfully preached. Most men in their heart of hearts would like to have their sins and go to heaven too. But that cannot be; while God is just, and heaven is holy, and truth is precious, it cannot be. What then? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Give up, give up; give up your sin. What is the sin? The drunkards cup? Away with the bewitching draught. Is it the drunkard's company? That is as damnable as his cup; renounce such society at once. Is it blaspheming? O man, God rinse thy mouth our of such black stuff as that! Have done with a sin for which there cannot be any excuse, for it cannot bring thee any pleasure or profit, nor can there be any necessity for it: it is a degrading, useless, senseless. God-provoking crime. Is it some secret sin that must not be named lest the cheek of modesty be reddened? Give it up, friend; it will be much better for thee to lose it though it were as precious as thy right arm or thy right eye, than to keep it and be cast into hell fire. The chamber of wantonness is the gate of death, flee from it without delay. The sins of the flesh are a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord fall therein; but as thou lovest thy soul, O young man, escape like a bird from the fowler's snare. Here is

the message of God to thee: "Give up, give up thy sin." Perhaps though you hear the summons, you trifle with it, and reply, "Yes; I mean to give them all up, and I hope by so doing I shall find my way to heaven. I shall deserve well of my Maker when I have denied myself all sinful pleasures." But stop; let me not deceive you: this is not all. I fear that some men are not improved in their hearts when they are altered in their outward behavior. I am glad of the outward improvement, but I have sometimes fancied that they have only changed their sins, but not given them up. They show no leprosy in their skin, but it dies in their bone and their flesh. It is little use merely to shift the region in which sin sets up its throne if its dominion is still undestroyed. It reminds one of the verse -

"So when a raging fever burns,
We shift from side to side by turns;
And 'tis a poor relief we gain
To shift the place but keep the pain."

What if the man does not go to hell as a drunkard, it will not mend it if he is ruined by being self-righteous: so long as he is lost I do not see that it materially matters how. Many and many a man has given up outward sins and set up a self-righteousness of his own, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel;" and so he fled from a bear, and a lion slew him; he leaned on a wall, and a serpent bit him. All sin must be cast out of the throne of the heart, and whatever righteousness that is not Christ's righteousness must go with it. I would fain put the sword-point to thy heart, O sinner, and say, "Give up all that opposes Christ;" for if thou do not give it up, thy soul will be lost.

In fine, dear friends, speaking to the children of God as well as to such as are not converted, I say, give up all and have Christ; give up all attempts to save yourself, and let Christ save you. Work afterwards, because he worketh in you to will and to do, but now do nothing either great or small, to make yourself righteous, for Jesus did it, did it all, long, long ago. Do nothing by way of straining for merit, but begin to do everything by way of gratitude. "Give up;" that is, give up yourself to Christ, whatever his will may be. If it be his will that you be sick, that you be poor, that you die, give all up, and say, "Thy will be done. I resign all to thee, my God."

Doth Jesus command you to do anything? Let it not be irksome to you. Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. Let there be no back-stair by which to play the truant; no keeping back of part of the price as though you would not do Christ's will, except in some points. Give up unreservedly, and make no provision for the flesh. Let his will be your will. Yield entirely; and if you have anything in this world of substance, of talent, of opportunity, "Give up." Begin with resignation, go on to obedience, and finish with consecration. "Give up, give up" till all is given up, body, soul, and spirit, a reasonable sacrifice to him, till you can say:

"Now Lord I would be thine alone,
And wholly live to thee."

I perceive that my text has grown from a word to the sinner who has to be conquered into a word directed to Christ's nearest and dearest friends, even to those who are the soldiers of his army. It is in effect a lofty, far-reaching precept, and would to God we could live up to it, by presenting our all to Jesus our Lord.

Let us now spend a minute or two on the second word of the King: "Keep not back." Is there some person within this assembly who feels within his heart, the desire to come and confess his sins to his God? Standing at the filthy swine-trough, does the prodigal say within himself: "I will arise and go unto my Father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned"? "Keep not back:" quench not that holy flame. If thou hast a desire to come and acknowledge thy transgressions unto the pardoning Savior, let nothing keep thee back—neither fear, nor shame, nor procrastination, but rest not till thou hast reached the bosom of thy God and acknowledged all thy guilt before him. A repulse need not be feared, nor even an upbraiding—a rich, free, loving welcome is sure. "Keep not back."

But is there another who has confessed his sin, but yet has found no peace? Dost thou see yonder Christ on the cross? "Yes," sayest thou; "I know there is life in a look at him, but may I look?" My Master's message to thee is, "Keep not back; keep not back," for whosoever looketh shall be made whole, and none are forbidden to look. Does the crowd around the Savior hinder thee, thou sick and dying soul? Be not baffled by difficulty,

but persevere. Press into the thickest of the throng for if thou do but touch the hem of his garment thou shalt be made whole. "Keep not back; keep not back." Thou mayst believe in Jesus now! Mayst! Nay, thou art commanded to do it; and thou art threatened if thou do not, which proves that thou hast permission and something more. It is written: "He that believeth not shall be damned." O man, it is but another way of saying thou hast a full permission to do it, for thou art threatened if thou do it not. Come thou, then, come thou, now, right joyfully. "Keep not back." Confess thy sin with repentance, and lay it on Christ by faith, and thou shalt be saved.

Dear brethren and sisters, many of you have come to Christ and have been saved, and to you the text says, "Keep not back," in another sense. Do not keep back from confessing Christ. If you have the love of Jesus Christ in your soul, confess it, tell it to others. Never be ashamed of your Lord and Master. Come and unite with his church and people. It is due to the church; it is due to the preacher who was the means of your conversion, it is due especially to your Lord and Master that you "keep not back." I have heard of some who keep back because the church is not perfect. And you are very perfect I dare say! Why, if the church were perfect we should not endure you in it, my captious friend. I have no doubt whatever that you will find the church quite as perfect as you are. There are others who keep aloof from the people of God because they feel they are not perfect themselves. My dear friend, if you were perfect we should not want you, because you would be the only perfect member among us, and having a very imperfect pastor, I do not know what we should do with you; we should find you such a speckled bird among us, that we should probably pray the Lord to take you home to heaven at once. I should like to have you become perfect, and the nearer perfection the better—but still if you make no profession of faith till you are sinless, it will not be this side the grave. Nay, confess Christ, for is it not written: "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall he be saved"? Do not forget the confession of the mouth. "Keep not back." And when you have done that, if there be any Christian excellency that can be reached, do not despair of reaching it. "Keep not back." And if perfection itself be attainable, never be content till you get it. If you are a child of God you never will be self-satisfied, you will be

always crying: Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." O that you may never be content with yourself! Self-satisfaction is the death of progress. You have come into the lowest seat at the feast, but Jesus saith: "Friend, come up higher;" and when you get into a higher room, and enter into closer communion with him, he will say to you, "Friend, come up higher." Do not hesitate to climb higher in grace and fellowship. Let your prayer be, "Nearer to thee, my God, nearer to thee." Be insatiable in the longings of your soul; hunger and thirst after righteousness; covet earnestly the best gifts. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Keep not back." There is no point in grace which we are prohibited from aiming at. We ought none of us to say, "I am all I can ever be." Oh, no, let us reach to the front ranks by God's grace; for he says, "Keep not back."

Let me add if there be a brother who could do more for Christ than he is doing, let him "keep not back." Could you preach? Well, there are plenty of places needing occasional minister, and others that are quite destitute. I do not know a nobler occupation for a man who is in business in London than for him to be maintaining himself by his shop, or whatever else his calling may be, and going out to suburban villages on the Sabbath to preach. I often wonder more persons do not imitate the example of some good brethren, whom I could name, who are in their business diligent, and who are also fervent in spirit in their Master's work. What reason can there be that for every little church there should be a pastor specially set apart for the work? It is a very desirable thing wherever there are enough Christian people to be able to support the minister that there should be such; but I believe we very much hamper ourselves in our Christian work through always imagining that a paid person set apart to preach is necessary for every Christian church. There ought to be more farmers who educate themselves, and preach in their own barns or on the village greens. There ought to be more men of business in London who seek to improve their minds, that they may preach acceptably anywhere the gospel of Jesus Christ; and I hope the time will come when our dear friends, the members of churches in London, will not be so backward as they are, but will come forward and speak to the honor of the Lord Jesus. If you cannot edify a thousand, perhaps you can influence ten; if you

cannot with a regular congregation continue to find fresh matter year after year (and believe me that is a very difficult thing), yet you can preach a sermon here and a sermon there, and tell to different companies the same story of the Savior's love. I do not know what special work you can do, but something is within your power, and from that "Keep not back." Besides, there are all our street corners. In spring and summer, how delightful to stand in the thick of the throng and uplift the Crucified One! Of course, you are sure to have a congregation out of doors, and a congregation that is rather attentive, and sometimes rather inquisitive, and do not need to be so inconveniently crowded as we are in this Tabernacle. Take the wide sweep, cast the big net, and hope for fish. If you have any grace or gift, "Keep not back." "Alas!" murmurs the glowworm, "I mean to shut up my lamp, and hide under those damp weeds, and never shine again." What is the matter with you? "Why," says he, "I have seen the sun; I shall never shine again after seeing the sun." That glowworm is stupid. If it were wise, it would say, "I have looked upon the sun; and I perceive with shame that my lamp is but a poor light, but for that reason I must use it the more diligently. The sun may well hide its light after twelve hours are over; but I must try to glimmer during the whole twenty-four hours, and so give as much light as I can, little though it be." You complain that you have but one talent; that is the reason for being doubly diligent with it. If you had five, they ought to be fully used; but if you have only one, you must put all your wits to work to make something more of it. At any rate, "Keep not back."

"Well," says one, "I think I could do something, but I am of a retiring disposition." I am afraid if I had been in the French army in the late war, I should be very much of the same disposition; but in a soldier, as a rule, a retiring disposition in the hour of battle is not much commended by his captain. You who are so modest (shall I say so cowardly?) that you cannot do for Christ what you ought to do, will have an account to settle with your consciences one of these days, which will cost you a world of sorrow. Break through this bashfulness, this laziness (for it comes to that in the long run), this silly, wicked, shame. Pride must also be slain, for this hinders many. They cannot be so prominent as others, and therefore shun the work altogether. Get rid of all that cripples you, shake all off by the power of the Holy Spirit, my dear brethren, and "Keep not back," for

who knows but that you may yet bring sinners to Jesus, may save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins, through God's eternal Spirit. May it be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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The Northern Iron And The Steel

Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? - Jeremiah 15:12

The prophet Jeremiah was, as we saw upon a former occasion, a man of exquisitely sensitive character; not a prophet of iron, like Elijah, but nearer akin to him who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He lived in times which were peculiarly trying to him, and in addition was called to exercise an office which involved him in perpetual sorrow. He loved the people among whom he dwelt, yet was he commissioned by God to pronounce judgments upon them; this in itself was a hard task to such a nature as his. As a loving father, fearful of Eli's doom, uses the rod upon his child, but feels each stroke in his own heart far more acutely than the child does upon his back, so every threatening word which the prophet uttered lashed his own soul, and cost his heart the direst panics. He went, however, to his work with unstaggering firmness; hopeful, perhaps, that when his countrymen heard the divine threatening, they would repent of their sin, seek mercy, and find it. Surely if anything can add weight to the prophecy of the judgments of God, it is the trembling love, the anxious fear with which such a messenger as Jeremiah would deliver his warning. The deep sorrow of him who warned them ought to have driven the sinful nation to a speedier repentance; instead of which they rejected his warnings, they despised his person, and defied his God. As they thus heaped wrath upon themselves, they also increased his sorrow. He was a delicate, sensitive plant, and felt an inward shudder as he marked the tempest gathering overhead. Though a most loyal servant of his God, he

was sometimes very trembling, and though he never ventured, like Jonah, to flee unto Tarshish, yet he cried in the bitterness of his soul, "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them!" The Jews treated him so harshly and unjustly, that he feared they would break his heart; they smote him as with an iron rod, and he felt like one crushed beneath their unkindness. To silence his fear, the Lord assures him that he will renew his strength. "Behold," saith he, "I have made thee this day a fenced city and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Thus the Lord promised to his servant the divine support which his trials demanded. He never did and never will place a man in a trying position and then leave him to perish. David dealt thus treacherously with Uriah, but the Lord acts not thus with his servants. If the rebellious seed of Israel were iron, the Lord declared that his prophet should be hardened by sustaining grace into northern iron and steel. If they beat upon him like hammers on an anvil, he should be made of such strong, enduring texture, that he should be able to resist all their blows. Iron in the olden times amongst the Israelites was very coarsely manufactured, but the best was the iron from the north. So bad was their iron generally, that an admixture of brass, which among us would be thought rather to deteriorate the hardness, was regarded as an improvement; so the Lord puts it, "Shall iron—the common iron—break the most firm and best prepared iron?" It cannot do so: and if the people acted like iron against Jeremiah, God would make his spirit indomitably firm, that they should no more be able to put him down than common iron could break the northern iron and the steel.

That being the literal meaning, we shall draw from our text a general principle. It is a proverbial expression, no doubt, and applicable to many other matters besides that of the prophet and the Jews; it is clearly meant to show, that in order to achieve a purpose, there must be a sufficient force. The weaker cannot overcome the stronger. In a general clash the firmest will win. There must be sufficient firmness in the instrument or the work cannot be done. You cannot cut granite with a pen-knife, nor

drill a hole in a rock with an auger of silk. Some forces are inadequate for the accomplishment of certain purposes. If you would break the best iron, you will be foiled if you strike it with a metal less hard.

I. We shall first of all apply this proverb to the PEOPLE OF GOD INDIVIDUALLY. Shall any power be able to destroy the saints?

We are sent into the world, if we are believers in Christ, like sheep in the midst of wolves, defenseless, and in danger of being devoured, yet no power on earth can destroy the chosen disciples of Christ. Weak as they are, they will tread down the strength of their foes. There are more sheep in the world now than wolves. There are parts of the world where wolves once roamed in troops where not a wolf can now be found; yet tens of thousands of sheep feed on the hillside: one would not be very bold to say that the day will come when the wolf will only be known as an extinct animal, while as long as the world lasts the sheep will continue to multiply. In the long run, the sheep has gained the victory over the wolf. And it is so with Christ's people. They appear to be weak, but there is a force about them which cannot be put down: they will overcome the ungodly yet, for the day will come when mighty truth shall prevail. God hasten that blessed and long-expected day. Till then, when persecuted we are not forsaken, when cast down we are not destroyed. Many Christians, are placed in positions where they are subject to very great temptations and persecutions; they are mocked, laughed at, ridiculed, called by evil names. Persecuted one, will you deny the faith? Are you going to put aside your colors, and relinquish the cross of Christ? If so, I can only tell you, you are not made of the same stuff as the true disciples of Jesus-Christ; for when the grace of God is in them, if the world be iron, they are northern iron and steel; they can bear all the blows which the world may possibly choose to lay upon them, and as the anvil breaks the hammers in the long run, so will they, by their patient endurance for Christ's sake, break the force of all persecution, and triumph over it. Do I speak to a young Christian, who has come up to London, and finds himself placed where he is continually ridiculed? Will you shrink in the day of trial? Do you mean to play the coward? Shall the iron break the northern iron and the steel! Let it not be so. Be strong. Quit you like men; and in the energy of the Holy Spirit, endure as seeing him that is invisible. There is no need

that we should fear, for amid all dangers the love of God shall live within us as a fire unquenchable. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Besides persecution, we are called frequently to serve the Lord under great difficulties. There are supreme difficulties connected with the evangelisation of this city. To stand here and preach to such a congregation as this, so large and so eager for the word, is a pleasure; but every sphere of labor is not equally cheering. Some of you who go to the lodging-houses to speak, or who visit the alleys, or stand up in the low neighbourhoods to preach the word of life, I know full well find it anything but child's play to serve your Lord under such conditions. Yours is rough hedging and ditching work, with very little in it of rosewater and gentility, and very much of annoyance and disappointment. What, then, is your resolution? I trust it is this: that as much strength is needed, you will wait more than ever upon the strong One till the needed power is given you. I trust you are not of that craven spirit which shrinks at difficulty or toil. Will you give way before the labors demanded of you? Do the redeemed of the Lord consent to give London up to Satan's rule? Do they say in despair that its darkest parts cannot be enlightened? Will the church of God despair of any race or country? Will it say: "There is no converting the Romanist; there is no convincing the literate and crafty Brahmin?" Is the iron to break the northern iron and the steel? Will we not rather take a firmer grip upon Omnipotence, and draw down almighty help by the blessed vehemence of prayer? What are we at? What aileth us that we are so soon dispirited? Is the Lord's arm waxed short? The apostles never thought of defeat; they believed that the gospel could break everything in pieces that stood in its way: and they went without hesitation to the work which the Lord sent them to do. Twas theirs to dare and die; questions and forebodings were not theirs. Into the bloody jaws of death those champions of Christendom rode on with dauntless courage, and won the victory. And are we to give way under difficulties? Are we to be as reeds shaken of the wind? You, Sunday-school teacher, are you going to give up your class because the boys are unruly? You in the Ragged-school, are you thinking of closing the doors, because as yet

the children have not come in great numbers, or because the young Arabs are as wild as unbroken colts? You, who stood in the corner of the street the other night to preach, did you determine never to stand up and preach again, because of the rough reception you received? O man, be of different metal from this! If God has called you to do anything, do it, if you die in doing it. To a man for whom Jesus died, no work should seem hard, no sacrifice grievous. All things are possible to those who burn with the love of God. There is nothing but what you can make a way through if you can find something harder to bore it with. Look at the Mont Cenis Tunnel, made through one of the hardest of known rocks; with a sharp tool, edged with diamond, they have pierced the heart of the Alps, and made a passage for the commerce of nations. As St. Bernard says: "Is thy work hard? set a harder resolution against it; for there is nothing so hard that it cannot be cut by something harder still." May the Spirit of God work in thee invincible resolution and unconquerable perseverance. Let not the iron break the northern iron and the steel. Under persecutions and difficulties, let God's people resolve on victory, and by faith they shall have it, for according to our faith so shall it be unto us.

One of the greatest trials to which the people of God are subject, in trying to serve their Master, is non-success. The seven lean kine, as they eat up the seven fat kine, sorely try the believer's faith. Alas! our disappointments seldom come alone, but like Job's messengers, follow close upon each other's heels. When a man succeeds, he continues to succeed, as a rule; he derives encouragement from what God has already done by him, and goes from strength to strength. Probably, however, there is more grace exhibited by the Christian, who, without present success, realises the things not seen as yet, and continues still to work on. To labor is not easy, but to labor and to wait is harder far. It is a grand thing to continue patiently in well doing, confident that in the end the reward is sure. He is a man indeed who under long-continued disappointment will not—

"Bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward."

Such a man "plucks success even from the spear-proof crest of rugged danger." The well-annealed steel within him ere long breaks in shivers the common iron which strikes him so severely. To him, to overcome by grace is glory indeed.

Some of the greatest works that were ever performed by Christian people were not immediate in their results. The husbandman has waited long for the precious fruits of the earth. The question has been asked, again and again, "Watchman, what of the night?" Some, no doubt, have had to labor all their lives, and have bequeathed to their heirs the promise whose fulfillment they had not personally seen. They laid the underground courses of the temple, and others entered into their labors. You know the story of the removal of old St. Paul's by Sir Christopher Wren. A very massive piece of masonry had to be broken down, and the task, by pick and shovel, would have been a very tedious one, so the great architect prepared a battering-ram for its removal, and a large number of workmen were directed to strike with force against the wall with the ram. After several hours of labor, the wall, to all appearances, stood fast and firm. Their many strokes had been apparently lost, but the architect knew that they were gradually communicating motion to the wall, creating an agitation throughout the whole of it, and that, by-and-by, when they had continued long enough, the entire mass would come down beneath a single stroke. The workmen, no doubt, attributed the result to the one crowning concussion, but their master knew that their previous strokes had only culminated in that one tremendous blow and that all the nonresultant work had been necessary to prepare for the stroke which achieved the purpose. O Christian people, do not expect always to see the full outgrowth of your labors! Go on, serve your God, testify of his truth, tell of Jesus' love, pray for sinners, live a godly life, serve God with might and main, and if no harvest spring up to your joyous sickle, others shall follow you and reap what you have sown, and since God will be glorified, it shall be enough for you. Let no amount of nonsuccess daunt you. Be uneasy about it, but do not be discouraged; let not even this iron break the resolution of your soul; let your determination to honor Jesus be as the northern iron and the steel.

I might thus enlarge, but I have so many other things to speak of, that I

shall pass on. The pith of what I want to say is this: if any dear brother here, as a Christian, is put to very severe trials, he may depend upon it there is nothing that happens to him but what is common to men, and that there is grace enough to be had to enable him to bear up under all. There is no need for any one soldier of God to turn his back in the day of battle. It is not right that any one of us should consider himself doomed to be defeated. The Holy Spirit giveth power to the weak, and lifts the common warriors into the ranks of the mightiest. Fulness of grace is provided for us in Christ Jesus, and if we draw from it by faith we shall not need to fail. Let us not be slow to arm ourselves with the divine might. Let us ask the Captain of our salvation to make us as tough in the day of battle as the northern iron was beneath the blow of the common iron; that having done and suffered all, we may still stand, and none may be able to rob us of our crown.

II. But we shall now make a second use of this same proverb. It is applicable to the cause of God in the world—to THE CHURCH. I shall speak but little upon this, for time would fail me. What power, however like to iron, shall suffice to break the kingdom of Jesus, which is comparable to steel? We every now and then hear the babyish talk of persons who say that the gospel will die out in England—that Romanism will return in all its darkness, gospel light will be extinguished, and the candle which Latimer helped to light will be blown out. Atrocious nonsense, if not partial blasphemy. If this thing were of men it would come to nought; but if it be of God, who shall overthrow it? It has sometimes happened that fear has been the father of the thing it feared: let it not be so in this case; let us not court defeat by anticipating it. As surely as the Lord liveth the end of the Romish Anti-Christ will come, and the long-expected angel shall cry with a loud voice, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." Revelation 18:2, 20. Other desponding prophets foretell that infidelity will so spread through all the churches and the fabric of society, that at last we shall see this country without a gospel ministry, and perhaps, through the spread of revolutionary principles, bereft of all respect for law and order. We are to go down by way of Paris

to the foulness of Sodom, and thence into Pandemonium. Brethren, let those who will believe these evil tidings, I am not greatly moved thereby; for there are eternal principles and immutable decrees which uphold my joyful hopes. Consider for a moment what is involved in these gloomy forebodings. Then the gates of hell are to prevail against the church, are they? Then Christ is to be defeated by anti-Christ, is he? Then the pleasure of the Lord is not to prosper in his hand? Who said that? Who but a lying spirit that would lay low the faith and confidence of the people of God? It is no more possible for the truth of God and the church of God to be defeated, than for God himself to be overcome in conflict. Lo! Jehovah girds his church like a buckler on his arm: this is his battle-axe; this his weapons of war; and if you can wrench from his hand the weapons of his choice, then may you lift up the shout of triumph over the Eternal himself. But it never can be, for who shall stand against the Lord and prosper? My brethren, we may well fear the crafty machinations of the church of Rome, for all the subtlety of the old serpent is within her; but with the wisdom of God to meet it, there can be no alarm. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: there is no device nor counsel against the Lord. We may well be dismayed at the insidious attacks of scepticism; but while there remains a Holy Ghost to create and sustain faith in the world, we need not fear that the faithful will utterly cease out of the land. The thousands will still be reserved whose knees have never bowed to Baal. Infidelity and Socinianism have ready tongues, but every tongue that rises against the church in judgment she will condemn. The forges of hell are busy in fashioning new weapons with which to assail us, but the Lord will break their bows and cut their spears in sunder. They may and will defeat the dogmas of superstition, but the truths of revelation and the people who believe them they can never overthrow. The iron will never break the northern iron and the steel. The church can bear the blows of Ritualism and Infidelity, and survive them all, and be the better for them too. See what the cause of Christ is. It is truth: therein is victory. Who knows not that the truth must prevail? There is in the church of God, moreover, life, and life is a thing you cannot overcome. A dead thing may be cut in pieces, and strewn to the winds of heaven; but the life in Christ's church is that which has defied and overcome Satan a thousand times already. In the dark ages the enemy thought he had destroyed the church, but life came into the monk in his cell, and Luther shook the world. The

church in England fell into a deadly slumber in the days of Whitfield and Wesley; but she was not dead, and therefore a time of awakening came. The flame burned low but the heavenly fire still lingered among the ashes, and only needed the Holy Spirit to blow upon it, and cause a hallowed conflagration. Six young men in Oxford were found guilty of meeting to pray: their offense was contagious, and soon there sprang up hundreds glorying in the same blessed crime. Earnest servants of the living God were forthcoming and no man knew whence they came; like the buds and blossoms which come forth at the bidding of spring, a people made willing in the day of God's power came forward at once. Seeing that there is life in the church of God, you can never calculate what will happen within its bounds to-morrow, for life is an unaccountable thing, and scorns the laws which bind the formal and inanimate. The statues in St. Paul's Cathedral stand fixed on their pedestals, and the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey never raise a riot; but who can tell what the living may next conceive or attempt? Men have said: "We will put down the troublesome religion of these gospellers. Build prisons enough, forge chains enough, make racks enough, concoct tortures infernal enough, slay enough victims, and stamp out the plague." But their designs have never been accomplished. They hatched the cockatrice's egg, but that which came of it died. They burnt the gospel out in Spain, did they not? And in the Low Countries they erased the memory thereof. How is it now? Has not Spain achieved her liberty at a blow? Is not also Belgium free to the preacher of the word? Not even Italy or Rome itself is safe against the obnoxious heretic. Everywhere the gospel penetrates. Even the earth helps the woman, and swallows up the flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth to drown the man child: political rulers restrain the violence of those who otherwise would slay the saints in one general massacre. It shall be so, right on through all the ages till Christ comes—the iron shall not break the northern iron and the steel. Glory be to God, we have confidence in this, and in the name of God we set up our banner. This, too, is a pleasing theme; but we must leave it and pass on to another.

III. We may apply the principle to a very different matter indeed—THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS EFFORTS WHICH MEN MAKE FOR THEIR OWN SALVATION. We may remind them that the iron will never break the

northern iron and the steel. The bonds of guilt are not to be snapped by a merely human power. Here is a man with the fetters of his transgressions about him, but "he will get them off," he says: prayer shall be his file; tears shall be the aquafortis to dissolve the metal, and his own resolutions shall, like a hammer, dash the links in fragments. But it cannot be: the iron shall never break this northern iron and the steel. Habits of sin yield not to raspings of the unregenerate resolves. You are condemned, and only Christ the Son of God can set you free from the fetters which hold you in the condemned cell. All your efforts apart from Jesus are utterly useless. He must bring liberty—you cannot emancipate yourselves. You say that you will break off the chains of evil habit. There are some you can break off, but can you alter your nature? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" That were an easy task compared with a man renewing his own heart. The imaginations of the thoughts of your heart are evil, only evil, and that continually, and do what you will they will remain so. The dead cannot give themselves life: it needs superior power to hew off the fetters which hold you prisoner in the sepulcher of your natural death. Your iron can never break the northern iron and the steel which bind you to the slavery of hell. Do you think to force your way to heaven by ceremony? Do you imagine that baptism can wash away your sin, that confirmation can convey to you grace, that outward ceremonies of man's devising, or of God's instituting can deliver you from wrath? Believe no such thing; there is no potency in all these to deliver you from the bonds which hold you. The iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel. Come, sinner, with thy fetters, and lay thy Christ here at the cross-foot, where Christ can break the iron at once. Come, bring thyself, chained as thou art, to him, or if thou canst not stir an inch, cry out to him! Ask him to deliver thee! He can do it. Trust in him, for trust in his precious blood and reliance upon his perfect sacrifice will make thee a free man in a moment, never to be a bondslave again. But, oh, let not thy puny strength be wasted on so futile an effort as that which aims at self-salvation; how shall weakness achieve the labor of omnipotence, or death accomplish the sublimes miracle of the Immortal? Remember the work of salvation think how great it is, how worthy of a God; and then cease utterly from all self-reliance, for it is madness and blasphemy. Where were the need of the Holy Ghost, if you could regenerate yourself? Where would there be room for a display of the power of sovereign grace, if

man's will and effort could accomplish all? But I leave that topic, also, and pass on to another consideration.

IV. This same text is applicable to the case of any persons who are making **SELF-RELIANT EFFORTS FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**. How painfully are we made to feel, my brethren, after every series of our special services at this Tabernacle, that we of ourselves can do nothing! How are we driven to the conclusion that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God alone! Man's heart is very hard; it is like the northern iron and the steel. Our preaching—we try to make it forcible, but how powerless is it of itself! The preacher seeks goodly words and illustrations; he brings forth the law of God, he gives forth threatenings in God's name; he reasons concerning judgment to come, and flinches not from declaring the eternal punishment of sin; he preaches the love of God, and the infinite mercy of Christ Jesus, and he blends all this with an affection which longs for conversion, and he prays for God's blessing; but in many many hearts there is no change, the northern iron and the steel remain unmovable. We call spirits from the vasty deep of their lost estate, but they come not at our bidding. We plead with sinners to be reconciled to God, and we beseech them as though God himself besought them by us; but they remain unreconciled; they are even the more obdurate in iniquity. The cries and tears of a Whitfield would not avail. Though all the apostles reasoned with them they would turn to them a deaf ear. Herein the best adapted means cannot break the northern iron and the steel. With some of you an instrumentality has been used which ought to have been more prolific of results. A mother's tears, to your knowledge, have been shed for you. How affectionately has she spoken to you of the Savior, whom she loves: but powerful as your mother's pleadings would be on any other point, you reject them in the matter of your soul. How would it make you gray-headed man, your father, rejoice if he might see you saved! In other matters this also would have weight with you, but it has none in this. You have had the gospel, too, some of you, put to you very, very tenderly by those whom you love best, but you are unsaved still. There could be no better means than human love sanctified and strengthened by indwelling grace; it has been strong as iron, and would have broken any ordinary heart, but it has not crushed yours, for it is hard as the northern iron and the steel. Ay, and

you have been sick; you have been stretched upon the bed with fever, within a hair's breadth of hell; or you have been at sea, and escaped as with the skin of your teeth from shipwreck; but even the judgments of God have not aroused you. The iron has not broken the northern iron and the steel. This month, to some of you, there have been addresses delivered pointedly, plaintively, which should have moved a rock. I have been present at some of the meetings, when I have heard certain of our brethren speak in a way that made me inwardly say, "Surely these careless ones will yield to that." There has been much sighing and crying for your souls; and you have been spoken with personally, many of you; a kind hand has been put upon your wrist, and with tearful eye, brother and sister have looked into your face, and told you of your danger and of your remedy. Oh I if this does not save you, what will? "What shall I do unto thee?" "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" What other instrumentality can be employed? The iron will not break the northern iron and the steel. Children of God, you are driven to this, that here is a case in which you are powerless. You might as well reverse the wind, or move a star, or create a world, as soften these hardened hearts. What are you then to do? Certainly, you are to continue the effort; nothing must tempt you to relinquish it, or even to relax your zeal. If you cannot break the heart, truly it is no business of yours to do so; commit that work to him who is fully equal to the miracle, keep to your work, and fear not that the Lord will work with you. God bids you continue prayer, warning instruction, and invitation. If you knew that every soul you preached to or talked with would be lost, it were no less your duty to preach the gospel; for the duty to tell out the gospel is not influenced by our success, but is based upon the commission of Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is not Ezekiel's duty to make the dry bones live; but whether they live or not, it is his duty to prophesy upon them. Noah was none the less a preacher of righteousness because none, save his own family, listened to his appeals and sought shelter with him in the ark. Go on with your work; but let a sense of your personal inability make you fall back upon your God. Let it keep you from one self-reliant prayer or word, much more from one self-confident sermon or address. Every time we try to do good in our own strength, the effort bears the certainty of defeat in its own bowels. You shoot pointless darts; you wield a blunted sword when you go to work for God without God. It is

only when we go in God's power that we can save souls. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Lo, spiritual children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of our soul's womb is his reward. Feel your weakness, my brethren, and then you shall know your strength. Go to the sinner in God's strength, and then shall you see the divine operation; but certainly not till then. What a blessing it has been to some of us at times to be made to lie very low in the dust, and see what unworthy creatures we are! I have often noticed that when God intends to give a great blessing upon my ministry, and to let me know it, he usually makes me feel as if I had rather die than dive, because I feel myself so utterly unworthy to preach his word, and am made to bemoan my wretched unfitness to be used at all by my gracious Master. Let the stone lie in the brook, and let it be rounded, and made smooth by trituration of the water—it will do nothing of itself; but when it has been worn away enough by the brook, and David slings it, and smites the giant's brow, the stone cannot say, "I slew the giant by my own force;" but all men will give glory to the champion who hurled it at the giant's forehead. Yes, God will have the glory, and he will take means to prevent us from usurping it. He will make us feel that the iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel, and then he will send us forth to victory. Truly my inmost heart confesses that if one heart has been won for my Lord Jesus by me, I am less than nothing in it, and he is all in all. My soul dares not touch the glory, but loathes every thought of self-praise. He hath done it, and to him be everlasting songs.

V. But now I must close—time warns me to do so—by remarking that this text has A VERY SOLEMN APPLICATION TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE REBELS AGAINST GOD. Men sometimes think themselves of very great consequence. I spoke with one some years ago who had professed to be a Christian, who addressed me very indignantly after some little argument, and said that ere long he intended to produce a pamphlet which would extinguish Christianity. I remember making the remark, that I dared to say that the world would hear as much about it as when a fly fell into a pail of water and was drowned, and not much more. And then he was more indignant still; but I told him I had seen many a moth dash against my gas-burner in the evening, but I had never seen the light put out,

though I had seen the wretched insect fall with singed wings upon my table, to suffer for its fatal folly; and I feared that such a fate would happen to him. So rest assured it will be to you, O blasphemer of God, or hater of his Christ. Fight against God, would you? Measure your adversary, I charge you. The wax is about to wrestle with the flame: the tow is about to contend with the fire. It is too unequal a warfare. If you are wise, you will select another adversary, and not attempt to go to war with the omnipotent King, with such a puny force as yours. "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" You may be like iron: go and break the potsherds of the earth; they are fair game for you; but do not contend against the northern iron and the steel, for these will break you. You will not be able to deprive Christ of a single atom of his glory. You may blaspheme, but even that shall, somehow or other by a holy alchemy, be turned to his glory. You cannot thwart his decrees. The great wheels of his providence grind on, and woe to him who throws himself in their track; they will surely grind him to powder. The huge Matterhorn lifts its colossal head above the clouds. Who will may speak against it; but it bows not its giant form; and no matter what of snow and sleet may dash against its ramparts, there it stands, still the same; emblem herein of the great throne of the Eternal, firm and immutable, though all the universe storm at its foot. To resist God is to strike with naked feet against a goad. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." You will hurt yourself; you cannot injure him, nor change his purposes by so much as the turning of a hair. God will have his way: None shall resist his will. Everlasting and eternal are his decrees; and fast and fixed they ever must remain, though all earth and hell should unite in one great conspiracy. He thrusts a bit into the tempest's mouth, and rides upon the wings of the wind. Confusion there is none to him. Adversaries, what are they? They are utterly consumed as the stubble. But take ye heed that God come not out against you, ye who are rebels; for if he once put on the war-harness and fight against you, woe unto you! Have you not heard? Hath no one told you of the arrows of his quiver? They are sharp, heart-piercing, infallible. Sickness can shake you till every nerve shall become a road for pain to carry on its dreadful traffic. Poverty can come upon you, and want, like an armed man. Death shall strike down ail your lovers, and your acquaintances shall sink into the abyss. Let God but come forth in judgment against a man, or a people, and what can he not do? Look at the

nation across the Channel, and see how God hath dealt with it. Turn to any other nation against whom his fiat has gone forth, and read the story of its overthrow. What can emperors do, and what their imperial guards, and what their novel instruments of war, and what their death-dealing machines, that were to mow down thousands in an hour? He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh; the Lord doth have them in derision. He hath broken the bow and cut the spear in sunder; he hath burned the chariot in the fire. Contend no more against the Almighty: put back thy sword into the scabbard, and submit thyself to the inevitable; for remember, ere long, O rebel against God, he will deal with thee in another fashion than he doth now. Let that breath which is in thy nostrils go forth from thee, and where art thou then? I will quote one passage of Scripture and leave it to your thoughts. "Beware, ye that forget God"—that is, the very mildest form of rebellion—"Beware, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." O may you never know what that means! Cast down your weapons. Come now, and ask for reconciliation. The ambassador of peace invites you. I point you no longer to his burning throne, but to yonder cross. See there God in human flesh—bleeding, suffering, dying. Those wounds are fountains of mercy. Look to them, and you shall live. Wrath is appeased by the death of Jesus. Fury is no more in Jehovah! Trust in Jesus, the crucified, and your transgression shall be forgiven you. That precious blood shall make reconciliation: there shall be peace between you and God; but O resist no longer, for the iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel.

The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Not Now, But Hereafter!

Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? - Job 21:29-31

The [sermon which I preached two Lord's days ago upon the accidents](#), has caused considerable consternation among pious people with weak heads. Their idea that an calamities are judgments, is so inveterate a prejudice, and so favourite a dogma, that our exposure of its absurdity is, in their opinion, eminently calculated to encourage sin and quiet the consciences of offenders. Now, I feel quite at ease in this matter, and am confident that I have done service to our great cause, even though the timid should be alarmed, and the superstitious should be annoyed. Our gracious God and Father has seen fit to give us a whole book of the Bible upon the subject; the main drift of the Book of Job is to prove that temporal afflictions are not evidences of the Lord's displeasure, and I beg the modern Bildads and Zophars to reconsider their position, lest they too should be found to be "speaking wickedly for God, and talking deceitfully for him."—Job 13:7. In my very soul I feel that if evil days shall come upon me, it poverty, desertion, and disease should place me upon Job's dunghill, I shall point to that sermon with pleasure, and say to those who will tell me that God is angry with me, and has judged me to be unworthy, "Nay, ye know not what ye say, for the judgment is not passed already, nor is this the field of execution; neither disease, nor bereavements, nor poverty, can prove a man to be wicked, nor do they even hint that the chosen are divided from the hearts of Christ." O my beloved friends, settle it in your hearts that men are not to be judged according to their present circumstances, and learn like David to understand their end. It will save you from writing bitter things against yourselves in the time of trouble, and prevent your scanning the works of Providence, and measuring the infinite by line and plummet.

It is mainly my business, today, to deal with those who may wickedly continue in sin because their judgment tarries. If the Lord does not in this world visit the ungodly with stripes, this is but the surer evidence that in the world to come there is a solemn retribution for the impenitent. If the affliction which is here accorded to men be not the punishment of sin, we

turn to Scripture and discover what that punishment will be, and we are soon informed that it is something far heavier than any calamities which occur in this life,—something infinitely more tremendous than the most disastrous accident, the most shocking mutilation, or the most painful death. I know that there be some in these days who are like those in the time of the royal preacher, of whom he said, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Should I be addressing some this morning who have found a stupid quiet for their consciences in the fact that God does not here usually visit men's sins upon their heads, let me put it to them whether such peace is reasonable. There is a city which has revolted. A great king has threatened them with entire destruction for the revolt. He does not, in hurried passion, send against them a handful of soldiers to inflict instant and petty chastisement, he waits awhile, and marshals all his hosts, till every battalion has been put in array, till every mighty man has girded on his armor. Fools! will ye draw consolation from the delay of your destroyer? Will ye say, because he has not ridden forth against you on the very day of your rebellion that therefore this is a time of revelry and mirth? Nay, rather, inasmuch as he is gathering his hosts for the battle, let it cause you to tremble, for he shall break down your walls, and give your whole company to the sword. Imagine yourselves voyagers, far out upon the sea. A black cloud darkens in the sky, you say you fear not the cloud because it is not at present pouring forth the rain-flood. But that is the reason why ye should fear it, for the cloud is waiting until it grows and spreads, till under the wing of darkness the egg of cloud has been hatched into the black screaming eagle of the storm. See you, the clouds are hurrying from east and west, mustering for the strife! Mark you not the sea heaving heavily in sympathy with heaven's convulsions? Behold how all the dread artillery of heaven is gathering up for one tremendous shock. Fools! do ye say ye will not fear because the thundercloud has not yet burst, because as yet the breath of wind has not transformed itself into the blast of hurricane? It is gathering, sirs, congregating its forces and accumulating its fury, and the longer that it gathers, the more terrible shall be the moment when it bursts upon your devoted heads. And so to-day, God's clouds that float in the sky, the calamities of Providence, are not pouring on you the tempest of wrath; but is this a reason why ye should be at peace? Nay! the clouds

are gathering, every sin is adding to the mass, every day of God's long-suffering is covering heaven in blacker sable, every moment that he spares he does but prepare to punish in more tremendous force; and dread and direful shall be the day, when at last omnipotence itself shall come to the assistance of outraged justice, and you shall feel that God is God as much in punishing sin, as in the making of the worlds.

It was a fable of the old Jewish rabbis, that when the angel Gabriel flew he used both wings, because he always came with good tidings; but that when Michael flew, bearing God's sword to smite through the loins of king", he always flew with one wing. But Michael arrives as surely at his destined goal as Gabriel himself. The feet of the avenging deities may seem to be shod with lead for tardiness, and their tread may be as noiseless as wool, but they are as sure as the feet of mercy. I know, when God comes to bless, the axles of his chariot are hot with speed, and his steeds are white with foam, and when he comes to curse he travels slowly, with many a sigh, for he willeth not the death of any, but had rather "that he should turn unto him and live;" but remember, in judgment he comes in all his might, and he shall be discovered to be not less a God when he smiteth than when he giveth the kisses of his lips, and lifts the pardoned sinner into acceptance and favor.

We shall now deal with the sorrowful topic of the punishment of sin in the world to come. I have preached less upon this subject than almost upon any other, and yet always is it thrown in our teeth that we delight to dwell upon these horrors. I never come to this subject without the deepest distress of heart, and God alone shall know how many tears it costs these eyes when I have to deal out as God's faithful ambassador the thunders of his law. I delight to preach of Calvary, and of divine love, and of grace unsearchable. But this theme is to me the burden of the Lord, we must not, we dare not keep it back; fidelity to conscience, truthfulness to God, love to the souls of men, constrains us to make this a part of our ministry, not keeping back any part of the price.

I shall divide the discourse this morning into three parts, first, I shall speak of the punishment of sin, by way of affirmation, or prove that it must be so; secondly, by way of explanation, of what kind and nature this

punishment must be; and then, thirdly, by way of expostulation, pleading with those who are yet in the land of mercy, that they would hasten to the voice of wisdom, and that God's grace may turn them from the error of their ways.

I. First, then, by way of affirmation—THERE MUST BE A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.

Job says, that this is a truth so written upon the very nature of man, that even those who go by the way, the ignorant traveler and wayfarer, dares not for a moment deny that such is the case. "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens?" And truly it is so. If there be one intuitive truth which man perceives without need of argument, it is that sin deserves to be punished, and since sin is not punished here, it follows that the punishment must be endured in the world to come.

Let us, however, very briefly, review the argument. Sin must be punished from the very nature of God. God is; if God is God, he must be just. You can no more separate the idea of justice from the idea of God, than you can omniscience, or omnipresence, or omnipotence. To suppose of a God who was not omnipotent, is to make a supposition which is contradictory in its terms; for the term "God" includes that thought. And to suppose an unjust God, is to imagine an absurdity,—you have used, I repeat it, contradictory terms;—justice is included in the very thought of God. See how the oppressed always recognize this. The slave who has long been trampled under the feet of a tyrannical master, with his back fresh from the gory lash, lifts up his eye to God the avenger, for he feels instinctively that God must be just. Nationalities who have made appeals to arms, but have been subdued again to serfdom, at last in their despair cry out to God, for this is the bottom of man's thoughts, and the one which is sure to come forth when pain has emptied out his lighter notions, that God doth execute righteousness and judgment "for all that are oppressed." So, too, when man would aver a thing to be true he calls upon God to be his witness, because in his innermost nature he feels that God will be a just and impartial witness. If he thought not so, it would be ridiculous to call upon God to witness to his asseveration. Note how the tearful eye, the

groaning mind, the bursting heart, all turn instinctively to the Judge of all the earth. Man feels that God must be just. But how just? How just, if crowned beads that do injustice shall go unpunished? How just, if the adulterer, the thief, the liar, and the hypocrite unpunished here, should go unpunished in the world to come. Where is thy justice, God, if this world be all? We say, "Alas for love if, thou were an end nought beyond, O earth!" and we may add, alas, for justice too; for where could it live, where could it dwell, unless there were a world to come, in which God will right the wrongs, and avenge himself upon an who have trampled on his laws.

Not only does his very nature show this, but those acts of God, which are recorded in Revelation, prove incontestably that he will by no means spare the guilty. There have been judgment. I am not now appealing to the crotchets and opinions of ill-judging man, but to the inspired chronicles, for I will quote those judgments alone which the Word of God calls such. Adam sinned. 'Twas but the touching of an apple; Eden was blasted, Adam was exiled. The world sinned; they ate, they drank, they married, and were given in marriage; they forgot the Most High. The fountains of the great deep gave forth their floods; the cisterns of heaven emptied out their cataracts. All the world was drowned; and the last shriek of the strong swimmer yielding at last to universal death, told out to us that God is just. Look across to the allies of the plain. When they had wholly given themselves up to unnatural lusts, God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrha. And when he did so, what did he but write in letters of fire this word—"God is just, he furiously avengeth and terribly punisheth sin." Behold, too, Pharaoh and all his hosts drowned in the Red Sea. For what purpose was Pharaoh but that God might show forth his power in him—might prove to the world that there were vessels of wrath, and that God knew how to fill them to the brim, and break them as with a rod of iron. Look to Palestine, and behold its kings put to death by the sword of the Lord and his servant Joshua. What means a land stained in blood? It meaneth this, that the race had offended much against heaven; and God, that man might have some glimpses of his terrible justice, declared that he would root out the races of Canaan, and would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. It is impossible to reconcile Old Testament history with the

effeminate notion of neological divinity, that God is only a universal Father, but not a governor and a judge. If these gentlemen will quietly read some of those awful passages in the Old Testament, they cannot—unless they should deny the inspiration of the passage, or attempt to tone down in meaning—they cannot but confess that they see there far less a loving parent than a God dressed in arms, of whom we may say, "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name. Thy right hand, O Lord, thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces thine enemies." A God without justice is what this modern church is seeking after. These new doctrines would fashion a deity destitute of those sublime attributes, which keep the world in awe, and command for him the reverence of his creatures.

This brings me to my third argument. Not only do the nature and the acts of God prove that he will punish sin, but the very necessities of the world demand it. Imagine the contrary. Put in all our Christian pulpits men who should teach to sinners that there is no punishment for sin. Let them say to them, "What you suffer here is to be looked upon as God's judgment on your offense; but there is no world to come in which your sins will be visited upon your heads." Friends, you may at once advise the government to multiply the number of our jails tenfold. If there be no punishment for sin in another world, if it be so light and trifling an offense that the little sufferings of this life are sufficient atonement for it, then you have thrown up the floodgates which have hitherto dammed up the overflowing floods; you will soon see society swept from its moorings, there will be no possibility that men will seek to be honest, when they find that honesty or dishonesty are terms which have but a trifling difference between them. If sin be so slight a thing, men will think virtue to be a slight thing too, and if there be so little punishment for crime, they will soon think that there can be but little reason for virtue, and where will be our commonwealths, and our social compacts? The best lawgivers, however amiably disposed they may be, find that they must back up their laws with penalties. A state which should be founded upon laws without penalties could not last a week, or if it lasted, you would find that while the laws would be disregarded there would be more death and more suffering than there had been before. When was the guillotine most at work, but when there was loudest boast of liberty, and men's living without law. When would there be the most of murder, but when there

should no more be heard the threat of condemnation, and when they who were assassins might be permitted to go abroad untouched. There must be punishment for the world's own good, to say nothing of the nature of God, which for its dignity and holiness necessarily demands that very offense and transgression should receive its just recompense of reward.

But further, I affirm the punishment of sin from the atonement of Christ. Friends, if there be no necessity that sin should be punished, why did Jesus die? Why, Father, didst thou send thy only begotten and well-beloved Son, and lay upon him the iniquities of us an? Was he needed for an example? He might have been our example without dying, in fact if this were all, virtue, crowned and glorified, might have been quite as noble an incentive to goodness, as virtue mocked and crucified. He was needed that he might take our sins, and having taken our sins, it became absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ should die. In the death of Christ, if sin must not necessarily be punished, I see nothing but the death of a martyr, like James, or Peter, or Polycarp, the death of a man murdered for being better than his fellows. And why do we make this fuss and noise about salvation by the death of Christ if that be all. Why has the Christian church existed to be a false witness, to testify to a fiction? Why has her blood been shed these many centuries, to maintain that the blood of Jesus Christ taketh away the sin of the world, if the sin could he taken away without punishment? The wounds of Christ have no meaning, his precious blood has no value, his thorn-crowned head is not worthy of worship, nor is his death worthy of daily ministry, unless it be that he suffered "the just for the unjust to bring us to God;" God in Christ punished the sins of his people; and if he did it in Christ, unpardoned sinner, rest assured he will do it in you. If the imputed sins of Christ brought him the agonies of Gethsemane, what will your sins bring you? If guilt that was not his own brought him an exceeding heaviness, "even unto death," what will your sins bring you, sins remember which are your own? "He that spared not his own Son" wilt never spare rebels. He who did not spare his Son a single lash or a single stroke, will certainly make no exemption in your favor, if you live and die impenitent and reject the gospel of Christ.

Besides, my dear friends, permit me to say that those who think that sin

is not to be punished, are generally the worst of men. Men hate hell for the reason that murderers hate the gallows. The miscreant Youngman, who was executed on the top of yonder gaol, informed the chaplain that he objected on principle to all capital punishment, an objection natural enough when it was his own inevitable doom. They who dissent from the doctrine of divine justice, are interested in forming that opinion; the wish is father to the thought, they would have their sin unpunished, they hope it may be, and then they say it will be. You will not hear a thief's objection to a policeman; you do not imagine that a criminal's objection to a judge is very valid, and the sinner's objection to hell lies only here, that he will not repent, and he therefore fears the dread certainty that he shall be punished. Besides even these worst of men, who pretend not to believe, do believe. Their fears betray the secret conviction of their consciences, and on their dying beds, or in a storm, whenever they have thought they were about to see with their own eyes the stern realities of eternity, their fears have proved them to be as strong believers as those who profess the faith. Infidelity is not honest. It may profess to be, but it is not. I think that our judges are right in not accepting the oath of an infidel. It is not possible that he should be honest in the notion that there is no God. When God is around him in every leaf, in every tree, and in every star in the sky; it is not possible that a man should be honest when he calls himself an atheist. Nor do we believe that any man can speak the dictates of his inmost heart, when he says that sin will never be punished, and that he may sin with impunity. His conscience gives him the lie, he knows it must be so, and that God will visit his offenses upon his head.

I shall not enlarge further, except to say in gathering up the thoughts, impenitent sinner, be thou sure of this; there shall not a sin of thine fall to the ground unremembered, "For every idle word that thou shall speak God will bring thee into judgment," how much more for every blasphemous word and for every rebellious act. Do not wrap thyself up in the delusive thought that sin will escape unpunished. Even if it should be so, then the Christian is as well off as you are, but since righteousness will be laid to the line, and judgment to the plummet, what will become of you? Be wise before it is too late. Believe to-day what you will find out to be a fact ere long. God has revealed it to you, his revelation has tokens and signs which prove its divine origin. Believe what He has revealed; do

not say in your heart "I never will believe there is a hell unless one should come from it." Do you not see, that if one should come from it then you would not believe at all, because you would say, "If one person came from hell, then another may, and I may myself." It would take away all your dread of future punishment if any spirit should come back from it, and therefore it is you that you should not have that be given you. Yet methinks the shrieks of dying sinners, the cries which some of you have heard coming up from the death beds of blasphemers, ought to be enough evidence that there is a world to come whereof we speak, and that there are terrors of the law which are happily concealed to-day from your eyes and from your ears, but which you may soon know, and know far better than the best words can teach you, by your own feelings, by your own everlasting despair, and banishment from God.

II. I turn now to the second portion of the discourse: THE NATURE OF THIS PUNISHMENT by way of explanation.

How will God punish sin? The text says, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." The old Puritanic preachers, such men as Alleyne, who wrote the "Alarm," and others of his class—always gave a very cross picture of the world to come. They could never represent it except by brimstone flames, and dancing fiends, and such like horrors. They were conscientious in the drawing of the picture, and to them the terrors of the Lord gross, corporeal, unscriptural ideas of hell, but rather let us feel that it is a great mystery, concerning which we must rather follow Scripture than imagination. The first punishment which will be executed upon man for his sins, will be punishment to his soul. The soul leaves the body, the body is here enclosed in the coffin, rotting in the tomb; the disembodied spirit will appear before its God. It will then know at once what its future destination shall be. The great assize will not then have been held, the Judge will not have officially pronounced the sentence, but the soul anticipating the sentence will antidote its execution. Memory will begin to reflect upon past sins, past mercies unimproved, past opportunities neglected, and past offenses which have long been forgotten. Then the conscience will begin to thunder. "Thou didst this wantonly," saith Conscience. "Thou didst it against light and knowledge, thou didst

despise Christ, thou didst neglect the day of mercy, thou hast been a suicide, thou hast destroyed thyself." Then the fears will come in, the fears of the day of judgment, when the body shall be reunited with the soul. And those fears will sting the man with thoughts like these. "What wilt thou say when He comes to judge thee? How will thou bear the eyes of Him that shall read thee through and through? Now thou knowest that what was preached to thee on earth is true. Thou art no infidel now. Now the truth is not kept out of thy soul by the dulness of thy fleshly body; thou seest thou knowest it. What will become of thee when earth shall pass away and heaven shall shake, and hell shall gape to receive its prey?" So the spirit shall be virtually in hell before the body goes there. This shall be the first punishment of sin.

Then, when the day predestined shall have come, the trump of the archangel shall ring through the air—the trump this time of the second resurrection—for the dead in Christ shall have already risen, and have reigned with Christ upon the earth. Then rings the elation note that wakes the dead. They start up, and the soul returns to its old house, the body. Then it receives its sentence. It is brought forth as the text says, "to the day of wrath,"—it had been reserved in chains before, in blackness and darkness, it is now brought forth to receive the sentence, that the body may begin its hell. Then, mark you, beyond a doubt, for we cannot understand Scripture, and especially the words of Christ without it, the body shall have pains meet for its offenses. Your members were servants of your lusts, they shall be partakers of the wage of your soul—the feet that carried you in the paths of sin, shall tread the fiery road, the eyes which gazed with lustful glance, shall now be made to weep the scalding tear, the teeth which ministered to your gluttony, shall now gnash for pain, the tongues which talked so exceeding proudly against God, shall be "tormented in this flame." There shall be certainly a punishment for the body as well as for the soul, for what else did Christ mean when he said, "Fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." I shall not enlarge upon what sort of punishment this will be, suffice me to say, that whatever it is, it will be just. The sinner in hell shall not endure one iota more than he deserves, he shall have the due reward of his deeds—no more. God is not unjust to punish men arbitrarily,—I know of no arbitrary condemnation. There is no such thing as sovereign damnation;

it will be justice—inflexible, I grant you, but yet not such as shall pass the bounds of due and right desert. God will give to man only the harvest of his own deeds. He sowed the wind, and he shall reap the whirlwind. You shall not have the consolation in hell of saying that you did not deserve it, for in hell you will be made to feel, "I brought this on myself, I destroyed myself, it is true I am in pain, but I am the father of my own pains; I planted the tree which yields the bitter fruit, I digged about it and I watered it, I did the work, I labored, and this is my wages;" and you will have to feel there and then, that in every pang that rends the heart God is infinitely just. And then, whatever the pain may be, we know that while it is just, it will be terrible. Whose are those awful words, "He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire! "Is this the language of Moses? No, of Christ. It is a remarkable fact, that the most frightful descriptions of punishment, of another world are from the lips of the Savior. Had Peter spoken them, you would have said Peter was harsh in spirit. It was the Master spake them. He who wept over Jerusalem said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" he spoke of "burning up the chaff;" he spoke of "binding hand and foot and giving them up to the tormentors." In the compass of revelation there are no words so grim and terrible in their awful suggestiveness, as the words of Him "who went about doing good," and wept and cried, "Come unto me, and ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And we know, again that this punishment will be eternal. This is the very pith of it. There were no hell, if it were not eternal, full the hope of an end would be the end of fear. If there could be an end to hell at any time, there would be an end to it at once, for no man would feel that desperate despair, if there were a hope that it should come to a close. But it is eternity, eternity, eternity, that makes punishment bad. This is the bell which tolls the funeral of every hope—eternity, eternity, eternity. To sail across a sea of fire for ever, never reaching a haven; to sink, but never reach the bottom, or to rise to heights of greater agony, and never reach the summit. Oh, brethren, brethren, it is not the wrath of God in this world that you have so much to fear, the wrath's to come, the wrath's to come. And it is not the wrath that the soul shall be filled with when it has been there a thousand years, it is the wrath's to come. They will go on sinning and God will go on averaging, they will go on blaspheming and

they shall go on gnawing their tongues, they shall go on hating God and they shall go on feeling his anger, they shall go from bad to worse in character, and doubtless from ball to worse in agony. O God, help us to escape from this awful thing—the wrath, the wrath to come!

III. I close now by offering SOME FEW WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION.

You will kindly look at the thirty-first verse. He says "Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done!" Now there are many men who think they shall come off soot free, because in this life there are none who will dare to mention their sins to their face. The covetous man is very seldom rebuked for his covetousness. If a man lives an unclean life, he does not usually read books which would prick his conscience. If a man acts dishonorably in his trade, if another should tell him of it, he would be exceedingly insulted. It is true a faithful minister will often make men feel uneasy in their sins, for he will be led by God's direction to give such a description of the offenses and of the punishment, that he will make sinners tremble in their shoes. But still are there not some among you here to-day who can sin with both your hands, and there is no Elijah to say, "Thou art the man. "You have none to meet you in Naboth's vineyard, and say to you, "Hast thou killed and taken possession? "There is perhaps hardly a "still small voice:" there used to be one. The agonizing face of your wife when first you had forsaken the way of virtue; the ghastly look of your mother as you were bringing down her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, the sorrowful gaze of your little children when first their father became a drunkard, these were still voices to you, but they are hushed now. When God gives you up, then indeed your damnation slumbereth not. But remember, however cheaply you can sin now, God will not fear insulting you; he will bring your sins to your remembrance and there shall be no consideration of your dignity. He vein not consult your feelings, he will not look upon you as a great one; he will bring your sins to remembrance in no courtly phrases and in no polished terms. You shall find that the lips of Justice know not how to make distinctions between you and the basest menial whom once you despised. Now, if a man should speak your character it would be libel; but when God speaks it, you shall not threaten him. What thinkest thou that he will fear and tremble before thee? Who art thou, O man, that the lips of the

Eternal God should be silent about thee? Who art thou that he should fail to draw thy character in black or crimson hues? He will convict thee to thy face, and thou shalt be utterly unable to plead guiltless of thy sins. And then the text says "Who shall repay him?" Ah! there is no hand which dares repay you now; you have gone unpunished yet. No law can touch you, you say; ah! but there is a law divulge which overrides the law that is human; and if the arm of human justice be too short, the arm of God is as long as it is strong, and he will reach you, and to the last jot and little pay you your due reward. You shall not escape, even in the slightest degree. No pleas and prayers, no tears and excuses, shall have any avail with him, but till justice shall have had its uttermost farthing, thou shalt by no means come out thence.

And now, sinner, why wilt thou dare the wrath of God? Why wilt thou run this fearful risk? Why wilt thou make thy bed in hell? Why wilt thou dwell in everlasting burnings? Is it wise, or art thou mad, and is thy reason gone? Have I preached to you a bugbear and a fable?—if so, go thy way and sin. But oh! if it be true—and it must be, unless you are prepared to reject that precious book and the very name of Christian—if it be true! Soul, I pray thee let me feel for thee, if thou wilt not feel for thyself. Why dash thyself upon the point of Jehovah's javelin? Why destroy thyself against the bosses of his buckler? What can there be that makes thee so in love with ruin? Why wilt thou hug the grave, and embrace destruction? Soul, again I say, art thou mad?—art thou mad?—art thou mad? May the Lord teach thee reason, and may he help thee to flee to the only refuge where a sinner may find mercy.

I shall close when I have tried to set out the way of Mercy. I have read in the old Histories of England, that Edward the Second, one of our kings, was exceedingly enraged against one of his courtiers; being out hunting one day, he threatened the courtier with the severest punishment. There was a river between them at the time, and the courtier thinking that he was perfectly safe, ventured to offer some jeering remark upon the king—telling him that at any rate he would not be likely to chastise him until he got at him. The king feeling his anger hot within him, told him that the water should not long divide them, leaped into the middle of the stream, and with some difficulty gained the other side. The courtier in great alarm

fled in terror, and the king pursued him with might and main, spurring his horse to the utmost. Nor did his anger cease; he carried his drawn sword in his hand with the intention of killing him. At last the courtier, seeing that there was no hope for any escape, knelt down upon the grass, and laying bare his neck, said, "I heartily deserve to die, mercy, King! mercy!" He sent back his sword into the scabbard in a moment, and said, "Whilst you sought to escape me I determined to destroy you, but when I see you humble at my feet I freely forgive you." Even so is it with the King of heaven. Sinners, ye say there is this life between you and God, ah! but how soon will the white horse of Justice pass the stream, and then flee, flee as you may today, he will surely overtake you. He now is swift to destroy, let it be yours on your knees to make confession of your sin and say, "I deserve thy wrath, Great King, I deserve thy wrath," and if to this thou art enabled to add the plea of the precious blood of Christ, the sword of Justice will return into its scabbard, and he will say, "I am just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly." For Jesus died, and inasmuch as Jesus Christ has died, Justice is satisfied on the account of all believers. Go thy way, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. "What must I do to saved?" saith one. This is all thou hast to do, and this the Holy Spirit will work in thee. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart." "What is that?" say you. "I believe him to be divine; I believe that he is able to save." That will not save you, there must be something more than that. "What then?" "Believe in him,"—carry out practically your belief that he is able to save by trusting yourself in his hands. To exhibit again an old picture which has often been used, there is a child in a burning house, hanging from the upper window. A strong man stands beneath and offers to catch him, if he will but drop from yonder hot window sill to which he still clings. "Drop, my child," saith he, "I will catch you." The child believes the strength of his preserver; that does not save him. He trusts to the strength, he lets go his hold and falls, is caught and is preserved, that is faith. Let go your hold of your good works, your good thoughts, and all else, and tried in Christ. He never did let one soul dash itself to earth yet, that did but fall into his hands. Oh! for grace for every one of us to say in the words of Watts, -

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;

He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

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Nothing But Leaves

He found nothing but leaves. - Mark 11:13

Most of the miracles of Moses were grand displays of divine justice. What were the first ten wonders but ten plagues? The same may be said of the prophets, especially of Elijah and Elisha. Was it not significant both of the character and mission of Elias when he called fire from heaven upon the captains of fifties; nor was he upon whom his mantle descended less terrible when the she-bears avenged him upon the mockers. It remained for our incarnate Lord to reveal the heart of God. The only begotten was full of grace and truth, and in his miracles pre-eminently God is set forth to us as LOVE. With the exception of the miracle before us, and perhaps, a part of another, all the miracles of Jesus were entirely benevolent in their character; indeed this one is no exception in reality, but only in appearance. The raising of the dead, the feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the tempest, the healing of diseases—what were all these but displays of the lovingkindness of God? What was this to teach us but that Jesus Christ came forth from his Father on an errand of pure grace?

"Thine hands, dear Jesus, were not arm'd
With an avenging rod,
No hard commission to perform
The vengeance of a God.

But all was mercy, all was mild,
And wrath forsook the throne,
When Christ on his kind errand came
And brought salvation down."

Let us rejoice that God commendeth his love towards us, because in "due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Yet, as if to show that Jesus the Savior is also Jesus the Judge, one gleam of justice must dart forth. Where shall mercy direct its fall? See, my brethren, it glances not upon a man, but lights upon an unconscious, unsuffering thing—a tree. The curse, if we may call it a curse at all, did not fall on man or beast, or even the smallest insect; its bolt falls harmlessly upon a fig tree by the wayside. It bore upon itself the signs of barrenness, and perhaps was no one's property; little, therefore, was the loss which any man sustained by the withering of that verdant, mockery, while instruction more precious than a thousand acres of fig trees has been left for the benefit of all ages. The only other instance at which I hinted just now was the permission given to the devils to enter into the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. In that case, again, what a mercy it was that the Savior did not permit a band of men to become the victims of the evil one. It was infinitely better that the whole herd of swine should perish than that one poor man should be rendered a maniac through their influence. The creatures choked in the abyss were nothing but swine—swine which their Jewish owners had no right to keep; and even then they did not perish through Jesus Christ's agency, but through the malice of the devils, for needs must even swine run when the devil drives.

Observe, then, with attention, this solitary instance of stern judgment wrought by the Savior's hand. Consider seriously that if only once in his whole life Christ works a miracle of pure judgment, the lesson so unique must be very full of meaning. If there be but one curse, where does it fall? What is its symbolic teaching? I do not know that I ever felt more solemnly the need of true fruitfulness before God than when I was looking over this miracle—parable—for such it may justly be called. The curse, you at once perceive, falls in its metaphorical and spiritual

meaning upon those high professors who are destitute of true holiness; upon those who manifest great show of leaves, but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Only one thunderbolt, and that for boasting pretenders; only one curse, and that for hypocrites. O blessed Spirit, write this heart-searching truth upon our hearts!

I. We will commence our exposition with the remark that **THERE WERE MANY TREES WITH LEAVES ONLY UPON THEM, AND YET NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED BY THE SAVIOR, SAVE ONLY THIS FIG TREE.** It is the nature of many trees to yield to man nothing but their shade. The hungry Savior did not resort to the oak or to the elm to look for food, nor could the fir tree, nor the pine, nor the box, offer him any hope of refreshment; nor did he breathe one hard word concerning them, for he knew what was in them, and that they neither were, nor pretended to be fruit-bearing trees. So, dear friends, there are many men whose lives bear leaves, but no fruit—and yet, thanks be unto God, almighty patience bears with them. They are allowed to live out their time, and then it is true they are cut down and cast into the fire; but while they are permitted to stand, no curse withers them: the longsuffering of God waiteth to be gracious to them. Here are some of the characters who have leaves but no fruit.

There are thousands who ignorantly follow the sign and know nothing of the substance. In England, we think ourselves far in advance of Popish countries; but how much of the essence of Popery peeps out in the worship of very many! They go to Church or chapel, and they think that the mere going into the place and sitting a certain time and coming out again is an acceptable act to God: mere formality, you see, is mistaken for spiritual worship! They are careful to have their infants sprinkled, but what the ceremony means they know not; and without looking into the Bible to see whether the Lord commands any such an ordinance, they offer him their ignorant will—worship either in obedience to custom, or in the superstition of ignorance. What the thing is, or why it is, they do not enquire, but go through a performance as certain parrots say their prayers. They know nothing about the inward and spiritual grace, which the Catechism talks about, if indeed, inward spiritual grace could ever be connected with an unscriptural outward and visible sign. When these poor souls come to the Lord's Supper, their thoughts go no farther than

the bread and wine, or the hands which break the one and pour out the other; they know nothing whatever of communion with Jesus, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood; their souls have proceeded as far as the shell, but they have never broken into the kernel to taste the sweetness thereof. They have a name to lives and are dead; their religion is a mere show; a signboard without an inn a well-set table without meat; a pretty pageant where nothing is gold, but everything gilt nothing real, but all pasteboard, paint, plaster, and pretense. Nonconformists, your chapels swarm with such, and the houses of the Establishment are full of the same! Multitudes live and die satisfied with the outward trappings of religion, and are utter strangers to internal vital godliness. Yet such persons are not cursed in this life! No, they are to be pitied, to be prayed for, to be sought after, with words of love and honest truth; they are to be hoped for yet, for who knoweth but that God may call them to repentance, and they may yet receive the life of God into their souls?

Another very numerous class have opinion but not faith, creed but not credence. We meet them everywhere. How zealous they are for Protestantism! They would not only die for orthodoxy, but kill others as well. Perhaps it is the Calvinistic doctrine which they have received, and then the five points are as dear to them as their five senses. These men will contend, not to say earnestly, but savagely for the faith. They very vehemently denounce all those who differ from them in the smallest degree; and deal damnation round the land with amazing liberality to all who are not full weight according to the balance of their little Zoar, Rehoboth, or Jireh: while all the while the spirit of Christ, the love of the Spirit, bowels of compassion, and holiness of character are no more to be expected from them than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. Doctrine, my brethren, is to be prized above all price! Woe to the Church of God when error shall be thought a trifle, for truth be lightly esteemed; and when truth is gone, what is left? But, at the same time, we grossly mistake if we think that orthodoxy of creed will save us. I am sick of those cries of "the truth," "the truth," "the truth," from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers. There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to hell, and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Arminians. No pale of any Church can insure salvation, no form of doctrine can guarantee to us eternal life. "Ye must be born again." Ye must bring forth

fruits meet for repentance. "Every tree which bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Stopping short of vital union to the Lord Jesus by real faith, we miss the great qualification for entering heaven. Yet the time is not come when these mere head-knowers are cursed. These trees have leaves only, but no fatal curse has withered them hopelessly. No; they are to be sought after; they may yet know the Lord in their hearts, and the Holy Spirit may yet make them humble followers of the Lamb. O that it may be so!

A third class have talk without feeling. Mr. Talkative, in "Pilgrim's Progress," is the representative of a very numerous host. They speak very glibly concerning divine things. Whether the topic be doctrinal, experimental, or practical, they talk fluently upon everything. But evidently, the whole thing comes from the throat and the lip; there is no welling up from the heart. If the thing came from the heart it would be boiling, but now it hangs like an icicle from their lips. You know them—you may learn something from them, but all time while you are yourself aware that if they bless others by their words, they themselves remain unblessed. Ah! let us be very anxious lest this should be our own case. Let the preacher feel the anxiety of the apostle Paul, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; and let my hearers feel the same concern, lest, after talking about the timings of God, they should prove to be mere lip-servers, and not accepted children of the Most High.

Another tribe springs up just now before my eye—those who have regrets without repentance. Many of you under a heart-searching sermon feel grieved on account of your sins, and yet never have the strength of mind to give them up. You say you are sorry, but yet go on in the same course. You do really feel, when death and judgment press upon you, a certain sort of regret that you could have been so foolish, but the next day the strength of temptation is such, that you fall a prey to the very same infatuation. It is easy to bring a man to the river of regret, but you cannot make him drink the water of repentance. If Agag would be killed with words, no Amalekite would live. If men's transient sorrows for sin were real repentance on account of it, there is not a man living who would not, sometime or other, have been a true penitent. Here, however, are leaves

only, and no fruit.

We have yet again, another class of persons who have resolves without action. They will! Ah! that they will! but it is always in the future tense. They are hearers, and they are even feelers, but they are not doers of the Word: it never comes to that. They would be free, but they have not patience to file their fetters, nor grace to submit their manacles to the hammer. They see the right, but they permit the wrong to rule them. They are charmed with the beauties of holiness, and yet deluded with the wantonness of sin. They would ran in the ways of God's commandments, but the road is too rough, and running is weary work. They would fight for God, but victory is hardly won, and so they turn back almost as soon as they have set out; they put their hand to the plough, and then prove utterly unworthy of the kingdom.

The great majority of persons who have any sort of religion at all, bear heaves, but they produce no fruit. I know there are some such here, and I solemnly warn you, though no curse falls upon you, though we do not think that the miracle now under consideration has any relation to you whatever, yet remember, there is nothing to be done with trees which bring forth only leaves, but in due time to use the axe upon them, and to cast them into the fire: and this must be your doom. As sure as you live under the sound of the gospel, and yet are not converted by it, so surely will you be cast into outer darkness. As certainly as Jesus Christ invites you, and ye will not come, so certainly will he send his angels to gather the dead branches together, and you among them, to cast them into the fire. Beware! beware! thou fruitless tree! thou shalt not stand for ever! Mercy waters thee with her tears now; God's lovingkindness digs about thee still; still the husbandman comes, seeking fruit upon thee year after year. Beware! the edge of the axe is sharp, and the arm which wields it is nothing less than almighty. Beware! lest thou fall into the fire!

II. Secondly, THERE WERE OTHER TREES WITH NEITHER LEAVES NOR FRUIT, AND NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED!

The time of figs was not yet come. Now, as the fig tree either brings forth the fig before the leaf, or else produces figs and leaves at the same time,

the major part of the trees, perhaps all of them, without exception of this one, were entirely without figs and without leaves, and yet Jesus did not curse any one of them, for the time of figs was not yet come.

What multitudes are destitute of anything like religion; they make no profession of it; they not only have no fruits of godliness, but they have no leaves even of outward respect to it; they do not frequent the court of the Lord's house; they use no form of prayer; they never attend upon ordinances. The great outlying mass of this huge city—how does religion affect it? It is a very sad thing to think that there are people living in total darkness next door to the light; that you may find in the very street where the gospel is preached, persons who have never heard a sermon. Are there not, throughout this city, tens and hundreds of thousands who know not their right hand from their left, in matters of godliness? Their children go to Sabbath schools, but they themselves spend the whole Sabbath day in anything except the worship of God! In our country parishes, very often neither the religion of the Establishment nor of Dissent, at all affects the population. Take, for instance, that village which will be disgracefully rememb'ed as long as Essex endures, the village of Hedingham. There are in that place not only parish Churches, but Dissenting meetinghouses, and yet the persons who foully murdered the poor wretch supposed to be a wizard, must have been as ignorant and indifferent to common sense, let alone religion, as even Hottentots or Kaffirs, to whom the light of religion has never come. Why was this? Is it not because there is not enough of missionary spirit among Christian people to seek out those who are in the lowest strata of society, so that multitudes escape without ever coming into contact with godliness at all? In London, the City Missionaries will bear witness that while they can sometimes get at the wives, yet there are thousands of husbands who are necessarily away at the time of the missionary's visit, who have not a word of rebuke, or exhortation, or invitation, or encouragement, ever sounding in their ears at all, from the day of their birth to the day of their death; and they might, for all practical purposes, as well have been born in the center of Africa as in the city of London, for they are without God, without hope, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, far oft; not by wicked works only, but by dense ignorance of God.

These persons we may divide into two classes, upon neither of whom does the withering curse fall in this life. The first we look upon with hope. Although we see neither leaves nor fruit, we know that "the time of figs is not yet." They are God's elect, but they are not called. Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, and were there from before the foundations of the world; though they be dead in trespasses, they are the objects of divine love, and they must, in due time, be called by irresistible grace, and turned from darkness to light. "The Lord hath much people in this city," and this should be the encouragement of every one of you, to try to do good, that God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who must be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs; they must be called in the fullness of time to be the brethren of Christ and children of the Most High. They are redeemed, beloved friends, but not regenerated—as much redeemed with precious blood as the saints before the eternal throne. They are Christ's property, and yet perhaps, they are waiting around the ale-house at this very moment until the door shall open—bought with Jesus' precious blood, and yet spending their nights in a brothel, and their days in sin; but if Jesus Christ purchased them he will have them. If he counted down the precious drops, God is not unfaithful to forget the price which his Son has paid. He will not suffer his substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is your comfort and mine, when we go out with the quickening Word of God. Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "Neither pray I for these alone," saith the great Intercessor, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." They do not pray for themselves; poor, ignorant souls, they do not know anything about prayer; but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on his breast, and ere long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace. "The time of figs is not yet." The predestinated moment has not struck; but, when it comes, they shall, for God will have his own; they must, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when he cometh forth with power—they must become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power." "He shall justify

many." "He shall see of the travail of his soul." "He shall divide a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

No curse falls upon these; they deserve it, but eternal love prevents it. Their sins write it, but the finished sacrifice blots it out. They may well perish because they seek not mercy, but Christ intercedes for them, and live they shall.

Alas! however, among those who have neither leaves nor fruit, there is another class which never bring forth either the one or the other; they live in sin and die in ignorance, perishing without hope. As these leave the world, can they upbraid us for neglecting them? Are we clear of their blood? May not the blood of many of them cry from the ground against us? As they are condemned on account of sins, may they not accuse us because we did not take the gospel to them, but left them where they were? Dread thought! but let it not be shaken off, there are tens of thousands every day who pass into the world of spirits unsaved, and inherit the righteous wrath of God. Yet in this life, you see, no special curse falls upon them, and this miracle has no special bearing upon them; it bears upon a totally different class of people, of whom we will now speak.

III. WE HAVE BEFORE US A SPECIAL CASE.

I have already said, that in a fig tree, the fruit takes the precedence of the leaves, or the leaves and the fruit come at the same time; so that it is laid down as a general rule, that if there be leaves upon a fig tree, you may rightly expect to find fruit upon it.

To begin then with the explanation of this special case, in a fig tree fruit comes before leaves. So in a true Christian, fruit always takes the precedence of profession. Find a man anywhere who is a true servant of God, and before he united himself with the Church, or attempted to engage in public prayer, or to identify himself with the people of God, he searched to see whether he had real repentance on account of sin—he desired to know whether he had a sincere and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he perhaps tarried some little time to try himself to see

whether there were the fruits of holiness in his daily life. Indeed, I may say that there are some who wait too long; they are so afraid lest they should make a profession before they have grace in possession, that they will wait year after year—too long—become unwise, and make what was a virtue become a vice. Still this is the rule with Christians: they first give themselves to the Lord and afterwards to the Lord's people according to his will. You who are the servants of God—do you not scorn to vaunt yourselves beyond your line and measure? Would you not think it disgraceful on your part to profess anything which you have not felt? Do you not feel a holy jealousy when you are teaching others, lest you should teach more than God has taught you? and are you not afraid even in your prayers lest you should use expressions which are beyond your own depth of meaning? I am sure the true Christian is always afraid of anything like having the leaves before he has the fruit.

Another remark follows from this—where we see the leaves we have a right to expect the fruit. When I see a man a Church-member, when I hear him engage in prayer, I expect to see in him, holiness, the character and the image of Christ. I have a right to expect it, because the man has solemnly avowed that he is the partaker of divine grace. You cannot join a Church without taking upon yourselves very solemn responsibilities. What do you desire when you come to see us, and ask to be admitted into fellowship? You tell us that you have passed from death unto life, that you have been born again, that there has been a change in you, the hike of which you never knew before, one which only God could have wrought. You tell us you are in the habit of private prayer; that you have a desire for the conversion of others. If you did not so profess, we dare not receive you. Well now, having made these professions, it would be insincere on our part if we did not expect to see your characters holy, and your conversation correct; we have a right to expect it from your own professions. We have a right to expect it from the work of the Spirit which you claim to have received. Shall the Holy Spirit work in man's heart to produce a trifle? Do you think that the Spirit of God would have written us this Book, and that Jesus Christ would have shed his precious blood to produce a hypocrite? Is an inconsistent Christian the highest work of God? I suppose God's plan of salvation to be that which has more exercised his thoughts and wisdom than the making of all worlds and the

sustenance of all providence; and shall this best, this highest, this darling work of God, produce no more than that poor, mean, talking, unacting, fruitless deceiver? Ye have no love for souls, no care for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and yet think that the Spirit, has made you what you are! No zeal, no melting bowels of compassion, no cries of earnest entreaty, no wrestling with God, no holiness, no self-denial, and yet say that you are a vessel made by the Master and fitted for his use! How can this be? No; if you profess to be a Christian, from the necessity of the Spirit's work, we have a right to expect fruit from you. Besides, in genuine professors we do get the fruit, we see a faithful attachment to the Redeemer's cause, an endurance to the end, in poverty, in sickness, in shame, in persecution. We see other professors holding fast to the truth, they are not led aside by temptation, neither do they disgrace the cause they have espoused; and, if you profess to be one of the same order, we have a right to look for the same blessed fruits of the Spirit in you, and if we see them not you have belied us.

Observe further that our Lord hungers for fruit. A hungry person seeks for something which may satisfy him, for fruit, not leaves! Jesus hungers for your holiness. A strong expression, you will say, but I doubt not of its accuracy. For what were we elected? We were predestinated to be conformed unto the image of God's Son; we were chosen to good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." What is the end of our redemption? Why did Jesus Christ die? "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Why have we been called but that we should be called to be saints? To what end are any of the great operations of the covenant of grace? Do they not all point at our holiness? If you will think of any privilege which the Lord confers upon his people through Christ, you will perceive that they all aim at the sanctification of the chosen people—the making of them to bring forth fruit that God the Father may be glorified in them. O Christian, for this the tears of the Savior! for this the agony and bloody sweat! for this the five death-wounds! for this the burial and the resurrection, that he makes you holy, even perfectly holy like unto himself! And can it be, that when he hungers after fruit, you think nothing of fruit-bearing? O professor, how base art thou, to call thyself a blood-bought child of God, amid yet to live unto

thyself! How darest thou, O barren tree, professing to be watered by the bloody sweat, and digged by the griefs and woes of the wounded Savior—how darest thou bring forth leaves and no fruit? Oh! sacrilegious mockery of a hungry Savior! oh! blasphemous tantalizing of a hungry Lord! that thou shouldst profess to have cost him all this, and yet yield him nothing! When I think that Jesus hungers after fruit in me, it stirs me up to do more for him. Does it not have the same effect on you? He hungers for your good works; he hungers to see you useful. Jesus the King of kings, hungers after your prayers—hungers after your anxieties for the souls of others; and nothing ever will satisfy him for the travail of his soul but seeing you wholly devoted to his cause.

This brings us into the very midst and meaning of the miracle. There are some, then, who make unusual profession, and yet disappoint the Savior in his just expectations. The Jews did this. When Jesus Christ came it was not the time of figs. The time for great holiness was after the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. All the other nations were without leaves. Greece, Rome, all these showed no signs of progress; but there was the Jewish nation covered with leaves. They professed already to have obtained the blessings which he came to bring. There stood the Pharisee with his long prayers; there were the lawyers and the Scribes with their deep knowledge of the things of the kingdom. They said they had the light. The time of figs was not come, but yet they had the leaves, though not a single fruit; and you know what a curse fell on Israel; how in the day of Jerusalem's destruction the tree was withered altogether from its root, because it had its leaves, but had no fruit.

The same will be true of any Church. There are times when all the Churches seem sunken alike in lethargy—such a time we had, say ten years ago—but one Church, perhaps, seems to be all alive. The congregations are large. Much, apparently, is proposed for the growth of the Savior's kingdom. A deal of noise is made about it; there is much talk, and the people are all expectation; and, if there be no fruit, no real consecration to Christ, if there be no genuine liberality, no earnest vital godliness, no hallowed consistency, other Churches may live on; but such a Church as this, making so high a profession, and being so precocious in the produce of leaves, shall have a curse from God. No man shall eat fruit

of it for ever, and it shall wither away.

In the case of individuals the moral of our miracle runs thus. Some are looked upon as young believers, who early join the Church. "The time of figs is not yet;" it is not a very ordinary case to see children converted, but we do see some, and we are very grateful. We are jealous however lest we should see leaves but not fruit. These juveniles are extraordinary cases; and on that account we look for higher results. When we are disappointed what shall come upon such but a curse upon their precocity, which led them to the deception. Some of us were converted, or profess to have been, when young, and if we have lived hitherto, and all we have produced has been merely words, resolves, professions, but not fruit unto God, we must expect the curse.

Again, professors eminent in station. There are necessarily but few ministers, but few Church officers; but when men so distinguish themselves by zeal, or by louder professions than others, as to gain the ear of the Christian public and are placed in responsible positions—if they bring forth no fruit, they are the persons upon whom the curse will light. It may be with other Christians that "the time of figs is not yet;" they have not made the advances which these profess to have made; but having been, upon their own profession, elected to an office which essentially requires fruit, since they yield it not, let them beware.

To those who make professions of much love to Christ, the same caution may be given. With the most of Christians, I am afraid, I must say that "the time of figs is not yet," for we are too much like the Laodicean Church. But you meet with some men—how much they are in love with Christ! How sweetly they can talk about him, but what do they do for him? Nothing! nothing! Their love lies just in the wind which comes out of their own mouths, and that is all. Now, when the Lord has a curse, he will deal it out on such. They went beyond all others in an untimely declaration of a very fervent love, and now they yield him no fruit. "Yes," said one, "I love God so much, that I do not reckon that anything I have is my own. It is all the Lord's—all the Lord's, and I am his steward." Well, this dear good man, of course, joined the Church, and after a time, some mission work wanted a little help. What was his reply? "When I pay my

seat rent, I have done all I intend to do." A man of wealth and means! After a little time, this same man found it inconvenient even to pay for his seat, and goes now to a place not quite so full, where he can get a seat and do nothing to support the ministry! If there is a special thunderbolt anywhere, it is these unctious hypocrites who whine about love to Christ, and bow down at the shrine of mammon.

Or, take another case. You meet with others whose profession is not of so much love, but it is of much experience. Oh! what experience they have had! What deep experience! Ah! they know the humblings of heart and the plague of human nature! They know the depths of corruption, and the heights of divine fellowship, and so on. Yes, and if you go into the shop you find the corruption is carried on behind the counter, and the deceit in the day-book; if they do not know the plague of their own hearts, at least they are a plague to their own household. Such people are abhorrent to all men, and much more to God.

Others you meet with who have a censorious tongue. What good people they must be; they can see the faults of other people so plainly! This Church is not right, and the other is not right, and yonder preacher—well some people think him a very good man, but they do not. They can see the deficiencies in the various denominations, and they observe that very few really carry out Scripture as it should be carried out. They complain of want of love, and are the very people who create that want. Now if you will watch these very censorious people, the very faults they indicate in others, they are indulging in themselves; and while they are seeking to find out the mote in their brother's eye, they have a beam in their own. These are the people who are indicated by this fig tree, for they ought, according to their own showing, taking them on their own ground, to be better than other people. If what they say be true, they are bright particular stars, and they ought to give special light to the world. They are such that even Jesus Christ himself might expect to receive fruit from them, but they are nothing but deceivers, with these high soarings and proud boastings; they are nothing after all but pretenders. Like Jezebel with her paint, which made her all the uglier, they would seem to be what they are not. As old Adam says, "They are candles with big wicks and no tallow, and when they go out they make a foul and nauseous smell."

"They have summer sweating on their brow, and winter freezing in their hearts." You would think them the land of Goshen, but prove them the wilderness of sin. Let us search ourselves, lest such be the case with us.

IV. And now to close, SUCH A TREE MIGHT WELL BE WITHERED. Deception is abhorred of God. There was the Jewish temple, there were the priests standing in solemn pomp, there were the abundant sacrifices of God's altar. But was God pleased with his temple? No, because in the temple you had all the leaves, you had all the externals of worship, but there was no true prayer, no belief in the great Lamb of God's passover, no truth, no righteousness, no love of men, no care for the glory of God; and so the temple, which had been a house of prayer, had become a den of thieves. You do not marvel that the temple was destroyed. You and I may become just like that temple. We may go on with all the externals of religions, nobody may miss us out of our seat at Tabernacle, nay, we may never miss our Christian engagements; we may be in all external matters more precise than we used to be, and yet for all that, we may have become in our hearts a den of thieves; the heart may be given to the world while external ceremonies are still kept up and maintained. Let us beware of this, for such a place cannot be long without a curse. It is abhorrent to God.

Again, it is deceptive to man. Look at that temple! What do men go there for? To see holiness and virtue. Why tread they its hallowed courts? To get nearer to God. And what do they find there? Instead of holiness, covetousness; instead of getting nearer to God, they get into the midst of a mart where men are haggling about the price of doves, and bickering with one another about the changing of shekels. So men may watch to hear some seasonable word from our lips, and instead of that, may get evil; and as that temple was cursed for deluding men, so may we be, because we deceive and disappoint the wants of mankind.

More than this, this barren fig tree committed sacrilege upon Christ, did it not? Might it not have exposed him to ridicule? Some might have said, "How goest thou to a tree, thou prophet, whereon there is no fruit?" A false professor exposes Christ to ridicule. As the temple of old dishonored God, so does a Christian when his heart is not right; he does dishonor to

God, and makes the holy cause to be trodden under foot of the adversary. Such men indeed have reason to beware.

Once more, this tree might well be cursed, because its bringing forth nothing but leaves was a plain evidence of its sterility. It had force and vitality, but it turned it to ill account, and would continue to do so. The curse of Christ was but a confirmation of what it already was. He did as good as say, "He that is unfruitful, let him be unfruitful still." And now, what if Christ should come into this Tabernacle this morning, and should look on you and on me, and see in any of us great profession and great pomp of leaves, and yet no fruit, what if he should pronounce the curse on us, what would be the effect? We should wither away as others have done. What mean we by this? Why, they have on a sudden turned to the world. We could not understand why such fair saints should, on a sudden, become such black devils; the fact was, Christ had pronounced the word, and they began to wither away. If he should pronounce the unmasking word on any mere professor here, and say, "Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever," you will go into gross outward sin and wither to your shame. This will take place probably on a sudden; and taking place, your case will be irretrievable; you never afterwards will be restored. The blast which shall fall upon you will be eternal; you will live as a lasting monument of the terrible justice of Christ, as the great head of the Church; you will be spared to let it be seen that a man outside the Church may escape with impunity in this life, but a man inside the Church shall have a present curse, and be made to stand as a tree blasted by the lightning of God for ever. Now, this is a heart-searching matter. It went through me yesterday when I thought, "Well, here am I, I have professed to be called of God to the ministry; I have forced myself into a leading place in God's Church; I have voluntarily put myself into a place where sevenfold damnation is my inevitable inheritance if I be not true and sincere." I could almost wish myself back out of the Church, or at least in the obscurest place in her ranks, to escape the perils and responsibilities of my position; and so may you, if you have not the witness of the Spirit in you that you are born of God—you may wish that you never thought of Christ, and never dreamed of taking his name upon you. If you have by diligence worked yourself into a high position among God's people; if you have mere leaves without the fruit, the more sure is the curse, because the

greater the disappointment of the Savior. The more you profess, the more is expected of you; and if you do not yield it, the more just the condemnation when you shall be left to stand for ever withered by the curse of Christ. O men and brethren, let us tremble before the heart-searching eye of God; but let us still remember that grace can make us fruitful yet. The way of mercy is open still. Let us apply to the wounds of Christ this morning. If we have never begun, let us begin now. Now let us throw our arms about the Savior, and take him to be ours; and, having done this, let us seek divine grace, that for the rest of our lives we may work for God. Oh! I do hope to do more for God, and I hope you will. O Holy Spirit, work in us mightily, for in thee is our fruit found! Amen.

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Now

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. - 2 Corinthians 6:2

We frequently hear the question discussed as to which are the best times. Some are perpetually singing the praises of the "good old times;" though, if one reads the page of history, it does not appear that the old times deserve any very special praise, unless oppression, ignorance, persecution, and abundant suffering deserve to be the theme of song. It is the common habit of the fathers, with tears in their eyes, to say, "The former days were better than these," but we have the wisdom of Solomon on our side when we tell them they do not enquire wisely Concerning this. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this." (Ecclesiastes 7:10.) Others there be who are always boasting of the present eventful period. There was none like it: this is the era of invention and of progress, the age of liberty and of light, when slavery must cast away her fetters, and superstition must hide herself among her congenial associates, the

moles and bats. But I cannot perceive that this century is so much the age of gold as to need any very enthusiastic praises. Its greatest virtues are counterbalanced by greater sins; and the progress which has been made towards liberty, has scarcely kept pace with its advance towards licentiousness: the barriers have been broken down, it is true, but in some places the bulwarks have fallen too. Many there be who with bright eyes are looking forward to the future, and their declaration is, that the "good time is coming," if we but "wait a little longer;" if we will but look ahead, till this beast shall have been slain, that vial shall have been poured out, and the other seal shall have been broken, then it is that we shall arrive at halcyon times. We agree with these watchful waiters: the age of gold is yet to come; the Advent is the world's best and brightest hope, insomuch that every lover of his kind, may importunately cry out, "Come quickly; yea, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

But there is one thought which should not leave us when talking about times and seasons, namely, that now, now, just now, this present flying moment, that second which is being recorded by the ticking of yonder clock, is the only time which we have to work with. I can do nothing with the days that are past, I can do nothing with the days future—yet I reach out towards them—but I cannot improve them. The past and present are fields far beyond the reach of my culture. I can neither plough nor sow the future, nor can I prune and correct the past. For practical purposes, the only time I have is that which is just now passing. Did I say I had it? While I said I had it, it is gone, like the meteor which dashes adown the sky, or the eagle which flies afar, or the swift ships which disappear beyond the horizon.

Time present is the only time I may ever have. Ere any future shall have become present, I may be merged in eternity. As far as I know, this day may be the end of my life's career, and when yonder sun sinks to his rest, I may sink to my rest also, so far as time is concerned. If there be more time allotted to me, yet it will never come to me in any other guise and form than as time present. I call it future now, but when I get, say, to 1866, or 1880, it will be just like to these moments, it will be to me present then; and consequently, for practical purposes, however much we may speculate upon the past or the future, the present moment is the only

time we have, may have, or ever can have; and it becomes important that all our thoughts should be centred upon it, if we would make our calling and election sure. Our text directs us to that solemn employment, and it does so by a very telling argument.

You perceive that our text is a quotation. How ought we to value the Old Testament! If inspired men of God, who spoke by the Holy Ghost, yet quoted the Old Testament, how valuable must be its bejewelled sentences! The apostle here quotes from the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, the eighth verse. In that passage the Lord God is speaking to the Messiah, speaking to our Lord Jesus Christ, and he says to him, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." The first part, then, of this verse is a quotation from Isaiah; the second part of the verse is Paul's commentary upon the passage, "Behold, now is the accepted time." He takes his text from the Old Testament, but he gives us a New-Testament sermon upon it. Let us try if we can catch the apostle's meaning.

When Paul was reading in Isaiah, he perceived that the Lord Jehovah had expressly said to him, "Whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth (and who is this but the Lord Jesus?) "In an acceptable time have I heard thee." Jesus' sighs, and tears, and bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane did not fall unheeded; like the blood of Abel, they cried from the ground, and were heard acceptably above; an answer was given: this was plainly proved by the descent of the angel to strengthen the Savior; so the prophetic words add, "In a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee." The apostle infers from this, that inasmuch as God hath accepted Christ, the representative of his people, he hath thereby ushered in an era of acceptance. Acceptance given to the Savior is, in the apostle's view, acceptance given to sinners. Inasmuch as Christ is heard—he prayed not for himself, but for us—there is therefore an accepted time for us begun and commenced from the day when Christ went up to the tree, stretched his hands to the nails, bowed his head to death, and said, "It is finished." Paraphrase the text thus: " I have heard Jesus, the surety, in an acceptable time; in the day of salvation have I succored him, the mighty Savior; and therefore to you, my people, to you, poor lost and wandering sinners, to you, now is the accepted time;

now is the day of salvation." If Christ had not died, there had never been a day of salvation. If Christ had not been heard and accepted, an accepted time there never could have come to us; but since he, man's representative, hath obtained favor in the eyes of God, and through his complete work, hath for ever settled that favor upon himself, there is favor in the heart of God to those whom Christ represented, even to those transgressors for whom he maketh intercession.

We shall now take the text, as God may help us, using it first, to look at the now of believers; then, at the now of sinners; and after this taking wing from the text, we shall offer a few reflections upon now in heaven; and close with a few solemn thoughts upon now in hell.

I. First, then, NOW, WITH THE BELIEVER. With him, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

As a believer, it is well for the Christian to live in the present. I say, as a believer, for, alas! there is a temptation to make our faith a thing of the past. It is nearly sixteen years since I first looked to the crucified Redeemer, and was lightened, and my face was not ashamed. Is there a temptation in me to say the faith which I exercised in Christ in my youthful days has saved me, and therefore I am now in a different position from what I was then, and need not feel now as I did at first? If there be such a temptation, let me shake it off as a man would shake off the deadly sleep of frozen climes; let me this morning feel myself to be still in myself just what I was, a sinner loathsome, undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving. And what then? Why, let me then this morning, stand where I stood in the first moment of my salvation, at the foot of the Savior's cross, and look up and view the flowing of his soul-redeeming blood, with divine assurance, knowing he has made my peace with God. At this moment, my dear brother, your proper standing is as a sinner saved by blood, looking up to those dear wounds from which your pardon streamed. Have you had many virtues since then? Has the grace of God led you on to add to your faith courage; and to your courage, experience; and to your experience, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity? Yet, for all this, your safest, happiest, holiest, best position, is at the foot of the cross, with none of these things in your hand

as the price of your salvation, but looking to your Redeemer, who alone has found a ransom for you. Since the day of your espousals you have committed many sins: dare you look at them without trembling? How often have we grieved our Lord! Our love to him! Shall we dare to call it love? Our faith in him, how mixed with unbelief! Our zeal, how dashed with selfishness! Our humility, how stained with pride! Our patience, how spoiled with murmuring! Our every good thing marred and rendered worthless! What a crop of weeds the soil of our heart has produced! When we look within we see, "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy;" and every unclean bird seeks a lodging-place in our hearts as in a grove of vanities: what shall we then do? Why, come just now with all these sins, and wash once more in that fountain which has lost none of its fullness, and feel the power of that precious blood which has not diminished one whit in its efficacy. I know the temptation is to climb to some higher room, but let us be warned by the nonsuccess of the boasting Pharisee, and taught by the justification of the humble publican, still to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Beware of trying to live before God as a minister. Brother minister, this is poor living: to live officially, to go to the closet or come into God's house merely as holding a certain profession, oh! this is starving work. If your tendency be to live as Church-members, if not altogether as worldly men, rouse yourselves from it, I pray you, and confess with Paul, "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The proper place of a Christian is never to get one inch beyond this—a monument of grace, a sinner saved by blood. I live in Jesus, on Jesus, for Jesus, with Jesus, and hope soon to be perfectly conformed to his likeness. Let me recollect that if there could be a moment in which my soul might stand out of Christ, no longer leaning upon him, and no longer covered with his righteousness, that very moment I must be condemned; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, but there is a terrible condemnation against every soul that is out of him. Have ye climbed so high that ye have towered above the place of the poor thief? Come back again, brother, for thou hast climbed to a dangerous altitude, and may be thou shalt find it a gallows whereon Haman was hanged, and thou shalt hang with him. Or hast thou dived so deep in a sense of thine own depravity, that thou hast forgotten to rest on Jesus Christ as able still to save thee? My brother, look up from the hole of the pit, for in it there is

no water, and thou wilt perish there with a grievous famine. O, then, away with all but Jesus! None but Jesus: this must be our watchword at the gates of death, and we must enter heaven with it. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so must we walk in him: he must be Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, author and finisher, first and last. As believers, let us by God the Holy Spirit's grace keep our trust just where it was at first, in him whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for our sins.

Take the word "now" again, and look at the Christian as a professor. Now you are in the house of God, my dear friends, and you recollect that you profess to be followers of Christ. Now, therefore, you sing in holy hymns of praise, and join in solemn prayers to God, as Christians should do in the worship of God. To-morrow morning, some of you, perhaps, will be at Copenhagen Fields' Market, some of you at Newgate Market, others of you will be lighting the fire in your master's house, others seeing to your numerous families, others taking down the shop shutters; will you then recollect, dear friends, that now, where you then are, you are a Christian. You are not to say, "I was a Christian yesterday," but "now, now I am a Christian." A customer will come in; the temptation will be, perhaps, to take more than you ought to do; will you please recollect, "Now I am a child of God;" not "yesterday, when I was listening to Mr. Spurgeon, at the Tabernacle," but now. When you are in the market, there will be much to plague and vex you, and perhaps you will think, "I cannot enjoy the presence of God here." Oh! but, my dear brother, "now is the accepted time." Buying sheep, selling bullocks, using the hammer, snipping with the scissors, working at the plough, tending your sheep—now, now, now is the day of salvation: you are still a Christian, therefore act as a Christian. But you are much plagued and vexed, somebody teases you, things go wrong: what could be a better stop to that little rising passion, what could keep under the naughty spirit better than to recollect, "Now, now I am a Christian—even now." A true Christian cannot shake off his character. He is really what he is: he always must be a Christian. I heard the other day of a certain Scotch moderate minister, who being much provoked by a person in his parish, said, "If I were not a minister, I would give you a sound thrashing, sir;" and when he was further irritated, he took off his coat and said, "There is the minister—there he lies"—he was

then in his shirt sleeves—"there is the minister, and I am only So-and-so, and will give you your due," and proceeded at once to give the man a sound thrashing. It is just possible the man may have deserved it, that is not to my point; but if a man can say, "There lies the minister," or, when you take off your cloth coat to-night, if you can say, "There lies the member of the Church:" If you, good women, when you get off your gowns, can say, as you hang up your best attire in the wardrobe, "There goes the Christian," then you have no religion at all, you have none whatever worth having; you have the faith of devils that will damn you, but not the faith of Christians that will save you. It is not a religious coat, but a renewed heart: I pray you keep this at all times on your mind, "Now I am accepted; now I am saved: how can such a man as I do such a thing? 'How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'" Mordecai once wore the king's robe, but he soon put it off, because he was not really a king; and thus do many act who wear the garb of religion in the house of God, but cast it off when they go home. When Lord Burleigh, Queen Elizabeth's councillor, reached his home, he was so little pleased with the cares of state, that taking off his robe, he threw it down, saying, "Lay there, Lord Chancellor." Ah! how irksome must some men's religion be to them, and how cheerfully would they lay aside its restraints! but you, who are really the Lord's, will, I trust, feel your faith to be your constant help, and your profession your perpetual honor. You will not, you cannot sin, because you are born of God.

Suppose a brother has his pen in his hand, and is going to write what we sometimes call a nasty letter—now suppose an angel should whisper in his ears as he is writing, "Now, now you are one of God's chosen; you have been washed in the precious blood of Christ, and now you profess to be a member of his body, a king and a priest unto God." Why, methinks he would throw the pea away and tear the paper up. Or, just when you are about to proceed to extremities with some poor soul who asks your mercy, if you could recollect that you are now, even now an heir of heaven, methinks you would say, "Lord, give me grace to act according to my profession, and not to stain the character I have assumed." Let "now" keep upon your mind with regard to your profession and the duty which it brings.

Dear friends, let me comfort your hearts by the recollection that now, as a child of God, you are a possessor of present privileges. I do not know what thy frame of mind may be this morning. Thou mayst have been very much tempted, thou mayst feel, through some sickness of body, anything but cheerful, but if thou believest in Christ, remember now thou art a son of God, and though it doth not yet appear what thou shalt be, yet, when he shall appear, thou shalt be like him, for thou shalt see him as he is. At this very moment, I, a believer in Christ, am completely pardoned; no spot of sin remains on me if I believe in Jesus. White as the newly-fallen snow is every soul that has been washed in the precious blood. Think of this delightful truth, desponding Christian, and let your countenance be no more sad. Your eye of faith is dim, your evidences are very slender, your graces are at a low ebb, but you are completely forgiven, absolved and acquitted at this moment, if your soul rests upon the Rock of Ages. You are completely justified at this moment, despite your sins. Wearing your Savior's righteousness, you stand all beauteous in the eye of God at this very moment: the words of Solomon to the spouse are the words of Christ to you, though you are vexed with a thousand cares, "Thou art all fair my love: there is no spot in thee." Covered with his righteousness and washed in his blood, even the pure and holy eyes of God can find no fault in thee, and, as a consequence of this, thou art this moment accepted. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" God doth not look upon thee with any anger. Though thy heart may be struggling and tormented with sin, yet if thou art resting upon God's Son, the love of God is flowing out to thee in a stream which never can be stayed. Think of this sweet thought, and let thy soul be filled with the perfume of it. Loved of God now, the object of the almighty affection of the blessed One art thou now. Nay, more than this, thou art not only accepted, but thou art in union with Christ now. Beloved believer, canst thou realize it? Thou art a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. There is a vital union at this instant between you and the Lord of glory; the life-blood flows from him, the head, to thee; and at this moment, whether in thy worst state of feeling or thy best, thou art now one with Jesus, by eternal union, one. I would to God we realized our present privileges. We are thinking about the heaven that is to come, and forgetting the heaven below. The first we should do; but the second we should not leave undone. The men

of grace find that the fruits of paradise hang over the wall, and they begin to pluck and eat thereof before they pass the gates of pearl. Come, Christian, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Since Jesus is accepted, so are you even now. Live upon your present privileges and be glad.

Recollect that wherever there is present privilege there is also a present duty to be performed, and so I touch a string which I made to sound just now. Since "now is the accepted time" with sinners, now is the accepted time for thee to work, O Christian. I know what you intend to do; you have vast plans and machinery. My brother, I do not care what you mean to do to-morrow, but I do care about what you intend to do to-day. Oh! those day-dreams of ours! We are always intending in a year or two's time to be such valorous defenders of the faith, such good soldiers of Christ, such good winners of souls. My dear brother, what art thou doing now? There flies that moment; what does it bear upon its wings? Another drop of the stream of time is passed away: what action of thine is reflected on its crystal surface? Art thou doing anything now? "I do not know," says one, "I do not know that I can do anything just now. When the service is broken up, I may get home, and then try to do something." I would pray thee remember that "now is the accepted time," and therefore now seek to get thy heart warm; and, when the service is over, think thou hearest the now, and begin to speak to those in the pew, or on the way home talk to any person you may meet with; and then, tomorrow, do not say, "Sunday is over, and I cannot do any good on the week-day," but think you hear the clarion-sound of this word now. You have a sister unsaved, pray for her now; you have a brother unconverted, write to him if you cannot speak to him, and do it now. There is a court, a blind alley, which needs visiting; a dying man who needs instruction—do it now. Do you feel you have a talent? Use it now. You think you will have a better sphere in ten years' time; I pray thee get a sphere now, for now is the day of salvation. I say again, I do not care what you do with your to-morrow. If you will but give God your now, your to-morrows will be all right. For duty, then, let the Christian prize the "now."

One thought more. The Christian recollects that now he may die. What is his prospect now? Let him take courage. If his Lord should come now, he

has his loins girt about, and his lamp well trimmed, and he is ready to enter in to the supper; he will not be overtaken as by a thief, but his Lord, when he cometh, shall find him watching: and should death come before the Advent, then he can say, "Now shall I enter into my rest, now shall I see the face of my Lord Jesus without a veil to hide him, and I shall be with him supremely blest." The glorious Advent or the bliss of heaven is your prospect now; not that you will go to heaven if you die in twenty years' time, but if you die now, if the hand of death should take you in the street, or you should feel its numbing influence while you are in the pew; now the celestial band shall bear you to the sublimities of glory, and introduce you to the presence of him whom you love. Now, Christian, rejoice, now labor, now live at the foot of the Savior's cross.

II. May the Master give us power on the second point to deal with "NOW" AS IT RESPECTS THE SINNER.

The great mischief of the most of men is that they procrastinate. It is not that they resolve to be damned, but that they resolve to be saved tomorrow. It is not that they reject Christ for ever, but that they reject Christ to-day; and truly they might as well reject him for ever, as continue perpetually to reject him "now." Sinner, let me put thy "now" before thee as a man. Thou must soon pass away and be forgotten, like the flowers that withered in autumn, and the insects which flitted through the summer hours. Now, then, is thy time to think about eternity, and to prepare thyself to meet thy God. "See to your business first, James," said a careful father—"get a good trade, and after that, look to your religion." There spake a fool, who knew not that infinite wisdom has commanded, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Wouldst thou give God the fag-end of thy life? Take care lest thou have no old age at all; for many candles are blown out as soon as lit. Wouldst thou, as a lamb, be Satan's? and when thou art withered and worn out, shall the lean skeleton of tottering weakness be brought and laid upon the altar? Be it not so; let thy flower be plucked in the bud and put into the hand of Jesus. God grant thee grace to seek him in the days of thy youth, for the promise is, "They that seek me early shall find me." As a man, I charge thee, since there is only a "day of salvation" before the sun goes down and the black night of eternal

ruin shall come upon thee, lay hold upon the hope that is set before thee.

As a sinner, I also address thee concerning this "now." "Now is the day of salvation: thou needest it now. God is angry with thee now. Thou art condemned already. It is not the torment of hell thou hast to dread only, but if thou hast thy senses, thou wouldst tremble at thy present state. Now without God, now without hope, now an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, now dead in trespasses and sins, now in danger of the wrath to come, thou wantest a Savior this morning, young man. Young woman, I do not charge thee to store up medicine against the maladies of twenty years hence, it is the sickness of to-day of which I would fain have thee cured this very morning. It is not to look after a danger which shall press upon thee when thou growest old that I exhort thee, but now thou art on the brink of the precipice. Now therefore thou needest to be saved.

But here comes the beauty of my text. As a sinner under the gospel, I pray thee to recollect that "Now is the accepted time." The most of my unconverted hearers do not believe this. I know what you are saying. You say "I have had a great many thoughts about religion;" but why dost thou not believe in Christ now? "Well," you say, "I will endeavor to think seriously of it:" but what will be the result of your thinking? After you have thought ever so much, do you imagine you will think yourself into salvation? If the gospel command were "Think, and be saved," I would cheerfully allow you a month's thinking; but the command is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and "Now is the accepted time." "But, sir, I do not think such things should be done in a hurry." A hurry! What does David say? "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." A hurry! when a man is on the edge of damnation and on the borders of the grave! Do not talk of hurry, sir; when it is a case of life and death, let us fly swift as a flash of lightning. "Well, but I do not feel prepared." Do you think that disobeying God will make you more prepared? If you have lived a month without believing, you have lived a month in sin; do you think when you have sinned more, you will be better prepared to obey the command which comes to you, "Believe now in the Lord Jesus Christ"? "Yes, but my heart feels so hard." Dear friend, dost thou think thou wilt be able to soften it between this and next week, or next month, or next

year? Is there anything in the Word of God which leads thee to believe that thou canst in any way soften thine own heart? Is not this a mighty work of grace? and when the text says, "Now is the accepted time," does not this suppose that even if you have a hard heart, still it is true that now is the accepted time? "Well, but," saith one, "I do not feel convinced enough." That is to say, dear friend, you do not think that "now is the accepted time:" you think that another time when you get more convicted will be the accepted time. Here is a quarrel between God and you. He says "Now;" you say, "No, no, it cannot be true;" when I am more convicted, then will be the time." My dear friend, are you not altogether mistaken? The likelihoods are that you never will be more convicted than now, if you are brought now to think upon these things. Your heart will certainly grow harder in course of time; but softer, never. I never heard the case of a man whose heart was made softer by delay. "Yes, but I should like to get home and pray." My text does, not say it will be the accepted time when you get home and pray; it says, "Now," and as I find you are "now" in this pew, "now is the accepted time." If you trust Christ now, you will be accepted: if now you are enabled to throw yourself simply into the hands of Christ, now is the accepted time between God and you. "Well," says another, "it does seem strange to think that I shall be saved this morning: there must be a little time occupied in it surely?" The text says, "Now is the accepted time;" it does not say, "There is an accepted time lasting through a period of weeks, and months, in which we pump ourselves up into a state of grace," but "now," in a moment, acceptance is given. But do you really mean it" says one, " that I, as I am, trusting Christ this morning, without any previous preparation whatever, shall be accepted?" My dear friend, it is not what I mean; it is what the Scripture means. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The moment a sinner trusts in Christ, he is saved, and if thou trustest him now, it is the day of salvation to thee.

Will you kindly look at that text—just open your Bibles now, and look at it—you, especially, who are unconverted, whet her my hearers or readers? It has two fingerposts to point to it: two beholds. " Behold, now is the accepted time." Now, stop and look at that. Do you believe it? Say "Yes," or "No." There is another "Behold"—"Behold, now is the day of salvation." Do you believe that? I have asked you to look at the text, because I want

you to look in its face, and, if you dare, say "That is a lie." No, you do not dare to say that. Then if you do not dare to say so, away must go in a single moment all those excuses which you make about a hard heart, not being convinced enough, praying, reading, preparing, and so on. Now, just as the clock ticks, not as an event to take place during a quarter of an hour, but in a moment the whole thing is done: "Now is the day of salvation." And what dost thou say to this? Does God the Holy Spirit now lead thy soul to say, "Gracious Lord, I trust my soul with thee now"? Oh! it is all done. Fly up to heaven, angels! bear the tidings, tell the spirits who look down anxiously watching for the spreading kingdom of the Savior, that another heir of glory is born, another prodigal has returned to his Father's house. Now! now! now! O God, let conquering grace get the victory! How my soul has longed over this text! and now when I get at it, I cannot handle it as I would; but, if I might, I would fain take some of you by the hand—think that I have your hand now—and I would put this to you, I may never have another opportunity of preaching this text in your ears, for you may be gone before there is another season to hear. "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Canst thou believe?" "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Old Nabal said to David, "There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master." A bad old fellow, but he spake a good sentence there without knowing it. Are there not some here who will break away from their old master? Are there not some who would fain be servants of Christ and no longer servants of the devil? O souls, if God has made you willing to break with Satan, to lay hold on Christ, this is not a day in which Christ will deny you, for he has expressly said, now he will accept you, for "Now is the accepted time." "But, sir, I am a harlot steeped up to the throat in vice." Still "Now is the accepted time." "Ah! but I have grown grey, sir, I am seventy or eighty, and have lived in sin all these years." Yes, but "Now is the accepted time." Do you believe it or not? "Oh! I have refused the invitation a thousand times over." Yes, but still, still the abundant grace of God says, "Now, is the accepted time." I would to God some of you would decide this very morning, this very morning in your pew where you are now sitting. Now, O Spirit of the living God, waken those whom thou hast chosen and set apart unto eternal life.

I have not time now to dwell on the other two points; we will merely,

therefore, hint at them.

III. Now IN HEAVEN! Can you think of it? Now in heaven!

They now delight in the society of Christ; they are now blest with communion with all the glorified spirits; they are now resting from their labors, their toils, their sufferings; they are now full of joys, while to their golden harps they sing; they are just now satisfied with the favor and full of the goodness of the Lord; they are now knowing what they knew not here, knowing even as they are known; they are now more than conquerors, waving their palm branches; they are now safely shut in from all fear of danger; they are now perfect, without taint of sin or remnant of corruption; they are now supremely blest. I merely point the finger where my wing cannot carry me, and where my eye cannot see. Such are your friends who have departed. Your wife is there now, your little infant children are there, your brother is there, your grandsire is there, and we, if we should now die, blessed be the name of God, many of us, should know what they know, and taste what they enjoy in an instant.

IV. That is a dreary thought—Now IN HELL!

Some of my hearers who listened to me last year, and in the years that are past, are now—now—in hell! Now, where no hope can come; now, where no gospel shall ever be preached; now, where they bitterly regret their wasted Sabbaths and despised opportunities; now, where memory holds a dreadful reign, reminding them of all their sins; now, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" where they gnaw their fire-tormented tongues in vain; now, where God's fury is manifested to the full in Tophet's hideous fire; now, where devils, once their tempters, become their tormentors; now, where sinners, who kept jovial company, help to increase the doleful miserere of sighs, and groans, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth; now, accursed of God, accursed for ever and ever! And within a moment, that may be the lot of every sinner here. Within the twinkling of an eye, there is not a man or woman among us out of Christ who may not know this. One drop of blood goes wrong—a thousand chances, as we say, may cause it, and hell is your portion. Every anatomist knows that hundreds of times in an hour, through the internal

economy of the human frame, our life is in danger; nay, there is not a second in which it is not so. "Great God! on what a feeble thread hang everlasting things!"

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone;
Strange! that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

While we are in this danger, we are passing on to our doom—

"We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

But where is that home to be with you, unconverted ones? When the express trains first began to run to Scotland, there was seen at the station, one evening, a gentleman tall and thin, whose cheek had the consumptive mark upon it. The porters asked him several questions about his luggage, of which there was a good deal, and when he had been asked several times by different persons, another came up and said, "Where are you going, sir?" Being of short temper, and in great haste, he said, "To hell!" A servant of Christ passed by that moment, and heard the answer. He sought to get in the same carriage, and did so, but at the other end of it; and this gentleman was talking very freely to different persons upon common topics, and the man thought, "I will get a word in if I can." So he joined in the general tenor of the conversation till they alighted at a refreshment station, when, taking the opportunity, he said to the gentleman, "When do you expect to get to the end of your journey?" "Oh," said he, "I am going to cross at such-and-such a town by the boat to-night, and hope to get to my journey's end about twelve o'clock to-morrow morning." The man said, "I think you misunderstand my question. You said when the porter asked you just now where you were going to, that you were going to a very different place." "Ah! yes, I recollect I did," said the gentleman, "but I am sometimes very hasty." The other said to him, "Was it true? Are you going to hell? If so, when do you expect to get there?" And he began to talk to him about that sickness

which he could see so certainly in his cheek, and warned him that unless he sought another road, and fled to Christ, the only refuge, he would certainly reach that dreadful end. There are some in this place, who if they were labelled this morning as to where they are going, would have to be directed "to hell." You know that this is the case. And when will you get to your journey's end? Some here may live another fifty years. I pray God that that question of mine may haunt you, and if it be never blessed to you before, may it be then, "When will you yet to your journey's end?" When will you arrive in hell? This morning may some of you in your hearts say, "I am journeying thither, but, by the grace of God, I have conic to a dead halt, and not another inch will I go. Lord, make me ready to go to heaven, give me now to trust the Savior that I may live." May God bless these feeble words of mine to his glory and your profit. Amen.

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Now, And Then

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face. - 1
Corinthians 13:12

In this chapter the apostle Paul has spoken in the highest terms of charity or love. He accounts it to be a grace far more excellent than any of the spiritual gifts of which he had just before been speaking. It is easy to see that there were good reasons for the preference he gave to it. Those gifts you will observe, were distributed among godly men, to every man his several portion, so that what one had another might have lacked; but this grace belongs to all who have passed from death unto life. The proof that they are disciples of Christ is found in their love to him and to the brethren. Those gifts, again, were meant to fit them for service, that each member of the body should be profitable to the other members of the body; but this grace is of personal account: it is a light in the heart and a star on the breast of every one who possesses it. Those gifts, moreover, were of temporary use: their value was limited to the sphere in which they were exercised; but this grace thrives at all times and in all places, and it is no less essential to our eternal future state than it is to our present welfare. By all means covet the best gifts, my dear brother, as an artist would wish to be deft with all his limbs and quick with all his senses; but above all, cherish love, as that same artist would cultivate the pure taste which lives and breathes within him—the secret spring of all his motions, the faculty that prompts his skill. Learn to esteem this sacred instinct of love beyond all the choicest endowments. However poor you may be in talents, let the love of Christ dwell in you richly. Such an exhortation as this is the more needful, because love has a powerful rival. Paul may have noticed that in the academies of Greece, as indeed in all our modern schools, knowledge was wont to take all the prizes. Who can tell how much of Dr. Arnold's success, as a schoolmaster, was due to the honor in which he held a good boy in preference to a clever boy? Most certainly Paul could discern in the church many jealousies to which the superior abilities of those who could speak foreign tongues, and those

who could prophecy or preach well, gave rise. So, then, while he extols the grace of love, he seems rather to disparage knowledge; at least, he uses an illustration which tends to show that the kind of knowledge we pride ourselves in, is not the most reliable thing in the world. Paul remembered that he was once a child. A very good thing for any of us to bear in mind. If we forget it, our sympathies are soon dried up, our temper is apt to get churlish, our opinions may be rather overbearing, and our selfishness very repulsive. The foremost man of his day in the Christian church, and exerting the widest influence among the converts to Christ, Paul thought of the little while ago when he was a young child, and he thought of it very opportunely too. Though he might have hinted at the attainments he had made or the high office he held, and laid claim to some degree of respect, he rather looks back at his humble beginnings. If there is wisdom in his reflection, there is to my mind a vein of pleasantry in his manner of expressing it. "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Thus he compares two stages of his natural life, and it serves him for a parable. In spiritual knowledge he felt himself to be then in his infancy. His maturity, his thorough manhood, lay before him in prospect. He could easily imagine a future in which he should look back on his present self as a mere tyro, groping his way amidst the shadows of his own fancy. "For now," he says, "we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Here he employs one or two fresh figures. "Through a glass!" What kind of a glass he alluded to, we may not be able exactly to determine. Well; we will leave that question for the critics to disagree about. It is enough for us that the meaning is obvious. There is all the difference between viewing an object through an obscure medium, and closely inspecting it with the naked eye. We must have the power of vision in either case, but in the latter case we can use it to more advantage. "Now we see through a glass, darkly." Darkly—in a riddle! So weak are our perceptions of mind, that plain truths often puzzle us. The words that teach us are pictures which need explanation. The thoughts that stir us are visions which coat in our brains and want rectifying. Oh, for clearer vision! Oh, for more perfect knowledge! Mark you, brethren, it is a matter of congratulation that we do see; though we have much cause for diffidence, because we do but "see through a glass, darkly." Thank God

we do know; but let it check our conceit, We know only in part. Beloved, the objects we look at are distant, and we are near-sighted. The revelation of God is ample and profound, but our understanding is weak and shallow.

There are some things which we count very precious now, which will soon be of no value to us whatever. There are some things that we know or think we know, and we pride ourselves a good deal upon our knowledge; but when we shall become men we shall set no more value upon that knowledge than a child does upon his toys when he grows up to be a man. Our spiritual manhood in heaven will discard many things which we now count precious, as a full grown man discards the treasures of his childhood. And there are many things that we have been accustomed to see that, after this transient life has passed, we shall see no more. Though we delighted in them, and they pleased our eyes while sojourning on earth, they will pass away as a dream when one awaketh; we shall never see them again, and never want to see them; for our eyes in clearer light, anointed with eye-salve, shall see brighter visions, and we shall never regret what we have lost, in the presence of fairer scenes we shall have found. Other things there are that we know now and shall never forget; we shall know them for ever, only in a higher degree, because no longer with a partial knowledge; and there are some things that we see now that we shall see in eternity, only we shall see them there in a clearer light.

So we shall speak upon some things that we do see now, which we are to see more fully and more distinctly hereafter; then enquire how it is we shall see them more clearly; and finish up by considering what this fact teaches us.

I. Among the things that we see now, as many of us as have had our eyes enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is OURSELVES.

To see ourselves is one of the first steps in true religion. The mass of men have never seen themselves. They have seen the flattering image of themselves, and they fancy that to be their own facsimile, but it is not. You and I have been taught of God's Holy Spirit to see our ruin in the fall; we have bemoaned ourselves on account of that fall; we have been made

conscious of our own natural depravity; we have been ground to the very dust by the discovery; we have been shown our actual sinfulness and how we have transgressed against the Most High. We have repented for this, and have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel. Day by day we see a little more of ourselves—nothing very pleasing, I grant you—but something very profitable, for it is a great thing for us to know our emptiness. It is a step towards receiving his fullness. It is something to discover our weakness; it is a step essential towards our participation of divine strength. I suppose the longer we live the more we shall see ourselves; and we shall probably come to this conclusion: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity:" and cry out with Job, "I am vile." The more we shall discover of ourselves, the more we shall be sick of ourselves. But in heaven, I doubt not, we shall find out that we never saw even ourselves in the clearest light, but only as "through a glass, darkly," only as an unriddled thing, as a deep enigma; for we shall understand more about ourselves in heaven than we do now. There we shall see, as we have not yet seen, how desperate a mischief was the Fall, into what a horrible pit we fell, and how fast we were stuck in the miry clay. There shall we see the blackness of sin as we have never seen it here, and understand its hell desert as we could not till we shall look down from yonder starry height whither infinite mercy shall bring us. When we shall be singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," we shall look at the robes that we have washed in his blood, and see how white they are. We shall better understand then than now how much we needed washing—how crimson were the stains and how precious was that blood that effaced those scarlet spots. There, too, shall we know ourselves on the bright side better than we do now. We know to-day that we are saved, and there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; but that robe of righteousness which covers us now, as it shall cover us then, will be better seen by us, and we shall discern how lustrous it is, with its needlework and wrought gold—how much better than the pearls and gems that have decked the robes of monarchs are the blood and righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, who has given himself for us. Here we know that we are adopted. We feel the spirit of sonship; "we cry, Abba, Father;" but there we shall know better what it is to be the sons of God, for here it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when we shall be there, and when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and then

we shall understand to the full what sonship means. So, too, I know today that I am a joint-heir with Christ, but I have a very poor idea of what it is I am heir to; but there shall I see the estates that belong to me; not only see them, but actually enjoy them. A part shall every Christian have in the inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away, that is reserved in heaven for him, because he is in Christ Jesus; one with Christ—by eternal union one. But I am afraid that is very much more a riddle to us than a matter of understanding. We see it as an enigma now, but there our oneness with Christ will be as conspicuous to us and as plain as the letters of the alphabet. There shall we know what it is to be a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; there shall I understand the mystical marriage bond that knits the believer's soul to Christ; there shall I see how, as the branch springs from the stem, my soul stands in union, vital union, with her blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, one thing that we see now which we shall see in a much clearer light hereafter, is "ourselves."

Here, too, we see the CHURCH, but WE SHALL SEE THE CHURCH MUCH MORE CLEARLY BY-AND-BY.

We know there is a church of God. We know that the Lord has a people whom he hath chosen from before the foundation of the world: we believe that these are scattered up and down throughout our land, and many other lands. There are many of them we do not know, many that we should not particularly like, I daresay if we did know them, on account of their outward characteristics; persons of very strange views, and very odd habits perhaps; and yet, for all that, the people of the living God; Now, we know this church, we know its glory, moved with one life, quickened with one Spirit, redeemed with one blood, we believe in this church, and we feel attachment to it for the sake of Jesus Christ, who has married the church as the Bride. But, oh! when we shall get to heaven, how much more we shall know of the church, and how we shall see her face to face, and not "through a glass, darkly." There we shall know something, more of the numbers of the chosen than we do now, it may be to our intense surprise. There we shall find some amongst the company of God's elect, whom we in our bitterness of spirit had condemned, and there we shall miss some who, in our charity, we have conceived to be perfectly secure. We shall know better then who are the Lord's and who are not than we

ever can know here. Here all our processes of discernment fail us. Judas comes in with the apostles, and Demas takes his part among the saints, but there we shall know the righteous, for we shall see them; there will be one flock and one Shepherd, and he that on the throne doth reign for evermore shall be glorified. We shall understand then, what the history of the church has been in all the past, and why it has become so strange a history of conflict and conquest. Probably, we shall know more of the history of the church in the future. From that higher elevation and brighter atmosphere we shall understand better what are the Lord's designs concerning his people in the latter day; and what glory shall redound to his own name from his redeemed ones, when he shall have gathered together all that are called and chosen and faithful from among the sons of men. This is one of the joys we are looking for, that we shall come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven; and have fellowship with those who have fellowship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thirdly. Is it not possible, nay, is it not certain, that in the next state WE SHALL KNOW MORE OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD THAN WE DO NOW?

Here we see the providence of God, but it is in a glass, darkly. The apostle says "through" a glass. There was glass in the apostles' days, not a substance such as our windows are now made of, but thick dull coloured glass, not much more transparent than that which is used in the manufacture of common bottles, so that looking through a piece of that glass you would not see much. That is like what we now see of divine providence. We believe all things work together for good to them that love God; we have seen how they work together for good in some cases, and experimentally proved it to be so. But still it is rather a matter of faith than a matter of sight with us. We cannot tell how "every dark and bending line meets in the center of his love." We do not yet perceive how he will make those dark dispensations of trials and afflictions that come upon his people really to subserve his glory and their lasting happiness; but up there we shall see providence, as it were, face to face; and I suppose it will be amongst our greatest surprises, the discovery of how the Lord dealt with us. "Why," we shall some of us say, "we prayed

against those very circumstances which were the best that, could have been appointed for us." "Ah!" another will say, "I have fretted and troubled myself over what was, after all, the richest mercy the Lord ever sent." Sometimes I have known persons refuse a letter at the door, and it has happened, in some cases, that there has been something very valuable in it, and the postman has said, afterwards, "You did not know the contents, or else you would not have refused it." And often God has sent us, in the black envelope of trial, such a precious mass of mercy, that if we had known what was in it, we should have taken it in, and been glad to pay for it—glad to give it house room, to entertain it; but because it looked black we were prone to shut our door against it. Now, up there we shall know not only more of ourselves, but perceive the reasons of many of God's dealings with us on a larger scale; and we shall there perhaps discover that wars that devastated nations, and pestilences that fill graves, and earthquakes that make cities tremble, are, after all, necessary cogs in the great wheel of the divine machinery; and he who sits upon the throne at this moment, and rules supremely every creature that is either in heaven, or earth, or hell, will there make it manifest to us that his government was right. It is good to think in these times when ever; thing seems loosening, that "the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." It must come out right in the long run; it must be well; every part and portion must work together with a unity of design to promote God's glory and the saint's good. We shall see it there! and we shall lift up our song with new zest and joy, as fresh displays of the wisdom and goodness of God, whose ways are past finding out, are unfolded to our admiring view.

Fourthly. It is surely no straining of the text to say, that, though here we know something of THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH, by-and-by, in a few months or years at the longest, we shall know a great deal more than we do now. There are some grand doctrines, brethren and sisters, we dearly love, but though we love them, our understanding is too feeble to grasp them fully. We account them to be mysteries; we reverently acknowledge them, yet we dare not attempt to explain them. They are matters of faith to us. It may be that in heaven there shall be counsels of eternal wisdom into which no saints or

angels can peer. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter. Surely, no creature will ever be able, even when exalted to heaven, to comprehend all the thoughts of the Creator. We shall never be omniscient—we cannot be. God alone knoweth everything, and understandeth everything. But how much more of authentic truth shall we discern when the mists and shadows have dissolved; and how much more shall we understand when raised to that higher sphere and endowed with brighter faculties, none of us can tell. Probably, things that puzzle us here will be as plain as possible there. We shall perhaps smile at our own ignorance. I have fancied sometimes that the elucidations of learned doctors of divinity, if they could be submitted to the very least in the kingdom of heaven, would only cause them to smile at the learned ignorance of the sons of earth. Oh! how little we do know, but how much we shall know! I am sure we shall know, for it is written, "Then shall I know even as also I have known." We now see things in a mist—"men as trees, walking"—a doctrine here, and a doctrine there. And we are often at a loss to conjecture how one part harmonizes with another part of the same system, or to make out how all these doctrines are consistent. This knot cannot be untied, that gnarl cannot be unravelled, but -

"Then shall I see, and hear and know
All I desired or wish'd below;
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

But, my dear brethren and sisters, having kept you thus far in the outer courts, I would fain lead you into the temple; or, to change the figure, if in the beginning I have set forth good wine, certainly I am not going to bring out that which is worse; rather would I have you say, as the ruler of the feast did to the bridegroom, "thou has kept the good wine until now." **HERE WE SEE JESUS CHRIST, BUT WE DO NOT SEE HIM AS WE SHALL SEE HIM SOON.** We have seen him by faith in such a way, that we have beheld our burdens laid on him, and our iniquities carried by him into the wilderness, where, if they be sought for, they shall not be found. We have seen enough of Jesus to know that "he is altogether lovely;" we can say of him, he "is all my salvation, and all my desire." Sometimes, when he throws up the lattice, and shows himself through

those windows of agate and gates of carbuncle, in the ordinances of his house, at the Lord's Supper especially, the King's beauty has entranced us even to our heart's ravishment; yet all we have ever seen is somewhat like the report which the Queen of Sheba had of Solomon's wisdom. When we once get to the court of the Great King we shall declare that the half has not been told us. We shall say, "mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Brethren, is not this the very cream of heaven? There have been many suggestions of what we shall do in heaven, and what we shall enjoy, but they all seem to me to be wide of the mark compared with this one, that we shall be with Jesus, be like him, and shall behold his glory. Oh, to see the feet that were nailed, and to touch the hand that was pierced, and to look upon the head that wore the thorns, and to bow before him who is ineffable love, unspeakable condescension, infinite tenderness! Oh, to bow before him, and to kiss that blessed face! Jesu, what better do we want than to see thee by shine own light—to see thee, and speak with thee, as when a man speaketh with his friend? It is pleasant to talk about this, but what will it be there when the pearl gates open? The streets of gold will have small attraction to us, and the harps of angels will but slightly enchant us, compared with the King in the midst of the throne. He it is who shall rivet our gaze, absorb our thoughts, enchain our affection, and move all our sacred passions to their highest pitch of celestial ardor. We shall see Jesus.

Once again (and here we come into the deep things), beyond a doubt WE SHALL ALSO SEE GOD. It is written that the pure in heart shall see God. God is seen now in his works and in his word. Little indeed could these eyes bear of the beatific vision, yet we have reason to expect that, as far as creatures can bear the sight of the infinite Creator, we shall be permitted to see God. We read that Aaron and certain chosen ones saw the throne of God, and the brightness as it were of sapphire stone—light, pure as jasper. In heaven it is the presence of God that is the light thereof. God's more immediately dwelling in the midst of the new Jerusalem is its peerless glory and peculiar bliss. We shall then understand more of God than we do now; we shall come nearer to him, be more familiar with him, be more filled with him. The love of God shall be shed abroad in our hearts; we shall know our Father as we yet know him not; We shall know the Son to a fuller degree than he has yet revealed himself to us, and we

shall know the Holy Spirit in his personal love and tenderness towards us, beyond all those influences and operations which have soothed us in our sorrows and guided us in our perplexities here below. I leave your thoughts and your desires to follow the teaching of the Spirit. As for me, I cower before the thought while I revel in it. I, who have strained my eyes while gazing at nature, where the things that are made show the handiwork of God; I, whose conscience has been awe-struck as I listened to the voice of God proclaiming his holy law; I, whose heart has been melted while there broke on my ears the tender accents of his blessed gospel in those snatches of sacred melody that relieve the burden of prophecy; I, who have recognised in the babe of Bethlehem the hope of Israel; in the man of Nazareth, the Messiah that should come; in the victim of Calvary, the one Mediator; in the risen Jesus, the well-beloved Son—to me, verily, God incarnate has been so palpably revealed that I have almost seen God, for I have, as it were, seen him in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily doth dwell. Still I "see through a glass, darkly." Illumine these dark senses, waken this drowsy conscience, purify my heart, give me fellowship with Christ, end thee bear me up, translate me to the third heavens; so I may, so I can, so I shall see God. But what that means, or what it is, ah me! I cannot tell.

II. We proposed to enquire, in the second place, HOW THIS VERY REMARKABLE CHANGE SHALL BE EFFECTED? WHY IS IT THAT WE SHALL BE MORE CLEARLY THEN THAN NOW? We cannot altogether answer the question, but one or two suggestions may help us. No doubt many of these things will be more clearly revealed in the next state. Here the light is like the dawn: it is dim twilight. In heaven it will be the blaze of noon. God has declared somethings of himself by the mouth of his holy prophets and apostles. He has been pleased, through the lips of his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, to speak to us more plainly, to show us more openly the thoughts of his heart and the counsel of his will. These are the first steps to knowledge. But there the light will be as the light of seven days, and there the manifestation of all the treasures of wisdom shall be brighter and clearer than it is now; for God, the only-wise God, shall unveil to us the mysteries, and exhibit to us the glories of his everlasting kingdom. The revelation we now have suits us as men clad in our poor mortal bodies; the revelation then will suit us as immortal

spirits. When we have been raised from the dead, it will be suitable to our immortal spiritual bodies. Here, too, we are at a distance from many of the things we long to know something of, but there we shall be nearer to them. We shall then be on a vantage ground, with the entire horizon spread out before us. Our Lord Jesus is, as to his personal presence, far away from us. We see him through the telescope of faith, but then we shall see him face to face. His literal and bodily presence is in heaven, since he was taken up, and we need to be taken up likewise to be with him where he is that we may literally behold him. Get to the fountain-head, and you understand more; stand in the center, and things seem regular and orderly. If you could stand in the sun and see the orbits in which the planets revolve round that central luminary, it would become clear enough; but for many an age astronomers were unable to discover anything of order, and spoke of the planets as progressive, retrograde, and standing still. Let us get to God, the center, and we shall see how providence in order revolves round his sapphire throne. We, ourselves, too, when we get to heaven, shall be better qualified to see than we are now. It would be an inconvenience for us to know here as much as we shall know in heaven. No doubt we have sometimes thought that if we had better ears it would be a great blessing. We have wished we could hear ten miles off; but probably we should be no better off; we might hear too much, and the sounds might drown each other. Probably our sight is not as good as we wish it were, but a large increase of ocular power might not be of any use to us. Our natural organs are fitted for our present sphere of being; and our mental faculties are, in the case of most of us, properly adapted to our moral requirements. If we knew more of our own sinfulness, we might be driven to despair; if we knew more of God's glory, we might die of terror; if we had more understanding, unless we had equivalent capacity to employ it, we might be filled with conceit and tormented with ambition. But up there we shall have our minds and our systems strengthened to receive more, without the damage that would come to us here from overleaping the boundaries of order, supremely appointed and divinely regulated. We cannot here drink the wine of the kingdom, it is too strong for us; but up there we shall drink it new in our heavenly Father's kingdom, without fear of the intoxications of pride, or the staggerings of passions. We shall know even as we are known. Besides, dear friends, the atmosphere of heaven is so much clearer than

this, that I do not wonder we can see better there. Here Here is the smoke of daily care; the constant dust of toil; the mist of trouble perpetually rising. We cannot be expected to see much in such a smoky atmosphere as this; but when we shall pass beyond, we shall find no clouds ever gather round the sun to hide his everlasting brightness. There all is clear. The daylight is serene as the noonday. We shall be in a clearer atmosphere and brighter light.

III. The practical lessons we may learn from this subject demand your attention before I close. Methinks there is an appeal to our gratitude. Let us be very thankful for all we do see. Those, who do not see now—ah, not even "through a glass, darkly"—shall never see face to face. The eyes that never see Christ by faith shall never see him with joy in heaven. If thou hast never seen thyself a leper, defiled with sin and abashed with penitence, thou shalt never see thyself redeemed from sin, renewed by grace, a white-robed spirit. If thou hast no sense of God's presence here, constraining thee to worship and love him, thou shalt have no sight of his glory hereafter, introducing thee to the fullness of joy and pleasure for evermore. Oh! be glad for the sight you have, dear brother, dear sister. It is God that gave it to thee. Thou art one born blind; and "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." This miracle has been wrought on thee; thou canst see, and thou canst say: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Our text teaches us that this feeble vision is very hopeful. You shall see better by-and-by. Oh, you know not how soon—it may be a day or two hence—that we shall be in glory! God may so have ordained it, that betwixt us and heaven there may be but a step.

Another lesson is that of forbearance one with another. Let the matters we have spoken of soften the asperity of our debates; let us feel when we are disputing about points of difficulty, that we need not get cross about them, because after all there are limits to our present capacity as well as to our actual knowledge. Our disputes are often childish. We might as well leave some questions in abeyance for a little while. Two persons in the dark have differed about a color, and they are wrangling about it. If we brought candles in and held them to the color, the candles would not

show what it was; but if we look at it to-morrow morning, when the sun shines, we shall be able to tell. How many difficulties in the word of God are like this! Not yet can they be justly discriminated; till the day dawn, the apocalyptic symbols will not be all transparent to our own understanding. Besides, we have no time to waste while there is so much work to do. Much time is already spent. Sailing is dangerous; the winds are high; the sea is rough. Trim the ship; keep the sails in good order; manage her and keep her off quicksands. As to certain other matters, we must wait till we get into the fair haven, and are able to talk with some of the bright spirits now before the throne. When some of the things they know shall be opened unto us, we shall confess the mistakes we made, and rejoice in the light we shall receive.

Should not this happy prospect excite our aspiration and make us very desirous to be there? It is natural for us to want to know, but we shall not know as we are known till we are present with the Lord. We are at school now—children at school. We shall go to the college soon—the great University of Heaven—and take our degree there. Yet some of us, instead of being anxious to go, are shuddering at the thought of death—the gate of endless joy we dread to enter! There are many persons who die suddenly; some die in their sleep, and many have passed out of time into eternity when it has scarcely been known by those who have been sitting at their bedsides. Depend upon it, there is no pain in dying; the pain is in living. When they leave off living here, they have done with pain. Do not blame death for what it does not deserve; it is life that lingers on in pain: death is the end of it. The man that is afraid of dying ought to be afraid of living. Be content to die whenever the Master's will shall bid thee. Commit thy spirit to his keeping. Who that hath seen but the glimpses of his beaming countenance doth not long to see his face, that is as the sun shining in his strength? O Lord! thy will be done. Let us speedily behold thee, if so it may be—only this one word, if so it may be. Do we now see, and do we expect to see better? Let us bless the name of the Lord, who hath chosen us of his mercy and of his infinite lovingkindness. On the other hand, let it cause us great anxiety if we have not believed in Jesus, for he that hath not believed in him, dying as he is, will never see the face of God with joy. Oh! unbeliever, be concerned about your soul, and seek thou after him, repair thou to him. Oh! that God would open thy eyes now

in this very house of prayer. Blessed for thee to know in part. Thrice blessed, I say; for as surely as thou knowest in part now, thou shalt fully know hereafter. Be it your happy lot to know him, whom to know is life eternal. God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Nunc Dimittis

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. - Luke 2:29-30

Blessed wert thou, O Simeon, for flesh and blood had not revealed this unto thee; neither had it enabled thee so cheerfully to bid the world farewell. The flesh clings to the earth—it is dust, and owns affluity to the ground out of which it was taken; it loathes to part from mother earth. Even old age, with its infirmities, does not make men really willing to depart out of this world. By nature we hold to life with a terrible tenacity; and even when we sigh over the evils of life, and repine concerning its ills, and fancy that we wish ourselves away, it is probable that our readiness to depart lies only upon the surface, but down deep in our hearts we have no will to go. Flesh and blood had not revealed unto Simeon that he saw God's salvation in that babe which he took out of the arms of Mary, and embraced with eager joy. God's grace had taught him that this was the Savior, and God's grace at the same time loosened the cords which bound him to earth, and made him feel the attractions of the better land. Blessed is that man who has received thy grace a meekness for heaven, and a willingness to depart to that better land: let him magnify the Lord who has wrought so great a work in him. As Paul says, "Thanks be unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Certainly none of us were meet by nature—not even Simeon; the fitness of the venerable man was all the handiwork of God,

and so, also, was his anxiety to obtain the inheritance for which God had prepared him. I trust, brethren, while we consider this morning the preparedness of the saints for heaven, and turn over in our mind those reflections which will make us ready to depart, God's Holy Spirit, sent forth from the Father, may make us also willing to leave these mortal shores, and launch upon the eternal sea at the bidding of our Father, God.

We shall note, this morning, first, that every believer may be assured of departing in peace; but that, secondly, some believers feel a special readiness to depart now: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;" and, thirdly, that there are words of encouragement to produce in us the like readiness: "according to thy word." There are words of Holy Writ which afford richest consolation in prospect of departure.

I. First, then, let us start with the great general principle, which is full of comfort; namely, this, that **EVERY BELIEVER MAY BE ASSURED OF ULTIMATELY DEPARTING IN PEACE**. This is no privilege peculiar to Simeon, it is common to all the saints, since the grounds upon which this privilege rests are not monopolised by Simeon, but belong to us all.

Observe, first, that all the saints have seen God's salvation, therefore, should they all depart in peace. It is true, we cannot take up the infant Christ into our arms, but he is "formed in us, the hope of glory." It is true, we cannot look upon him with these mortal eyes, but we have seen him with those eyes immortal which death cannot dim—the eyes of our own spirit which have been opened by God's Holy Spirit. A sight of Christ with the natural eye is not saving, for thousands saw him and then cried, "Crucify him, crucify him." After all, it was in Simeon's case the spiritual eye that saw, the eye of faith that truly beheld the Christ of God; for there were others in the temple who saw the babe; there was the priest who performed the act of circumcision, and the other officials who gathered round the group; but I do not know that any of them saw God's salvation. They saw the little innocent child that was brought there by its parents, but they saw nothing remarkable in him; perhaps, Simeon and Anna, alone of all those who were in the temple, saw with the inward eye the real Anointed of God revealed as a feeble infant. So, though you and I miss the outward sight of Christ, we need not regret it, it is but secondary

as a privilege; if with the inner sight we have seen the Incarnate God, and accepted him as our salvation, we are blessed with holy Simeon. Abraham saw Christ's day before it dawned, and even thus, after it has passed, we see it, and with faithful Abraham we are glad. We have looked unto him, and we are lightened. We have beheld the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. In the "despised and rejected of men" we have seen the anointed Savior; in the crucified and buried One, who afterwards rose again, and ascended into glory, we have seen salvation, full, free, finished. Why, therefore, should we think ourselves less favored than Simeon? From like causes like results shall spring: we shall depart in peace, for we have seen God's salvation.

Moreover, believers already enjoy peace as much as ever Simeon did. No man can depart in peace who has not lived in peace; but he who has attained peace in life shall possess peace in death, and an eternity of peace after death. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus has bequeathed us peace, saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." "For he is our peace," and "the fruit of the Spirit is peace." We are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. Whatever peace flowed in the heart of Simeon, I am sure it was not of a diviner nature than that which dwells in the bosom of every true believer. If sin be pardoned, the quarrel is ended; if the atonement is made, then is peace established, a peace covenanted to endure for ever. We are now led in the paths of peace; we walk the King's highway, of which it is written, "no lion shall be there;" we are led beside the still waters, and made to lie down in green pastures. We feel no slavish fear of God, though he be "a consuming fire" even to us; we tremble no longer to approach into his presence, who deigns to be our Father. The precious blood upon the mercy-seat has made it a safe place for us to resort at all times; boldness has taken the place of trembling. The throne of God is our rejoicing, though once it was our terror.

"Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame;
Our God appear'd 'consuming fire,'
And vengeance was his name."

Therefore, brethren, having peace with God, we may be sure that we shall "depart in peace." We need not fear that the God of all consolation, who has already enriched us in communion with himself, and peace in Christ Jesus, will desert us at the last. He will help us to sing a sweet swan-song, and our tabernacle shall be gently taken down, to be rebuilt more enduringly in the fair country beyond Jordan.

Furthermore, we may rest assured of the same peace as that which Simeon possessed, since we are, if true believers, equally God's servants. The text says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." But, in this case, one servant cannot claim a privilege above the rest of the household. The same position towards God, the same reward from God. Simeon, a servant; you also, my brother, a servant; he who saith to Simeon, "depart in peace," will say also the same to you. The Lord is always very considerate towards his old servants, and takes care of them when their strength faileth. The Amalekite of old had a servant who was an Egyptian, and when he fell sick he left him, and he would have perished if David had not had compassion on him; but our God is no Amalekite slave-owner, neither doth he cast off his wornout servants. "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." David felt this, for he prayed to God, and said, "Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." If thou hast been clothed in thy Lord's livery of grace, and taught to obey his will, he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; he will not sell thee into the hands of thine adversary, nor suffer thy soul to perish. A true master counts it a part of his duty to protect his servants, and our great Lord and Prince will show himself strong on the behalf of the very least of all his followers, and will bring them every one into the rest which remaineth for his people. Do you really serve God? Remember, "his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Are ye taught of the Spirit to obey the commandments of love? Do you strive to walk in holiness? If so, fear not death; it shall have no terrors to you. All the servants of God shall depart in peace.

There is also another reflection which strengthens our conviction that all believers shall depart in peace, namely, this: that up till now all things in their experience have been according to God's word. Simeon's basis of

hope for a peaceful departure was "according to thy word;" and, surely, no Scripture is of private interpretation, or to be reserved for one believer to the exclusion of the rest? The promises of God, which are "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus," are sure to all the seed: not to some of the children is the promise made, but all the grace-born are heirs. There are not special promises hedged round and set apart for Simeon and a few saints of old time, but with all who are in Christ, their federal head, the covenant is made, and stands "ordered in all things and sure." If, then, Simeon, as a believer in the Lord, had a promise that he should depart in peace, I have also a like promise if I am in Christ. What God hath said in his word Simeon lays hold of, and none can say him nay; but if, with the same grace-given faith, I also grasp it for myself, who shall challenge my right? God will not violate his promise to one of his people any more than to another, and, consequently, when our turn shall come to gather up our feet in the bed and to resign our spirit, some precious passage in sacred writ shall be as a rod and a staff to us that we may fear no evil.

These four considerations, gathered out of the text itself, may give fourfold certainty to the assurance that every believer, at the hour of his departure, shall possess peace.

For a moment, review attentively the words of the aged saint: they have much instruction in them. Every believer shall in death depart in the same sense as Simeon did. The word here used is suggestive and encouraging: it may be applied either to escape from confinement, or to deliverance from toil. The Christian man in the present state is like a bird in a cage: his body imprisons his soul. His spirit, it is true, ranges heaven and earth, and laughs at the limits of matter, space, and time; but for all that, the flesh is a poor scabbard unworthy of the glittering soul, a mean cottage unfit for a princely spirit, a clog, a burden, and a fetter. When we would watch and pray, we find full often that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. "We that are in this body do groan." The fact is, we are caged birds; but the day cometh when the great Master shall open the cage door, and release his prisoners. We need not dread the act of unfastening the door, for it will give to our soul the liberty for which it only pines, and then, with the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold, though aforetime it had lien among the pots, it

will soar into its native air, singing all the way with a rapture beyond imagination. Simeon looked upon dying as a mode of being let loose—a deliverance out of durance vile, an escape from captivity, a release from bondage. The like redemption shall be dealt unto us. How often does my soul feel like an unhatched chick, shut up within a narrow shell, in darkness and discomfort! The life within labors hard to chip and break the shell, to know a little more of the great universe of truth, and see in clearer light the infinite of divine love. Oh, happy day, when the shell shall be broken, and the soul, complete in the image of Christ, shall enter into the freedom for which she is preparing! We look for that, and we shall have it. God, who gave us to aspire to holiness and spirituality and to likeness to himself, never implanted those aspirations in us out of mockery. He meant to gratify these holy longings, or, else, he would not have excited them. Ere long we, like Simeon, shall depart—that is, we shall be set free to go in peace.

I said that the word meant also a release from toil. It is as though Simeon had been standing at the table of his Master like a servant waiting on his Lord. You know the parable in which Christ says that the master does not first bid his servant sit down and eat bread, but commands him thus, "Gird thyself and serve me." See then, Simeon stands yonder, girt and serving his Master; but by-and-by, when the Master sees fit, he turns round and says to Simeon, "Now thou mayest depart, and take thine own meat, thy work is done." Or, we may use another simile, and picture Simeon sitting at the King's gate, like Mordecai, ready for any errand which may be appointed him, but at length his time of attendance expires, and the great monarch bids him depart in peace. Or, yet again, we may view him as a reaper toiling amid the harvest beneath a burning sun, parched with thirst and wearied with labor, and lo! the great Boaz came into the field, and, having saluted his servant, says to him, "Thou hast fulfilled like an hireling thy day: take thou thy wage, and depart in peace." The like shall happen to all true servants of Christ; they shall rest from their labors where no weariness shall vex them, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." They shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and enjoy the rest which remaineth for them. There is much of comfortable thought if we meditate upon this.

But, note the words again. You perceive that the departure of the child of God is appointed of the Lord. "Now lettest thou thy servant depart." The servant must not depart from his labor without his Masters permission, else would he be a runaway, dishonest to his position. The good servant dares not stir till his Master says, "Depart in peace." Simeon was content to wait till he received permission to depart, and it becomes us all to acquiesce cheerfully in the Lord's appointment, whether he lengthens or shortens, our life. It is certain that without the Lord's will no power can remove us. No wind from the wilderness shall drive our souls into the land of darkness, no fiends with horrid clamor can drag us down to the abyss beneath, no destruction that wasting at noonday, or pestilence waiting in darkness can cut short our mortal career. We shall not die till God shall say to us, "My child, depart from the field of service, and the straitness of this thy tabernacle, and enter into rest." Till God commands us we cannot die, and when he bids us go it shall be sweet for us to leave this world.

Note, further, that the words before us clearly show that the believer's departure is attended with a renewal of this divine benediction. "Depart in peace," saith God. It is a farewell, such as we give to a friend: it is a benediction, such as Aaron, the priest of God, might pronounce over a suppliant whose sacrifice was accepted. Eli said unto Hannah, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." Around the sinner's death-bed the tempest thickens, and he hears the rumblings of the eternal storm: his soul is driven away, either amid the thunderings of curses loud and deep, or else in the dread calm which evermore forebodes the hurricane. "Depart, ye cursed," is the horrible sound which is in his ears. But, not so the righteous. He feels the Father's hand of benediction on his head, and underneath him are the everlasting arms. The best wine with him is kept to the last. At eventide it is light; and, as his sun is going down, it grows more glorious, and lights up all the surroundings with a celestial glow, whereat bystanders wonder, and exclaim "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That pilgrim sets out upon a happy journey to whom Jehovah saith, "Depart in peace." This is a sole finger laid upon the closing eyelid by a tender father, and it ensures a happy waking, where eyes are never wet with tears.

I cannot detain you longer over these words: suffice it to add, that whatever belonged to Simeon in this benediction must not be regarded as peculiar to him alone, but as, in their measure, the possession of all believers. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

II. But now, secondly, we remind you, that **SOME BELIEVERS ARE CONSCIOUS OF A SPECIAL READINESS TO DEPART IN PEACE.**

When do they feel this? Answer: first, when their graces are vigorous. All the graces are in all Christians, but they are not all there in the same proportion, nor are they at all times in the same degree of strength. In certain believers faith is strong and active. Now, when faith becomes "the evidence of things not seen," and "the substance of things hoped for," then the soul is sure to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Faith brings the clusters of Eschol into the desert, and makes the tribes long for the land that floweth with milk and honey. When the old Gauls had drunk of the wines of Italy, they said, "Let us cross the Alps, and take possession of the vineyards, which yield such generous draughts." So, when faith makes us realize the joy's of heaven, then it is that our soul stands waiting on the wing, watching for the signal from the glory-land.

The same is true of the grace of hope, for hope peers into the things invisible. She brings near to us the golden gates of the Eternal City. Like Moses, our hope climbs to the top of Pisgah, and beholds the Canaan of the true Israel. Moses had a delightful vision of the promised land when he gazed from Nebo's brow, and saw it all from Dan to Beersheba: so also hope drinks in the charming prospect of the goodly fund and Lebanon, and then she exclaims exultingly, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Heaven realised and anticipated by hope renders the thought of departure most precious to the heart.

And the like, also, is the effect of the grace of love upon us. Love puts the heart, like a sacrifice, on the altar, and then she fetches heavenly fire, and kindles it; and, as soon as ever the heart begins to burn and glow like a

sacrifice, what is the consequence? Why, it ascends like pillars of smoke up to the throne of God. It is the very instinct of love to draw us nearer to the person whom we love; and, when love towards God pervades the soul, then the spirit cries, "Make haste, my beloved, be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of separation." Perfect love, casting out all fear, cries, "Up, and away."

"Let me be with thee, where thou art,
My Savior my eternal rest!
Then only will this longing heart
Be fully and for ever blest."

I might thus mention all the graces, but suffer one of them to suffice! one which is often overlooked, but is priceless as the gold of Ophir—it is the grace of humility. Is it strange that the lower a man sinks in his own esteem the higher does he rise before his God? Is it not written, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?" Simeon had no conceit of his own importance in the world, else he would have said, "Lord, let me stay, and be an apostle. Surely I shall be needed at this juncture to lend my aid in the auspicious era which has just commenced?" But no, he felt himself so little so inconsiderable, that now that he had attained his heart's wish and seen God's salvation, he was willing to depart in peace. Humility by making us lie low helps us to think highly of God, and, consequently, to desire much to be with God. O to have our graces always flourishing, for then shall we always be ready to depart, and willing to be offered up. Lack of grace entangles us, but to abound in grace is to live in the suburbs of the New Jerusalem.

Another time, when believers are thus ready to go, is when their assurance is clear. It is not always so with even the most mature Christians, and some true saints have not yet attained to assurance; they are truly saved, and possess a genuine faith, but as assurance is the cream of faith, the milk has not stood long enough to produce the cream; they have not yet come to the flower of assurance, for their faith is but a tender plant. Give a man assurance of heaven and he will be eager to enjoy it. While he doubts his own security, he wants to linger here. He is like the Psalmist when he asked that God would permit him to recover his

strength before he went hence, and was no more. Some things were not yet in order with David, and he would stay awhile till they were. But, when the ship is all loaded, the crew on board, and the anchor heaved, the favoring breeze is desired that the barque may speed on its voyage. When a man is prepared for his journey, ready to depart, he does not care to linger long in these misty valleys, but pants for the sunny summits of the mount of God, whereon standeth the palace of the Great King. Let a man know that he is resting upon the precious blood of Christ, let him by diligent self-examination perceive in himself the marks of regeneration, and by the witness of his own spirit and by the infallible witness of the Holy Ghost bearing witness with his own spirit, let him be certified that he is born of God, and the natural consequence will be that he will say, "Now let me loose from all things here below and let me enter into the rest which is assuredly my own." O you that have lost your assurance by negligent living, by falling into sin, or by some other form of backsliding, I do not wonder that you hug the world, for you are afraid you have no other portion; but with those who read their titles clear to mansions in the skies it will be otherwise. They will not ask to linger in this place of banishment, but will sing in their hearts, as we did just now:

"Jerusalem my happy home,
Name ever dear to me;
when shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace and thee?"

Beloved, furthermore, saints feel most their readiness to go when their communion with Christ is near and sweet; when Christ hides himself we are afraid to talk of dying, or of heaven; but, when he only shows himself through the lattices, and we can see those eyes which are "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set;" when our own soul melteth even at that hazy sight of him, as through a glass darkly. Oh then we fain would be at home, and our soul crieth out for the day when her eyes shall see the King in his beauty, in the land that is very far off. Have you never felt the heavenly homesickness? Have you never pined for the home-bringing? Surely, when your heart has been full of the bridegroom's beauty, and your soul has been ravished with his dear and

ever precious love, you have said: "When shall the day break, and the shadows flee away? Why are his chariots so long in coming?" You have swooned, as it were, with love-sickness for your precious Savior, thirsting to see him as he is, and to be like him. The world is black when Christ is fair; it is a poor heap of ashes when he is altogether lovely to us. When a precious Christ is manifested to our spirits, we feel that we could see Jesus and die. Put out these eyes, there is nothing more for them to see when they have seen him. "Black sun," said Rutherford, "black moon, black stars, but inconceivably bright and glorious Lord Jesus." How often did that devout man write words of this sort: "Oh if I had to swim through seven hells to reach him, if he would but say to me, like Peter, 'Come unto me,' I would go unto him not only on the sea, but on the boiling floods of hell, if I might but reach him, and come to him." I will pause here and give you his own words: "I profess to you I have no rest, I have no ease, till I be over head and ears in love's ocean. If Christ's love (that fountain of delight) were laid as open to me as I would wish, Oh, how I would drink, and drink abundantly.! I half call his absence cruel; and the mask and veil on Christ's face a cruel covering that hideth such a fair, fair face from a sick soul. I dare not upbraid him, but his absence is a mountain of iron upon my heavy heart. Oh, when shall we meet? Oh, how long is it to the dawning of the marriage day? O sweet Lord Jesus, take wide steps; O my Lord, come over the mountains at one stride! O my Beloved, be like a roe, or a young hart, on the mountains of separation. Oh, if he would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lamb's wife for her Husband! Since he looked upon me my heart is not mine; he hath run away to heaven with it." When these strong throes, these ardent pangs of insatiable desire come upon a soul that is fully saturated with Christ's love, through having been made to lean its head upon his bosom, and to receive the kisses of his mouth, then is the time when the soul saith, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

So again, beloved, saints have drawn their anchor up and spread their sails, when they have been made to hold loose by all there is in this world; and that is generally when they hold fastest by the world to come. To many this world is very sweet, very fair, but God puts bitters into the cup of his children; when their nest is soft, he fills it with thorns to make

them long to fly. Alas, that it should be so, but some of God's servants seem as if they had made up their minds to find a rest beneath the moon. They are moon-struck who hope to do so. All the houses in this plague-stricken land are worm-eaten and let in the rain and wind: my soul longeth to find a rest among the ivory palaces of thy land, O Immanuel.

Brethren, it often happens that the loss of dear friends, or the treachery of those we trusted, or bodily sickness, or depression of spirit, may help to unloose the holdfasts which enchain us to this life; and then we are enabled to say with David in one of the most precious little Psalms in the whole Book, the 131st, "I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child." I have often thought that if David had said, "my soul is even as a weaning child," it would have been far more like most of God's people. But to be weaned, quite weaned from the world, to turn away from her consolations altogether, this it is which makes us cry, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Even as the psalmist when he said, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee."

Again, saints are willing to depart when their work is almost done. This will not be the case with many here present, perhaps, but it was so with Simeon. Good old man! He had been very constant in his devotions, but on this occasion he came into the temple, and there, it is said, he took the child in his arms, and blessed God. Once more he delivered his soul of its adoration—once more he blended his praise with the songs of angels. When he had done that, he openly confessed his faith: another important work of every believer—for he said, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He bore public testimony to the child Jesus, and declared that he should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles." Having done that, he bestowed his fatherly benediction upon the child's parents, Joseph and his mother; he blessed them, and said unto Mary "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Now, we read that David, after he had served his generation, fell on sleep; it is time for man to sleep when his life's work is finished. Simeon felt he had done all: he had blessed God; he had declared his faith; he had borne testimony to Christ; he had bestowed his benediction upon godly people; and so he said, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Ah, Christian people, you will never be

willing to go if you are idle. You lazy lie-a-beds, who do little or nothing for Christ, you sluggish servants, whose garden is overgrown with weeds, no wonder that you do not want to see your master! Your sluggishness accuses you, and makes you cowards. Only he who has put out his talents to good interest will be willing to render an account of his stewardship. But when a man feels, without claiming any merit, that he has fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, then will he rejoice in the crown which is laid up for him in heaven, and he will long to wear it. Throw your strength into the Lord's work, dear brethren—all your strength; spare none of your powers: let body, soul, and spirit be entirely consecrated to God, and used at their utmost stretch. Get through your day's work, for the sooner you complete it, and have fulfilled like an hireling your day, the more near and sweet shall be the time when the shadows lengthen, and God shall say to you, as a faithful servant, "Depart in peace!"

One other matter, I think, helps to make saints willing to go, and that is when they see or foresee the prosperity of the church of God. Good old Simeon saw that Christ was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel; and, therefore, he said, "Lord, lettest now thy servant depart in peace." I have known many a godly deacon who has seen a church wither and decay, its ministry become unprofitable, and its membership become divided; the dear old man has poured out his soul in agony before God, and when at last the Lord has sent a man to seek the good of Israel, and the church has been built up, he has been overjoyed, and he has said, "now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." It must have reconciled John Knox to die when he had seen the reformation safely planted throughout all Scotland. It made dear old Latimer, as he stood on the fagot, feel happy when he could say, "Courage, brother, we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be blown out." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," Ay, that we do, and we vehemently desire her prosperity, and if we can see Christ glorified, error defeated, truth established, sinners saved, and saints sanctified our spirit feels she has all she wishes. Like dying, David, when we have said, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," we can fall back upon the pillows and die, for our prayers like those of David the son of Jesse are ended. Let us pray for this peace and this prosperity, and when we see it come, it shall bring

calm and rest to our spirits, so that we shall be willing to depart in peace.

III. I shall call your attention now, for a little while, to the third point, that **THERE ARE WORDS TO ENCOURAGE US TO THE LIKE READINESS TO DEPART.** "According to thy word." Now let us go to the Bible, and take from it seven choice words all calculated to cheer our hearts in the prospect of departure, and the first is Psalm 33:4; "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "We walk"—the Christian does not quicken his pace when he dies; he walked before, and he is not afraid of death, so he calmly walks on. It is a walk through a "shadow." There is no substance in death, it is only a shade. Who needs fear a shadow? It is not a lonely walk—"Thou art with me." Neither is it a walk that need cause us terror; "I will fear no evil:" not only is there no evil, but no fear shall cloud my dying hours. It shall be a departure full of comfort: "Thy rod and thy staff"—a duplicate means shall give us a fullness of consolation. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Take another text, and so follow the direction, "According to thy word." Psalm 37:37: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." If we are perfect, that is sincere; if we are upright, that is honest in heart; our end then assuredly be peace.

Take another word, Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." It is no ordinary thing for a saint to die; it is a spectacle which the eyes of God are delighted with. As king's delight in their pearls and diamonds, and count them precious, so the death-beds of the saints are God's precious things.

Take another, Isaiah 57:2: "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Here is an entrance into peace for the saint, rest on his dying, bed, rest for his body in the grave, rest for his spirit in the bosom of his Lord, and a walking in his uprightness in the immortality above. "According to thy word." Oh, what force there is in these few syllables! When you can preach the word of God you must prevail. Nothing has such marrow and fatness in it as a text

of Scripture. It has a force of comfort all its own. Consider also 1 Corinthians 3:22: "For all things are your's: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's." Now, if death is yours, there can be no sort of reason why you should be afraid of that which is made over to you as a part of your inheritance.

Take the fifteenth chapter and fifty-fourth verse of the same epistle: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." With such a text we need not fear to depart.

And so that other word, the seventh we shall quote, and in that number seven dwelleth perfection of testimony. Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Now, I dare say, many of you have said, "I wish I had a word from God, just like Simeon had, to cheer me in my dying moments." You have it before you; here are seven that I have read to you, most sure words of testimony, unto which you do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. These promises belong to all believers in our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Fear not, then, be not afraid, but rather say, "How lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

I have done the sermon, but we must put a rider to it. Just a word or two to those of you who cannot die in peace because you are not believers in Christ: you have never seen God's salvation, neither are you God's servants. I must deal with you as I have dealt with the saints. I have given them texts of Scripture, for the text saith, "according to thy word;" and I will give you also two passages of Scripture, which will show you those who may not hope to depart in peace.

The first one is negative: it shows who cannot enter heaven, and, consequently, who cannot depart in peace. 1 Corinthians 6:9: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" the unjust, the oppressive, cheats, rogues, "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." I will read these words. I need not explain them, but let every one here who comes under their lash submit to God's word. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators,"—plenty of them in London—"nor idolaters,"—and ye need not worship a God of wood and stone to be idolaters, worship anything but God, you are an idolater—"nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,"—alas, some of these come to this house regularly,—"nor revilers," that is, backbiters!, cavillers, tale-bearers, swearers, and such like, "nor extortioners,"—you fine twenty percent gentlemen! You who grind poor borrowers with usurious interest. None of you shall inherit the kingdom of God, not one of you. If you come within this list, except God renew your hearts and change you, the holy gates of heaven are shut in your face.

Now, take another text, of a positive character, from the Book of Revelation 21:7: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful,"—that means the cowardly, those that are ashamed of Christ, those that dare not suffer for Christ's sake, those who believe everything, and nothing, and so deny the truth, because they cannot endure to be persecuted; "the fearful and unbelieving,"—that is, those who do not trust a Savior—"and the abominable,"—and they are not scarce, some among the poor are abominable, and there are Right Honourables who ought to be called Right Abominables; ay, and greater than that, too, whose vices make them abominable to the nation: and "murderers,"—"he that hateth his brother is a murderer;" and "whoremongers and sorcerers;" "those who have or pretend to have dealings with devils and spirits, your spirit rappers, the whole batch of them; "and idolaters, and all liars," and these swarm everywhere, they lie in print, and they lie with the voice; "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Now, these are no words of mine, but the words of God; and if they condemn you, you are condemned; but, if you be condemned, fly to Jesus. Repent and be converted, as saith the gospel, and forgiveness shall be yours, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The Obedience Of Faith

By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. - Hebrews 11:8

The part of the text to which I shall call your attention lies in these words, "By faith Abraham obeyed." Obedience—what a blessing it would be if we were all trained to it by the Holy Spirit! How fully should we be restored if we were perfect in it! If all the world would obey the Lord, what a heaven on earth there would be! Perfect obedience to God would mean love among men, justice to all classes, and peace in every land. Our will brings envy, malice, war; but the Lord's will would bring us love, joy, rest, bliss. Obedience—let us pray for it for ourselves and others!

"Is there a heart that will not bend
To thy divine control?
Descend, O sovereign love, descend,
And melt that stubborn soul! "

Surely, though we have had to mourn our disobedience with many tears and sighs, we now find joy in yielding ourselves as servants of the Lord: our deepest desire is to do the Lord's will in all things. Oh, for obedience! It has been supposed by many ill-instructed people that the doctrine of justification by faith is opposed to the teaching of good works, or

obedience. There is no truth in the supposition. We preach the obedience of faith. Faith is the fountain, the foundation, and the fosterer of obedience. Men obey not God till they believe him. We preach faith in order that men may be brought to obedience. To disbelieve is to disobey. One of the first signs of practical obedience is found in the obedience of the mind, the understanding, and the heart; and this is expressed in believing the teaching of Christ, trusting to his work, and resting in his salvation. Faith is the morning star of obedience. If we would work the work of God, we must believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Brethren, we do not give a secondary place to obedience, as some suppose. We look upon the obedience of the heart to the will of God as salvation. The attainment of perfect obedience would mean perfect salvation. We regard sanctification, or obedience, as the great design for which the Saviour died. He shed his blood that he might cleanse us from dead works, and purify unto himself a people zealous for good works. It is for this that we were chosen: we are "elect unto holiness." We know nothing of election to continue in sin. It is for this that we have been called: we are "called to be saints." Obedience is the grand object of the work of grace in the hearts of those who are chosen and called: they are to become obedient children, conformed to the image of the Elder Brother, with whom the Father is well pleased.

The obedience that comes of faith is of a noble sort. The obedience of a slave ranks very little higher than the obedience of a well-trained horse or dog, for it is tuned to the crack of the whip. Obedience which is not cheerfully rendered is not the obedience of the heart, and consequently is of little worth before God. If the man obeys because he has no opportunity of doing otherwise, and if, were he free, he would at once become a rebel—there is nothing in his obedience. The obedience of faith springs from a principle within, and not from compulsion without. It is sustained by the mind's soberest reasoning and the heart's warmest passion. The man reasons with himself that he ought to obey his Redeemer, his Father, his God; and, at the same time, the love of Christ constrains him so to do, and thus what argument suggests affection performs. A sense of great obligation, an apprehension of the fitness of obedience, and spiritual renewal of heart, work an obedience which becomes essential to the sanctified soul. Hence, it is not relaxed in the

time of temptation, nor destroyed in the hour of losses and sufferings. Life has no trial which can turn the gracious soul from its passion for obedience; and death itself doth but enable it to render an obedience which shall be as blissful as it will be complete. Yes, this is a chief ingredient of heaven—that we shall see the face of our Lord, and serve him day and night in his temple. Meanwhile, the more fully we obey at this present, the nearer we shall be to his temple-gate. May the Holy Spirit work in us, so that, by faith—like Abraham—we may obey !

I preach to you, at this time, obedience—absolute obedience to the Lord God; but I preach the obedience of a child, not the obedience of a slave; the obedience of love, not of terror; the obedience of faith, not of dread. I shall urge you, as God shall help me, in order that you may come at this obedience, that you should seek after stronger faith—"For by faith Abraham obeyed." In every case where the father of the faithful obeyed, it was the result of his faith; and in every case in which you and I shall render true obedience, it will be the product of our faith. Obedience, such as God can accept, never cometh out of a heart which thinks God a liar; but is wrought in us by the Spirit of the Lord, through our believing in the truth, and love, and grace of our God in Christ Jesus. If any of you are now disobedient, or have been so, the road to a better state of things is trust in God. You cannot hope to render obedience by the more forcing of conduct into a certain groove, or by a personal, unaided effort of the resolution. There is a free-grace road to obedience, and that is receiving, by faith, the Lord Jesus, who is the gift of God, and is made of God unto us sanctification. We accept the Lord Jesus by faith, and he teaches us obedience, and creates it in us. The more of faith in him you have, the more of obedience to him will you manifest. I was about to say that that obedience naturally flows out of faith, and I should not have spoken amiss, for as a man believeth so is he, and in proportion to the strength and purity of his faith in God, as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, will be the holy obedience of his life.

That our meditation may be profitable, we will first think a little of the kind of faith which produces obedience; and then, secondly, we will treat of the kind of obedience which faith produces; and then we will advance another step, and consider the kind of life which comes out of this faith

and obedience.

I will be as brief as I can upon each point. Let us look up to the Holy Ghost for his gracious illumination.

I. First consider THE KIND OF FAITH WHICH PRODUCES OBEDIENCE.

It is, manifestly, faith in God as having the right to command our obedience. Beloved in the Lord, you know that he is Sovereign, and that his will is law. You feel that God, your Maker, your Preserver, your Redeemer, and your Father, should have your unswerving service. We unite, also, in confessing that we are not our own, we are bought with a price. The Lord our God has a right to us which we would not wish to question. He has a greater claim upon our ardent service than he has upon the services of angels; for, while they were created as we have been, yet they have never been redeemed by precious blood. Our glorious Incarnate God has an unquestioned right to every breath we breathe, to every thought we think, to every moment of our lives, and to every capacity of our being. We believe in Jehovah as rightful Lawgiver, and as most fitly our Ruler. This loyalty of our mind is based on faith, and is a chief prompter to obedience. Cultivate always this feeling. The Lord is our Father, but he is, "our Father which art in heaven." He draws near to us in condescension; but it is condescension, and we must not presume to think of him as though he were such a one as ourselves. There is a holy familiarity with God which cannot be too much enjoyed; but there is a flippant familiarity with God which cannot be too much abhorred. The Lord is King; his will is not to be questioned; his every word is law. Let us never question his sovereign right to decree what he pleases, and to fulfil the decree; to command what he pleases, and to punish every shortcoming. Because we have faith in God as Lord of all, we gladly pay him our homage, and desire in all things to say: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven."

Next, we must have faith in the rightness of all that God says or does. I hope, beloved, you do not think of God's sovereignty as tyranny, or imagine that he ever could or would will anything but that which is right.

Neither will we admit into our minds a suspicion of the incorrectness of the Word of God in any matter whatever, as though the Lord himself could err. We will not have it that God, in his Holy Book, makes mistakes about matters of history, or of science, any more than he does upon the great truths of salvation. If the Lord be God, he must be infallible; and if he can be described as in error in the little respects of human history and science, he cannot be trusted in the greater matters. My brethren, Jehovah never errs in deed, or in word; and when you find his law written either in the ten commandments, or anywhere else, you believe that there is not a precept too many, or too few. Whatever may be the precepts of the law, or of the gospel, they are pure and holy altogether. The words of the Lord are like fine gold, pure, precious, and weighty—not one of them may be neglected. We hear people talk about "minor points," and so on; but we must not consider any word of our God as a minor thing, if by that expression is implied that it is of small importance. We must accept every single word of precept, or prohibition, or instruction, as being what it ought to be, and neither to be diminished nor increased. We should not reason about the command of God as though it might be set aside or amended. He bids: we obey. May we enter into that true spirit of obedience which is the unshaken belief that the Lord is right! Nothing short of this is the obedience of the inner man—the obedience which the Lord desires.

Furthermore, we must have faith in the Lord's call upon us to obey. Abraham went out from his father's house because he felt that, whatever God said to others, he had spoken to him, and said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Whatever the Lord may have said to the Chald'ans, or to other families in Ur, Abraham was not so much concerned with that as with the special word of command which the Lord had sent to his own soul. Oh, that we were most of all earnest to render personal obedience! It is very easy to offer unto God a sort of "other people's obedience"—to fancy that we are serving God, when we are finding fault with our neighbours, and lamenting that they are not so godly as they ought to be. Truly, we cannot help seeing their shortcomings; but we should do well to be less observant of them than we are. Let us turn our magnifying glasses upon ourselves. It is not so much our business to be weeding other people's

gardens as to keep our own vineyard. To the Lord each one should cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We, who are his chosen, redeemed from among men, called out from the rest of mankind, ought to feel that if no other ears hear the divine call, our ears must hear it; and if no other heart obeys, our soul rejoices to do so. We are bound with cords to the horns of the altar. The strongest ties of gratitude hold us to the service of Jesus: we must be obedient in life to him who, for our sakes, was obedient unto death. Our service to our Lord is freedom: we will to yield to his will. To delight him is our delight. It is a blessed thing when the inmost nature yearns to obey God, when obedience grows into a habit, and becomes the very element in which the spirit breathes. Surely it should be so with every one of the blood-washed children of the Most High, and their lives will prove that it is so. Others are bound to obey, but we should attend most to our own personal obligation, and set our own houses in order. Our obedience should begin at home, and it will find its hands full enough there.

Obedience arises out of a faith which is to us the paramount principle of action. The kind of faith which produces obedience is lord of the understanding, a royal faith. The true believer believes in God beyond all his belief in anything else, and everything else. He can say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." His faith in God has become to him the crown of all his believings; the most assured of all his confidences. As gold is to the inferior metals, such is our trust in God to all our other trusts. To the genuine believer the eternal is as much above the temporal as the heavens are above the earth. The infinite rolls, like Noah's flood, over the tops of the hills of the present and the finite. To the believer, let a truth be tinctured with the glory of God, and he values it; but if God and eternity be not there, he will leave these trifles to those who choose them. You must have a paramount faith in God, or else the will of God will not be a paramount rule to you. Only a reigning faith will make us subject to its power, so as to be in all things obedient to the Lord. The chief thought in life with the true believer is, "How can I obey God?" His great anxiety is to do the will of God, or acceptably to suffer that will; and if he can obey, he will make no terms with God, and stand upon no reservations. He will pray, "Refine me from the dross of rebellion, and let the furnace be as fierce as thou wilt." His choice is neither wealth, nor ease, nor honour;

but that he may glorify God in his body, and his spirit, which are the Lord's. Obedience has become as much his rule as self-will is the rule of others. His cry unto the Lord is, "By thy command I stay or go. Thy will is my will; thy pleasure is my pleasure; thy law is my love."

God grant us a supreme, over-mastering faith, for this is the kind of faith which we must have if we are to lead obedient lives! We must have faith in God's right to rule, faith in the rightness of his commands, faith in our personal obligation to obey, and faith that the command must be the paramount authority of our being. With this faith of God's elect, we shall realise the object of our election—namely, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.

Dear friend, have you this kind of faith? I will withdraw the question as directed to you, and I will ask it of myself: Have I that faith which leads me to obey my God?—for obedience, if it be of the kind we are speaking of, is faith in action—faith walking with God, or, shall I say, walking before the Lord in the land of the living? If we have a faith which is greedy in hearing, severe in judging, and rapid in self-congratulation, but not inclined to obedience, we have the faith of hypocrites. If our faith enables us to set up as patterns of sound doctrine, and qualifies us to crack the heads of all who differ from us, and yet lacks the fruit of obedience, it will leave us among the "dogs" who are "without." The faith that makes us obey is alone the faith which marks the children of God. It is better to have the faith that obeys than the faith which moves mountains. I would sooner have the faith which obeys than the faith which heaps the altar of God with sacrifices, and perfumes his courts with incense. I would rather obey God than rule an empire; for, after all, the loftiest sovereignty a soul can inherit is to have dominion over self by rendering believing obedience to the Most High.

Thus much upon faith. "By faith Abraham obeyed;" and by faith only can you and I obey.

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE KIND OF OBEDIENCE WHICH FAITH PRODUCES. This I shall illustrate from the whole of the verse.

Genuine faith in God creates a prompt obedience. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed." There was an immediate response to the command. Delayed obedience is disobedience. I wish some Christians, who put off duty, would remember this. Continued delay of duty is a continuous sin. If I do not obey the divine command, I sin; and every moment that I continue in that condition, I repeat the sin. This is a serious matter. If a certain act is my duty at this hour, and I leave it undone, I have sinned; but it will be equally incumbent upon me during the next hour; and if I still refuse, I disobey again and so on till I do obey. Neglect of a standing command must grow very grievous if it be persisted in for years. In proportion as the conscience becomes callous upon the subject, the guilt becomes the more provoking to the Lord. To refuse to do right is a great evil; but to continue in that refusal till conscience grows numb upon the matter is far worse. I remember a person coming to be baptised, who said that he had been a believer in the Lord Jesus for forty years; and that he had always seen the ordinance to be Scriptural. I felt grieved that he had so long been disobedient to a known duty, and I proposed to him that he should be baptised at once. It was in a village, and he said that there were no conveniences. I offered to go with him to the brook, and baptise him, but he said, "No; he that believeth shall not make haste." Here was one who had wilfully disobeyed his Lord, for as many years as the Israelites in the wilderness, upon a matter so easy of performance; and yet, after confessing his fault he was not willing to amend it, but perverted a passage of Scripture to excuse him in further delay. David says, "I made hast and delayed not to keep thy commandments." I give this case as typical illustration; there are a hundred spiritual, moral, domestic business, and religious duties, which men put off in the same manner as if they thought that any time would do for God, and he must take his turn with the rest. What would you say to your boy, if you bade him go upon an errand, and he answered you, "I will go to-morrow." Surely you would "morrow" him in a style which would abide upon his memory. Your tone would be sharp, and you would bid him go at once. If he, then, promised to run in an hour's time, would you call that obedience? It would be impudence. Obedience is for the present tense: it must be prompt, or it is nothing. Obedience respects the time of the command as much as any other part of it. To hesitate is to be disloyal. To halt and consider whether you will obey or not, is rebellion in the

germ. If thou believest in the living God unto eternal life, thou wilt be quick to do thy Lord's bidding, even as a maid hearkens to her mistress. Thou wilt not be as the horse, which needs whip and spur; thy love will do more for thee than compulsion could do for slaves. Thou wilt have wings to thy heels to hasten thee along the way of obedience. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Next, obedience should be exact. Even Abraham's obedience failed somewhat in this at first; for he started at once from Ur of the Chaldees, but he only went as far as Haran, and there he stayed till his father died; and then the precept came to him again, and he set off for the land which the Lord had promised to show him. If any of you have only half obeyed, I pray that you may take heed of this, and do all that the Lord commands, carefully endeavouring to keep back no part of the revenue of obedience.

Yet the error of the great patriarch was soon corrected, for we read that "Abraham, when he was called to go out . . . went out." I have only omitted intermediate words, which do not alter the sense: and that is exactly how we should obey. That which the Lord commands we should do—just that, and not another thing of our own devising. How very curiously people try to give God something else instead of what he asks for! The Lord says, "My son, give me thine heart," and they give him ceremonies. He asks of them obedience, and they give him will-worship. He asks faith, and love, and justice; and they offer ten thousand rivers of oil, and the fat of fed beasts. They will give all except the one thing which he will be pleased with: yet "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." If the Lord has given you true faith in himself, you will be anxious not so much to do a notable thing as to do exactly what God would have you to do. Mind your jots and tittles with the Lord's precepts. Attention to little things is a fine feature in obedience: it lies much more as to its essence in the little things than in the great ones. Few dare rush into great crimes, and yet they will indulge in secret rebellion, for their heart is not right with God. Hence so many mar what they call obedience by forgetting that they serve a heart-searching, rein-trying God, who observes thoughts and motives. He would have us obey him with the heart, and that will lead us, not merely to regard a few pleasing commands, but to have respect unto all his will.

Oh, for a tender conscience, which will not wilfully neglect, nor presumptuously transgress!

And next, mark well that Abraham rendered practical obedience. When the Lord commanded Abraham to quit his father's house, he did not say that he would think it over; he did not discuss it pro and con, in an essay; he did not ask his father, Terah, and his neighbour to consider it; but, as he was called to go out, he went out. Alas! dear friends, we have so much talk, and so little obedience! The religion of mere brain and jaw does not amount to much. We want the religion of hands and feet. I remember a place in Yorkshire, years ago, where a good man said to me, "We have a real good minister." I said, "I am glad to hear it." "Yea," he said; "' he is a fellow that preaches with his feet." Well, now, that is a capital thing if a preacher preaches with his feet by walking with God, and with his hands by working for God. He does well who glorifies God by where he goes, and by what he does; he will excel fifty others who only preach religion with their tongues. You, dear hearers, are not good hearers so long as you are only hearers; but when the heart is affected by the ear, and the hand follows the heart, then your faith is proved. That kind of obedience which comes of faith in God is real obedience, since it shows itself by its works.

Next, faith produces a far-seeing obedience. Note this. "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance." How great a company would obey God if they were paid for it on the spot! They have "respect unto the recompense of the reward;" but they must have it in the palm of their hand. With them—"A bird in hand is better far, than two which in the bushes are." They are told that there is heaven to be had, and they answer that, if heaven were to be had here, as an immediate freehold, they might look after it, but they cannot afford to wait. To inherit a country after this life is over is too like a fairy tale for their practical minds. Many there are who enquire, "Will religion pay? Is there anything to be made out of it? Shall I have to shut up my shop on Sundays? Must I alter my mode of dealing, and curtail my profits?" When they have totalled up the cost, and have taken all things into consideration, they come to the conclusion that obedience to God is a luxury which they can dispense with, at least until near the end of life. Those who practice the obedience of faith look for the reward hereafter,

and set the greatest store by it. To their faith alone the profit is exceeding great. To take up the cross will be to carry a burden, but it will also be to find rest. They know the words, "No cross, no crown;" and they recognise the truth that, if there is no obedience here, there will be no reward hereafter. This needs a faith that has eyes which can see afar off, across the black torrent of death, and within the veil which parts us from the unseen. A man will not obey God unless he has learned to endure "as seeing him who is invisible."

Yet, remember that the obedience which comes of true faith is often bound to be altogether unreckoning and implicit; for it is written, "He went out, not knowing whither he went." God bade Abraham journey, and he moved his camp at once. Into the unknown land he made his way; through fertile regions, or across a wilderness; among friends or through the midst of foes, he pursued his journey. He did not know where his way would take him, but he knew that the Lord had bidden him go. Even bad men will obey God when they think fit; but good men will obey when they know not what to think of it. It is not ours to judge the Lord's command, but to follow it. I am weary with hearing men saying, "Yea, we know that such a course would be right; but then the consequences might be painful: good men would be grieved, the cause would be weakened, and we ourselves should get into a world of trouble, and put our hands into a hornet's nest." There is not much need to preach caution nowadays: those who would run any risk for the truth's sake are few enough. Consciences, tender about the Lord's honour, have not been produced for the last few years in any great number. Prudent consideration of consequences is superabundant; but the spirit which obeys, and dares all things for Christ's sake—where is it? The Abrahams of to-day will not go out from their kindred; they will put up with anything sooner than risk their livelihoods. If they do go out, they must know where they are going, and how much is to be picked up in the new country. I am not pronouncing any judgement upon their conduct, I am merely pointing out the fact. Our Puritan forefathers reeked little of property or liberty when these stood in the way of conscience: they defied exile and danger sooner than give up a grain of truth; but their descendants prefer peace and worldly amusements, and pride themselves on "culture" rather than on heroic faith. The modern believer must have no mysteries, but must have

everything planed down to a scientific standard. Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went," but the moderns must have every information with regard to the way, and then they will not go. If they obey at all, it is because their own superior judgements incline that way; but to go forth, not knowing whither they go, and to go at all hazards, is not to their minds at all. They are so highly "cultured" that they prefer to be original, and map out their own way.

Brethren, having once discerned the voice of God, obey without question. If you have to stand alone and nobody will befriend you, stand alone and God will befriend you. If you should get the ill word of those you value most, bear it. What, after all, are ill words, or good words, as compared with the keeping of a clear conscience by walking in the way of the Lord? The line of truth is narrow as a razor's edge; and he needs to wear the golden sandals of the peace of God who shall keep to such a line. Through divine grace may we, like Abraham, walk with our hand in the hand of the Lord, even where we cannot see our way!

The obedience which faith produces must be continuous. Having commenced the separated life, Abraham continued to dwell in tents, and sojourn in the land which was far from the place of his birth. His whole life may be thus summed up: "By faith Abraham obeyed." He believed, and, therefore, walked before the Lord in a perfect way. He even offered up his son Isaac. "Abraham's mistake," was it? Alas for those who dare to talk in that fashion! "By faith he obeyed," and to the end of his life ho was never an original speculator, or inventor of ways for self-will; but a submissive servant of that great Lord, who deigned to call him "friend." May it be said of everyone here that by faith he obeyed! Do not cultivate doubt, or you will soon cultivate disobedience. Set this up as your standard, and henceforth be this the epitome of your life—"By faith he obeyed."

III. Just a moment or two upon the third point. Let us consider THE SORT OF LIFE WHICH WILL COME OF THIS FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

It will be, in the first place, life without that great risk which else holds us

in peril. A man runs a great risk When he steers himself. Rocks or no rocks, the peril lies in the helmsman. The believer is no longer the helmsman of his own vessel; he has taken a pilot on board. To believe in God, and to do his bidding, is a great escape from the hazards of personal weakness and folly. If we do as God commands, and do not seem to succeed, it is no fault of ours. Failure itself would be success as long as we did not fail to obey. If we passed through life unrecognised, or were only acknowledged by a sneer from the worldly-wise, and if this were regarded as a failure, it could be borne with equanimity as long as we knew that we had kept our faith towards God, and our obedience to him. Providence is God's business, obedience is ours. What comes out of our life's course must remain with the Lord; to obey is our sole concern. What harvest will come of our sowing we must leave with the Lord of the harvest; but we ourselves must look to the basket and the seed, and scatter our handfuls in the furrows without fail. We can win "Well done, good and faithful servant": to be a successful servant is not in our power, and we shall not be held responsible for it. Our greatest risk is over when we obey. God makes faith and obedience the way of safety.

In the next place, we shall enjoy a life free from its heaviest cares. If we were in the midst of the wood, with Stanley, in the centre of Africa, our pressing care would be to find our way out; but when we have nothing to do but to obey, our road is mapped out for us. Jesus says, "Follow me; "and this makes our way plain, and lifts from our shoulders a load of cares. To choose our course by policy is a way of thorns, to obey is as the king's highway. Policy has to tack about, to return upon its own courses, and often to miss the port after all; but faith, like a steam-vessel, steers straight for the harbour's mouth, and leaves a bright track of obedience behind her as she forges ahead. When our only care is to obey, a thousand other cares take their flight. If we sin in order to succeed, we have sown the seeds of care and sorrow, and the reaping will be a grievous one. If we will forsake the path, and try short cuts, we shall have to do a deal of wading through mire and slough, we shall bespatter ourselves from head to foot, we shall be wearied to find our way, and all because we could not trust God, and obey his bidding. Obedience may appear difficult, and it may bring with it sacrifice; but, after all, it is the nearest and the best road. Her ways are, in the long run, ways of pleasantness, and all her

paths are peace. He who through the Holy Spirit, is always believingly obedient, has chosen the good part. He it is who can sing—

"I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are thine;
I live in triumph, too, for thou
Hast made thy triumphs mine."

Or, to change the verse, he is like Bunyan's shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, for that lowland is part of the great Plain of Obedience, and he also can sing—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his Guide."

Although he may not reach the heights of ambition, nor stand upon the giddy crags of presumption, yet he shall know superior joys. He has hit upon the happiest mode of living under heaven—a mode of life akin to the perfect life above. He shall dwell in God's house and be still praising him.

The way of obedience is a life of the highest honour. Obedience is the glory of a human life—the glory which our Lord has given to his chosen, even his own glory. "He learned obedience." He never struck out an original course, but he did always the things which pleased the Father. Be this our glory. By faith we yield our intelligence to the highest intelligence: we are led, guided, directed; and we follow where our Lord has gone. To us who believe, he is honour. To a soldier it is the greatest honour to have accomplished his sovereign's command. He does not debase his manhood who subjects it to honourable command; nay, he is even exalted by obeying in the day of danger. It is no dishonour to have it said :

"Theirs not to reason why;
Theirs but to dare and die."

The bravest and the most honoured of men are those who implicitly obey the command of the King of kings. Among his children, they are best who best know their Father's mind, and yield to it the gladdest obedience. Should we have any other ambition, within the walls of our Father's house, than to be perfectly obedient children before him, and implicitly trustful towards him?

But, brethren, this is a kind of life which will bring communion with God. God often hides his face behind the clouds of dust which his children make by their self-will. If we transgress against him, we shall soon be in trouble; but a holy walk—the walk described by my text as faith working obedience—is heaven beneath the stars. God comes down to walk with men who obey. If they walk with him, he walks with them. The Lord can only have fellowship with his servants as they obey. Obedience is heaven in us, and it is the preface of our being in heaven. Obedient faith is the way to eternal life—nay, it is eternal life revealing itself.

The obedience of faith creates a form of life which may be safely copied. As parents, we wish so to live that our children may copy us to their lasting profit. Teachers should aspire to be what they would have their classes to be. If you go to school to the obedience of faith, you will be good teachers. Children usually exaggerate their models; but there will be no fear of their going too far in faith, or in obedience to the Lord. I like to hear a man say, when his father has gone, "My dear father was a man that feared God, and I would fain follow him. When I was a boy, I thought him rather stiff and Puritanical; but now I see he had a good reason for it all. I feel much the same myself, and would do nothing of which God would not approve." The bringing up of families is a very great matter. This is too much neglected nowadays; and yet it is the most profitable of all holy service, and the hope of the future. Great men, in the best sense, are bred in holy households. God-fearing example at home is the most fruitful of religious agencies. I knew a little humble Dissenting chapel, of the strictest sect of our religion. Culture there was none in the ministry; but the people were staunch believers. Five or six families, attending that despised ministry, learned to believe what they did believe, and to live upon it. It was by no means a liberal creed which they received, but what they held operated on their lives. Five or six families came out of that

place, and became substantial in wealth, and generous in liberality. These all sprang from plain, humble men, who knew their Bibles, and believed the doctrines of grace. They learned to fear God, and to trust in him, and to rest in the old faith, and even in worldly things they prospered. Their descendants, of the third generation, are not all of them of their way of thinking; but they have risen through God's blessing on their grandfathers. These men were fed on substantial meat, and they became sturdy old fellows, able to cope with the world, and fight their way. I would to God that we had more men to-day who would maintain truth at all hazards. Alas! the gutta-percha backbone is common among Dissenters, and they take to politics, and the new philosophy, and therefore we are losing the force of our testimony, and are, I fear, decreasing in numbers too. The Lord give us back those whose examples can be safely copied in all things, even though they be decried as being "rigid" or "too precise"! We serve a jealous God, and a holy Saviour; wherefore let us mind that we do not grieve his Spirit, and cause him to withdraw from us.

Lastly, faith working obedience is a kind of life which needs great grace. Every careless professor will not live in this fashion. It will need watchfulness and prayer, and nearness to God, to maintain the faith which obeys in everything. Beloved, "he giveth more grace." The Lord will enable us to add to our faith all the virtues. Whenever you fail in any respect in your lives, do not sit down, and question the goodness of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost; that is not the way to increase the stream of obedience, but to diminish the source of it. Believe more, instead of less. Try, by God's grace, to believe more in the pardon of sin, more in the renovation by the Holy Spirit, more in the everlasting covenant, more in the love that had no beginning, and will never, never cease. Your hope does not lie in rushing into the darkness of doubt; but in returning repentantly into the still clearer light of a steadier faith. May you be helped to do so, and may we, all of us, and the whole multitude of the Lord's redeemed, by faith go on to obey our Lord in all things!

I leave this word with you. Remember, "By faith Abraham obeyed." Have faith in God, and then obey, obey, obey, and keep on obeying, until the Lord shall call you home. Obey on earth, and then you will have learned

to obey in heaven. Obedience is the rehearsal of eternal bliss. Practice by obedience now the song which you will sing for ever in glory. God grant his grace to us! Amen.

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Obeying Christ's Orders

His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. -
John 2:5

It does not need a strong imagination to picture Mary, probably at that time the widowed mother of our Lord. She is full of love, and of a naturally kind, sympathetic disposition. She is at a marriage; and she is very pleased that her Son is there, with the first handful of his disciples. Their being there has made a greater demand upon the provisions than was expected, and the supply is running short; so she, with an anxiety that was natural to such a mother, of her years, and of her gentle spirit, thinks that she will speak to her Son, and tell him that there is a want, so she says to him, "They have no wine."

There was not much amiss in that, surely; but our Lord, who seeth not as man seeth, perceived that she was putting to the front her motherly relationship, at a time when it was needful that it should be in the background. How needful it was, history has shown; for the apostate church of Rome has actually made Mary a mediatrix, and prayers have been addressed to her; she has even been asked to use her maternal authority with her Son. It was well that our Savior should check anything that might tend to give any countenance to Mariolatry, which has been altogether so mischievous; and it was needful for him to speak to his

mother with somewhat more of sharpness than, perhaps, her conduct, in itself alone, might have required. So her august Son felt bound to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee in such a matter as this? I am not thy son as a miracle-worker; I cannot work to please thee. No; if I work a miracle as the Son of God, it cannot be as your son; it must be in another character. What have I to do with thee in this matter?" And he gives his reason: "Mine hour is not yet come."

It was a gentle rebuke, absolutely needful from the prescience of all that would follow. You can easily picture how Mary took it. She knew Christ's gentleness, his infinite love, how for thirty years there had never come anything from him that had grieved her spirit. So she drank in the reproof, and gently shrank back, thinking much more than she said; for she was always a woman who laid up these things, and pondered them in her heart. She says very little, but she thinks a great deal; and we see in her after conduct, in respect to this very miracle, that she thought very much of what Jesus had said to her. Brethren, you and I, with the very best intentions, may sometimes err towards our Lord; and if he then in any way rebukes us, and puts us back, if he disappoints our hope, if he does not allow our ambitious designs to prosper, let us take it from him as Mary took it from Jesus. Let us just feel that it must be right, and let us in silence possess ourselves in his presence.

Notice, then, this holy woman's quietude, ceasing to say a word, quietly drinking it all in; and then observe her wise admonition to the servants who were there to wait at the feast. Inasmuch as she had run before him, she would have them to follow after him, and she very wisely and kindly says to them, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. Do not go to him with any of your remarks. Do not try to press him forward; do not urge him on; he knows better than we do. Stand back, and wait till he speaks; and then be quick to obey every single word that he utters." Beloved, I wish that, when we have learned a lesson, we would try to teach it. Sometimes our Master gives us a sharp word all to ourselves, and we would not tell anybody else what he has said. In our private communions, he has spoken to our conscience and to our heart; and we need not go and repeat that, as Mary did not. But, having learned the lesson well, let us then say to our next friend, "Do not err as I have done. Avoid the rock on which I

struck just now. I fear that I grieved my Lord. My sister, I would not have you grieve him; my brother, I would try to tell you just what to do that you may please him in all things." Do you not think that we should minister to mutual edification if we did that? Instead of telling the faults of others, let us extract the essence from the discoveries which we make of our own errors, and then administer that as a helpful medicine to those who are round about us.

This holy woman must have spoken with a good deal of power. Her tone must have been peculiarly forcible, and her manner must have made a great impression upon the servants, for you notice that they did exactly what she told them. It is not every servant who will let a guest come into the house, and set up to be mistress; but so it was when she spoke to those servants, with her deep, earnest tones, as a woman who had learned something that she could not tell, but who yet, out of that experience, had extracted a lesson for others. She must have spoken with a wonderful melting force when she said to them, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it;" and they were all looking on with awe after she had spoken, drinking in her message to them as she had drunk in the message of the Lord.

Now I want to-night just to try to teach that lesson to myself and to you. I think that our own experience goes to show us that our highest wisdom, our very best prosperity, will lie in our cautiously keeping behind Christ, and never running before him, never forcing his hand, never tempting him, as they did who tempted God in the wilderness, prescribing to him to do this or that; but, in holy, humble obedience, taking these words as our life-motto henceforth, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." I will handle my text in this way: First, What? Secondly, Why? Thirdly, What then?

I. WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE HERE BIDDEN TO DO? In a word, it is to obey You who belong to Christ, and are his disciples, take heed to this word of exhortation, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

I want you to notice, first of all, that these words were spoken, not to the disciples of Christ, but to the servants who, in the Greek, are here called diakonois, the persons who were brought in to wait at the table, and to

serve the guests. I know not whether they were paid servants, or whether they were friends who kindly volunteered their services; but they were the waiters at the feast. They were not told to leave their master; they were not bidden to give up their avocation as waiters. They were servants, and they were to continue servants; but still, for all that, they were to acknowledge Christ as their Master without casting off their obedience to the governor of the feast. Mary does not say to these people, "Put down those pots, leave off carrying those dishes;" but while they continue to do what they were doing, she says to them, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." I thought that point was well worthy of our notice, that these servants, still abiding, as they were, yet were to render obedience to Christ.

That obedience, in the first place, would be prepared obedience. Mary came to get their minds ready to do what Christ should bid them. No man will obey Christ on a sudden, and keep on doing so. There must be a weighing, a considering; there must be a thoughtful, careful knowledge of what his will is, and a preparedness of heart, that whatever that will may be, as it is known so it shall be done. At first these servants did nothing. The guests wanted wine, but the servants did not go to Jesus, and say, "Master, wine is needed." Nay; but they stopped until he bade them fill the waterpots with water; then they filled them to the brim; but they did nothing till he bade them. A great part of obedience lies in not doing. I believe that, in the anxiety of many a trembling heart, the very best faith will be seen in not doing anything. When you do not know what to do, do nothing; and doing nothing, my brethren, will be found to be sometimes the very hardest work of all. In the case of a man in business, who has come into a difficulty, or of a sister with a sick child, or a sick husband, you know the impulse is to do something or other. If not the first thing that comes to hand, yet we feel that we must do something; and many a person has aggravated his sorrow by doing something, when, if he had bravely let it alone, believingly left it in God's hand, it would have been infinitely better for him. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." But do not do what every whim or fancy in your poor brain urges you to do. Do not run before you are sent. They who run before God's cloud, will have to come back again; and very happy they will be if they find the way back again. Where Scripture is silent, be you silent. If there is no command

thou hadst better wait till thou canst find some guidance. Blunder not on with a headlong anxiety, lest thou tumble into the ditch. "Whatsoever he saith unto you," do that; but until he speaks, sit thou still. My soul, be patient before God, and wait until thou knowest his bidding!

This prepared obedience was to be the obedience of the spirit, for obedience lies mainly there. True obedience is not always seen in what we do, or do not do; but it is manifest in the perfect submission to the will of God, and the strong resolve that saturates the spirit through and through, that what he bids us we will do.

Let your obedience, in the next place, be perfect obedience. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." It is disobedience, and not obedience, which prompts us to select from the commands of Christ such as we care to obey. If thou sayest, "I will do what Christ bids me as far as I choose," thou hast in fact said, "I will not do what Christ bids me, but I will do what I please to do." That obedience is not true which is not universal. Imagine a soldier in the army, who, instead of obeying every command of his captain, omits this and that, and says that he cannot help it, or that he even means to omit certain things. Beloved, take heed of throwing any precept of thy Lord upon the dunghill. Every word that he has spoken to thee is more precious than a diamond. Prize it; store it up; wear it; let it be thy ornament and thy beauty. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," whether it relates to the Church of God and its ordinances, or to your walk out of doors among your follow-men, or to your relationship in the family, or to your own private service for the Lord. "Whatsoever." See, there are to be no trimmings here, no cutting off of certain things: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Breathe this prayer at the present moment, "Lord, help me to do whatsoever thou hast said! May I have no choice; may I never let my own will come in to interfere; but, if thou hast bidden me do anything, enable me to do it, whatever it may be!"

This obedience, then, being prepared and perfect, is to be also practical obedience: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Do not think about it, especially for a very long time, and then wait until it is more impressed upon you, or till there is a convenient season: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." One of the great evils of the times is that of deliberating about

a plain command of Christ, and asking, "What will be the result of it?" What have you to do with results? "But if I follow Christ in all things, I may lose my position." What have you to do with that? When a soldier is bidden to go up to the cannon's mouth, he is very likely to lose his "position", and something else; but he is bound to do it. "Oh, but I might lose my opportunities of usefulness!" What do you mean? That you are going to do evil that good may come? That is what it comes to. Will you really, before God, look that matter in the face? "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." At any expense, at any risk, do it. I have heard some say, "Well, I do not like doing things in a hurry." Very well, but what saith David? "I made haste, and delayed not—to keep thy commandments." Remember that we sin every moment that we delay to do anything commanded by Christ. Whether every moment of delay is a fresh sin, I cannot say; but if we neglect any command of his, we are living in a condition of perpetual sinning against him; and that is not a desirable position for any of Christ's disciples to live in. Beloved, "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Do not argue against it, and try to find some reason for getting off it. I have known some believers who have not liked to have certain passages of Scripture read at the family altar, because they have rather troubled their consciences. If there is anything in the Bible that quarrels with you, you are wrong; the Bible is not. Come you to terms with it at once, and the only terms will be obey, obey, obey your Lord's will. I am not holding this up to you as a way of salvation; you know I should never think of doing that. I am speaking to those of you who are saved. You are Christ's servants, his saved ones; and now you have come to the holy discipline of his house, and this is the rule of it, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Do it practically. Have we not been talking too much about what should be done by our friends, or observing what others do not do? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon us, that our own walk might be close with God, our own obedience be precise and exact, our own love to Christ be proved by our continual following in his steps! Ours should be practical obedience.

It must be also personal obedience: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." You know how much there is done by proxy nowadays. Charity is done so. A is in a great deal of need, B hears of it, and is very sorry indeed, and so he asks C to come and help him; and then he goes to bed, and feels that

he has done a good thing. Or else, when A has told his story to B, B looks out to see if there is some Society that will help him, although he never subscribes to the Society, because he does not think of doing that. His part is just to pass A on to C, or to the Society: and, having done that, he feels satisfied. Do you wish the Savior to say, in the last great day, "I was an hungred, and ye sent me to somebody else," or, "I was thirsty, and you directed me to the parish pump for drink"? Nothing of the kind. We must do something personally for Christ. So is it in the matter of endeavoring to win souls to Christ. There is nothing like personally speaking to people, button-holing them, looking them in the eye, talking your own personal experience over with them, and pleading with them to fly to Christ for refuge. Personal obedience is what is wanted. If one of these persons who were waiting had said, when the command had come from Christ to fill the waterpots, "John, you go and do that; William, you go and do that;" he would not have followed out Mary's command, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Do I touch the conscience of anybody here? Well, if so, from this time forth cease to be a servant of God by proxy, lest thou be saved by proxy, and to be saved by proxy will be to be lost. But do thou trust Christ for thyself, and then serve him for thyself, by his own mighty grace: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

It must also be prompt obedience. Do it at once; delay will take the bloom from the obedience. "Whatsoever he saith unto you," stand ready to obey. The moment that the command "March," is given to the soldier, he marches. The moment a command comes to your heart, and you see it to be really in the Word of God, do it. Oh, the murdered resolutions that lie round about most men's lives! What they would have done, what they could have done, if they had but done it; but they have been building castles in the air, imagining lives they would like to lead, and not actually doing Christ's commands. Oh, for a prompt, personal, practical service to the Lord Jesus Christ!

And in our case it is to be perpetual obedience. Mary said to these waiters, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." "Keep on doing it; not only the first thing he says, but whatsoever he saith unto you. As long as this feast lasts, and he is here, do what my Son commands you." So, beloved, as long as we are in this world, until life's latest hour, may the Holy Ghost enable us to do just what Jesus bids us do! Can you say, my brethren and

sisters, -

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

Is it your wish that, until you enter into his rest, you should always bear his yoke, and follow his footsteps? Temporary Christians are not Christians. Those who ask for furlough from this divine service have never entered it. We have put on our regimentals never to take them off. As certain old knights in times of war slept in their armor, and had the lance and shield always ready to hand, so must the Christian be, from this time forth and for ever. "Ours not to reason why," ours not to delay when the command comes; but ours, while there is breath in our body, and life in our spirit, to serve him who hath redeemed us with his precious blood.

Thus I have feebly set before you what it is that we are called to do, that is, to obey Christ's orders.

II. Now for a few minutes let us ask, WHY IS THIS TO BE DONE? Beloved, why were these men to do what Jesus bade them? Let that melt into, "Why are you and I to do what Jesus bids us?"

First, Christ is by nature worthy of obedience. I count it an honor to serve Christ. Oh, what is he? Perfect Man, rising nobly above us all; perfect God, infinitely majestic in his two natures. Why, it seems to me as if we ought to love to do his bidding, and long to be conformed to his image! Here is the rest for our aspiring spirit. Here are the glory and the honor and the immortality for which we pant. By the glory of Christ, whom you unseen adore, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

Beside that, Christ is our only hope. All our prospects for the future depend upon him. Glory be to his blessed name! There is none like him. If he were gone from us, and we could not trust in him, life would be an endless darkness, an abyss of woe. By all the glory of his nature, and all that we owe to him, and all that we look for from him, I charge you, beloved friends, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

More than that, he is all-wise, and so fit to lead. Who but he could get these people out of their trouble at the feast when they wanted wine? He knew the way out of it all, a way that would manifest his own glory, and make his disciples believe in him, and make everybody round about happy. But if he did not show the way, nobody could. So let us obey him, for his commands are so wise. He never has made a mistake, and he never will. Let us commit our way unto his keeping; and whatsoever he saith unto us, let us do it.

Besides, beloved, Christ has hitherto rewarded our obedience. Did you ever act rightly, and after all find it a mistake? Some of us have had to do very grievous things in our time, that have gone sorely against the grain. Would we do them again? Ay, that we would, if they cost ten times as much! No man has ever, in looking back, to regret that he followed the voice of conscience, and the dictates of God's Word; and he never will, though he should even go to prison and to death for Christ's sake. You may lose for Christ, but you shall never lose by Christ. When all comes to be totalled up, you shall be a greater gainer because of the apparent loss. He has never deceived you, and never misled you. Obedience to him has always brought you real solid peace. Therefore, "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

Yet once more, Christ is our Master, and we must obey him. I hope, beloved, that there is no one among us here who would call him Master, and yet not do the things that he says. We do not talk about him as one who was once great, but who is gone away, and whose influence is now upon the wane, because he is not up to "the spirit of the age." No, but he still lives, and we still commune with him. He is our Master and Lord. When we were baptized into his death, it was no mere matter of form; but we were dead to the world, and we lived to him. When we took his sacred name upon us, and were called Christians, it was no sham; we meant that he should be Captain, King, and Master of our spirits. He is no Baali, that is, domineering lord; but he is Ishi, our Man, our Husband; and, in his husbandly relationship he is Lord and Governor of every thought and every motion of our nature. Jesus, Jesus, thy yoke is easy, and thy burden is light! It is lightsome and joyous to bear it. To get away from it, would be misery indeed; and that is one reason why I say to you to-night,

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," because if you do not, you cast off your allegiance to him; and what are you going to do then? To whom will you go if you turn away from him? Every man must have a master. Will you be your own master? You cannot have a greater tyrant. Will you let the world be your master? Are you going to be a servant of "society"? There are no worse slaves than these. Are you going to live for pelf, for honor, for what is called "pleasure"? Ah, me, you may as well go down to Egypt, to the iron furnace, at once! To whom can we go? Jesus, to whom can we go, if we go away from thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Throw another bond of love about me, another cord of sweet constraint, and let me never even think of parting with thee. Let me be crucified to the world, and the world to me. Do not your hearts pray after that fashion? Oh, to be wholly Christ's, entirely Christ's, for ever Christ's! Yes, yes, we will listen to the command, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." I have given you the reason why we should obey Christ's orders.

III. And now, beloved, let me occupy the last few minutes in answering this question, WHAT WILL FOLLOW FROM THIS OBEDIENCE? Suppose we do whatever Christ commands us, what then? I will tell you what then.

The first thing is, that you will feel free from responsibility. The servant, who has done what his master has bidden him, may in his own mind fear that some dreadful consequences may follow, but he says to himself, "It will be no fault of mine. I did what I was bidden to do." Now, beloved, if you want to get rid of the whole burden of life, by faith do whatsoever Christ commands you. Then, if the heavens should seem about to fall, it would be no business of yours to shore them up. You have not to mend God's work, and keep it right. I remember what Mr. John Wesley said to his preachers: "Now, brethren, I do not want you to mend my rules. I want you to obey them." That is pretty strong from John Wesley; but from our Lord Jesus Christ it comes most suitably. He does not want us to get altering, and mending, and touching up, and looking at consequences. No; do exactly what he tells you, and you have nothing to do with the consequences. You may have to bear them, but that he will give you grace to do; and it shall be your joy to bear all ill consequences

that come of firm obedience to Christ. This kind of doctrine does not suit the year 1889. If you go over to Scotland, and see where the Covenanters' graves are, anybody who thinks according to the spirit of this age will say that they were just a set of fools to have been so stubborn and so strict about doctrine as to die for it. Why, really, there is not anything in the now philosophy that is worth dying for! I wonder whether there is any "modern thought" doctrine that would be worth the purchase of a cat's life. According to the teaching of the broad school, what is supposed to be true to-day may not be true to-morrow, so it is not worth dying for. We may as well put off the dying till the thing is altered; and if we wait a month, it will be altered, and thus, at the last, you may get the old creed back again. The Lord send it, and send us yet a race of men who will obey what he bids them, and do what he tells them, and believe what he teaches them, and lay their own wills down in complete obedience to their Lord and Master! Such a people will feel free from responsibility.

Then you shall feel a sweet flow of love to Christ. The disobedient child—well, he will not be turned out of the house, because he will not do the bidding of his mother and father; but when he does not submit to the rule of the house, he has a hard time of it, and he ought to have. There is that evening kiss, it is not as warm as it would have been; and that morning greeting, after long disobedience, has no happiness in it; and, indeed, the more kind father and mother are, the more unhappy he is. And the sweet love of Christ is such that it makes us unhappy in disobedience. You cannot walk contrary to Christ, and yet enjoy fellowship with him; and the more dear and near he would be to you, so much the wider does the gap seem to be when you are not doing his bidding.

Besides, there is no carrying out your faith except by doing as he bids you. That faith which lies only in a creed, or in a little pious book, is not good for much. Faith does what Christ bids it do, and it delights to do so. It rejoices to run risks, it delights to put off from the land, and get out to sea. It is glad to sacrifice itself when Jesus calls for it, because faith cannot be satisfied without bearing fruit, and the fruit of faith is obedience to him in whom we believe.

Beloved, I also think that, if we will obey Christ in what he says, we shall

be learning to be leaders. Wellington used to say that no man is fit to command until he has learned to obey; and I am sure that it is so. We shall never see a race of really first-rate men unless our boys and girls are made to obey their parents in their childhood. The essential glory of manhood is lost when disobedience is tolerated; and, certainly, in the Church of God, the Lord does put his leading servants through very severe ordeals. The best place for the books of a minister is not his library, but a sick-bed very often. Affliction is our school; and before we can deal with others, God must deal with us. If thou wilt not obey, thou shalt not be set to command.

And lastly, I do believe that learning to obey is one of the preparatives for the enjoyments of heaven. Why, in heaven, they have no will but God's will! Their will is to serve him, and delight themselves in him; and if you and I do not learn here below what obedience to God is, and practice it, and carry it out, how could we hope to be happy in the midst of obedient spirits? Dear hearers, if you had never learned to trust Christ and obey him, how could you go to heaven? You would be so unhappy there that you would ask God to let you run into hell for shelter, for nothing would strike you with more horror than to be in the midst of perfectly holy people who find their delight in the service of God. May the Lord bring us to this complete obedience to Christ! Then this world will be an inclined plane, or a ladder such as Jacob saw, up which we shall trip with holy gladness till we come to the top, and find our heaven in perfect obedience to God.

It is not Mary who speaks to you to-night, but it is the Church of God, the mother of all who truly love Christ; and she says to you, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," and if you will do it, he will turn the water into wine for you. He will make your love more glad and happy than it ever would have been without obeying him, and he will provide for you. Obey him, and he will comfort you. Obey him, and he will perfect you. Be with him in the ways of duty, and you shall be with him in the home of glory.

The Lord grant this, of his infinite grace, giving to us to know the will of Christ, and then working in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure! Amen and Amen.

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The Object Of Christ's Death

Who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. - Galatians 1:4-5

The apostle Paul, in his writings, is notable for the fact that he scarcely ever mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ without pausing to praise and bless him. There are many benedictions and hallelujahs in Paul's Epistles, which might have been omitted so far as the run of the sense is concerned, but not one of them could be omitted because his heart was so aglow with love to his Divine Master that he only needed to mention that dear name, and out burst his praises in a moment. Brethren, let us all try to keep a heart like the apostle's, so full of love to Christ that we have only to come across his track, and we shall at once fall down, and worship and adore him, or upon the wings of holy love mount up nearer to his throne.

I am quite sure that, when Paul was writing the Epistle to the Galatians, he was eager to get at his task. The Galatians had turned aside from the gospel of God's grace, and Paul was in dead earnest to bring them back to the grand truth of the doctrine of salvation and justification by faith in Christ. He was burning to get at his work of trying to win them back to the old paths; but it seemed needful and courteous to begin with a salutation. In that salutation occurred the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, so off went the apostle directly. Earnest as he was to get to the special subject on which he was about to write, he felt that he must tarry a while, and write a little to the honor of his Divine Master. So we read, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory

for ever and ever. Amen." Then he gets at the business he has in hand: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ," and so on. He is red-hot upon that subject, yet he must stop a minute or two to pen some few words of praise to his glorious Lord and Savior. The old proverb says, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey:" and to stop a little while, to praise and bless the name of Jesus Christ, hinders no man's argument. Whatever it is that thou hast to do, if thy Master shall cross thy path, pause a while, and praise him as best thou canst. When Mary sat at Christ's feet, she was not wasting her time, she was employing it then to the highest possible profit; and when you and I get away even from the Master's work, to think of our Lord himself, and to praise him, and commune with him, we are by no means wasting our time; but we are gathering strength, and laying it out to the best possible purpose with regard to our future work and warfare.

I can see the great wisdom of the apostle in acting in such a fashion as this. He is about to write to these Galatians concerning their leaving the gospel; what is the best way to make them sorry for turning aside from the faith? Why, to set before them Jesus Christ himself, who is the very essence and glory of the gospel. I have heard of one who preached much against certain errors, but there was another servant of the Lord who never preached against those errors, but who always proclaimed the gospel right out straight; and when one asked him why he did not attack the errors, he said, "I do preach against them most effectually. If there is a crooked stick about, and you want to show how many crooks there are in it, you need not do anything except lay a straight one down by the side of it, and the crookedness of the other stick will be detected at once." So the apostle admires, extols, and adores the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus, in the best possible manner, introduces what he has to say concerning the errors of the Galatians. Oh, for a burst of sunlight from the face of Christ! Then would the shadows of to-day soon fly away. They who have never seen him may love modern novelties and falsehoods; but if they have beheld his face, and have been won by his charms, they will hold that he who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, is infinitely to be preferred to all the inventions of men. I could say no less than this when I

noticed the position in which our text is placed.

But now let us come to the text itself; to my mind, it contains four things. First, what our Lord Jesus Christ aimed at with regard to his people: "that he might deliver us from this present evil world." Secondly, what our Lord has done to secure this end: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." Thirdly, why he did it: "According to the will of God and our Father." And fourthly, what we shall say concerning it: "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

I. First, then, WHAT DID OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AIM AT WITH REGARD TO HIS PEOPLE? To preserve them from going down into the pit? To rescue them from hell? To bring them to heaven? Yes, all that; but more than that. His great aim with regard to his people is to deliver them from this present evil world. We are living in this present evil world; and as Paul called it by that name, we need not alter the phrase, for we cannot help knowing that it is still an evil world, and in it are God's redeemed and chosen people, by nature part and parcel of that world, equally fallen, equally estranged from God, equally set on mischief, equally certain to go down into the pit of destruction if left to themselves. The object of Christ is to carve out a people from this great brook of stone; it is his purpose to find his own people, who were given to him or ever the earth was, and to deliver them from the bondage and the slavery in which they are found in this Egypt, of which they seem to form a part, though to the eye of Christ they are always as separate and distinct as the Israelites were when they dwelt in the land of Goshen.

What does the apostle mean by saying that the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world?

First, Christ came that he might deliver his people from this common condemnation of this present evil world. This is the City of Destruction which is to be burned with fire, and Christ's business is to fetch his people out of it. Therefore he sends his evangelists to cry to them, "Flee from the wrath to come; tarry not in the city, but escape for your lives; you are in a doomed world, which will certainly be destroyed, therefore, fly to the only shelter from the coming storm." The Lord desires that we should be so

clear of this world that, when it is condemned, we may not share in the condemnation. It is Christ's purpose to bring us into a state of justification before God, through his blood and righteousness, that we may not perish in the common wreck in the day when the world shall be consumed with fire; but that we may have our ark wherein, as righteous Noah was preserved from the deluge of water, we may be saved from the fiery floods of divine wrath. The-Lord Jesus Christ came into the world that he might deliver us from that condemnation which now rests upon all the race of Adam except those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel.

But he came with this further purpose, to deliver us from the condition in which the world is found. In Paul's day, the world was in a horrible state. Then, the slave was chained to his master's door, like a dog, and slept at night in a hole under the stairs, and the slave's master indulged in all kinds of debauchery and sin. The cruelty of the Romans satisfied itself with gladiatorial shows where men murdered each other to make a public holiday. Christ came to gather out a people even from among these abominations, and he did gather them out, a holy people who could not, and would not live as the rest of the world lived. They did not go away into the deserts, or hide themselves in caves, living as hermits, but they went up and down in the earth, attending faithfully to the duties of daily life, yet everywhere marked as differing from other men. Their moral tone, their whole thought about the things of this world and the next, was altogether different from that of the rest of mankind, for Christ had come to draw them out of the kennel of iniquity in which others lived like beasts, to lift them up out of the bog of sin, and make them to be a pure-minded, holy, kind, generous, loving people who should be like their Master, Jesus Christ. For this purpose, the Savior died. He thought it worth his while even to die upon the cross that he might thereby make a better, purer, nobler, more unselfish, more devout people than as yet had appeared in the Roman or Jewish world; and this is what he is still doing in this present evil world, lifting up men and women out of the filthiness in which they have been wallowing, and making them love holiness, and purity, and temperance, and hate all that is evil in the sight of God.

This, then, is the great object of Christ's death, to deliver us from the

world's condemnation, and to deliver us from the world's condition.

He also came to deliver us from the world's customs. There are many things which a worldling does which a Christian cannot do. I need not enlarge upon the tricks in trade which are all too common in the present day; but if you be Christ's own, I charge you, do not even think of them, but let your course be straight as an arrow's, and let your conscience be clean as the driven snow. It is not for God's people to say, "It is the custom of the trade, so we may do it." What have you to do with that? It is the custom of the trade to ruin men's souls; but the churches of God have no such custom, nor have those who follow closely after the Lord Jesus Christ. He has come on purpose that we may not conform to the sinful fashions of men, but that we may have a way of our own, or rather, that we may make Christ's way, the way of holiness, to be our way.

Hence, he has come to deliver us from the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world is, "I can swim; so, if everybody else be drowned, there will then be the more room for me." "I fight for my own hand," says the worldling, "and if, in the process, I crush the widow and the fatherless, I cannot help that, they should not get in my way." The rules of political economy do not permit of anything like mercy; they are as inflexible as the laws of nature. They are something after this fashion,— "Grind down the poor; get as much as ever you can out of them for as little money as possible. Care for nobody but yourself. Mind the main chance; make money, honestly if you can, but if not, make it anyhow; only keep clear of the law, for it would be a mistake to fall into its clutches." Now, Christ has come to gather out of the world's people who will not be possessed with this detestable spirit, but who will resolve to live for others rather than for themselves. We are to consider those who are around us, and to think what influence our conduct will have upon them. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves; we are to love even our enemies; we are to do good to the unthankful and to the evil. We are in all ways, and according to the measure of our ability, to copy the example of our Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the evil as well as upon the good. O friends, see what Christ has come to do, even to separate unto himself a people like unto himself out of this present evil

world!

Yet once more, he will do this by delivering us from all fear of this world. What a great many of you there are who dare not do anything but what society agrees should be done; and if society says, "This is the right thing to do," you call it "etiquette", and you do that particular thing. Then, all the people around you are very respectable, and you want to be counted respectable, and the consequence is that you dare not call your souls your own, and you do not act as you would wish to until you have first asked your neighbours' leave. There are multitudes of people still in the condition of abject slavery to those who are round about them; but when Christ came into the world, he gathered out of the world a people who were not afraid of anybody. After his good Spirit had renewed them, they walked about fearless of the greatest earthly potentates. There was the great Emperor of Rome, for instance, and who dared ever contradict what the Emperor of Rome said? The man who wrote our text did; and Paul before Nero is a vastly greater man than the cruel tyrant upon the throne. When they bring the saints before the judgment-seat, the Roman consul says, "Offer sacrifice to idols. You know the law; take that incense, and put it on the altar, this very moment." One of the guards says, "Sir, this man is obstinate and rebellious; I have told him what he is to do, but he refuses." The consul says, "Dost thou, impious wretch, refuse to worship Jupiter? Put that incense on the altar, this moment, or thou shalt be torn in pieces with hot irons." The man before him replies, "I am a Christian." "Is that your answer?" "Yes, sir, my only answer; I am a Christian." "Then tear him with the pincers; let him learn what my hot irons can do." They do it, and the brave saint bears it. Perhaps a groan escapes his lips, for flesh is frail; but when he is asked again, "Will you worship Jupiter?" he replies as before, "I am a Christian." "To the lions with him, then, to the lions with him," cries the enraged persecutor, and he is taken off to the amphitheatre; but as that poor simple peasant walks across the arena, the wild beasts themselves seem cowed before him, and, though he is soon torn in pieces, everybody goes home from the amphitheatre saying, "What a strange being that man was, he seemed utterly devoid of fear!" Yes, the early Christians were without fear and without reproach, for Christ came to set them free from fear of this present evil world.

O brothers and sisters, were the martyrs as brave as this, and are we going to yield to whatever laws and rules the world lives to lay down for us? Do we mean to believe its current theology, or philosophy, and do or not do as it may dictate? For my part, "I would as lief not be as live to be in awe of such a thing as I myself." Since Christ has given me my liberty, I am his servant; and whether I am in the fashion or out of the fashion, is no concern of mine so long as I please him. Dear friends, let it be so with you, I pray you, and may the Lord daily divide you more and more from the world, so that, at home or abroad, everybody can see that you are not of the world! Love men, seek their good, and in the highest and best sense be far more loving to the world than the world is to itself; but still, fear it not. Why should you? It is "the present evil world" which "lieth in the wicked one." It is for you bravely to bear your protest against the world every day you live, for to this end did he come to this earth, "that he might deliver us from this present evil world."

II. We have seen what our Lord aimed at by his death; now, secondly, **WHAT DID CHRIST DO TO THIS END,**—to deliver us from this present evil world?

The answer of the text is, "He gave himself." I will not say that he gave his royal crown, that diadem which did outshine the sun; I will not say that he laid aside his azure rest, and hung it on the sky as he came down to earth; I will not say that he gave up for us the thrones and royalties of heaven. You know that he did all this, and far more; nor need I remind you that, when upon earth, he gave up all that he had, even to his last garment, for they parted his raiment among them, and for his vesture did they cast lots. I need not say that he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, nor that he gave his hands to the nails, and his feet to the cruel iron. I need not say that he gave his body, his soul, and his spirit, but you have it all in these three words: "He gave himself."

"He gave himself for our sins." That is the wonder of Christ's death, our sins could not be put away except by his dying in our stead. There was no expiation of our sin, and consequently no deliverance from its condemnation, except by Christ's bearing in our room, and place, and

stead, that wrath of God which was due to us; and he did do it. "He gave himself for our sins." I need not say more upon that point except just this. Do not, I pray you, let us permit him in any sense or measure to fail of his supreme object. "He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world," therefore, out of gratitude to him, if for no other reason, let us not be of the world, and like the world, servants of the world, slaves of the world. What! did Christ die to deliver us from the world, and do we go back to it, and deliberately put our necks under the world's yoke, and wear the world's yoke, and become again the world's slaves? I am ashamed of myself, and of you, whenever we for a moment act as the ungodly world acts, and become as the world is, self-seeking, rebellious against God's will, living contrary to the divine law of Christ. Oh, let every drop of blood he shed on Calvary purge you from all resemblance to the world! Let the dying Savior's cries move you to hate the sin which the world loves; from Calvary, hear him cry, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." By the blood with which he bought you, be ye not of the world, seeing that he hath redeemed you from among men that you might be altogether his own.

How does the death of Christ deliver us from the world? It does this by removing from us the condemnation of our sin. Having borne our sins in his own body on the tree, Christ has for ever freed us from the penalty that was our due. You know that is the very essence of the gospel; and you also know that I preach this truth every time I stand here, so I need not enlarge upon it now.

Christ has also delivered us from the world by making sin hateful to us. We say to ourselves, "Did sin kill Christ? Then we cannot play with that dagger that stabbed our Lord. How can we be friendly with the world that cast him out, and hanged him on a tree? O murderous sin, how can I give thee lodgment in my heart when thou didst kill the altogether lovely One?" Men speak hard things of regicides, but what shall I say of deicides? And sin is that deicide which slew the Christ of God; yet, marvel of marvels, by that death on the cross he hath crucified us to the world, and the world unto us, and so he has delivered us from this present evil world.

I may add that Christ has also delivered us from the world by the splendor of his example in giving himself to die for his enemies, and by the glory of his infinite merit, whereby he purchased back that image of God in Adam which sin had obliterated. He gave himself, the very image of God, and more than that, God himself, that he might give back to us that image of God which long ago we had lost. Thus has Christ delivered us from this present evil world; judge ye, sirs, whether he has thus delivered you.

III. Time flies, therefore I must hasten on to the third question, which is, WHY DID CHRIST DO THIS?

First, because our holiness was included in the purpose of God. The text says, "According to the will of God and our Father." Mr. Charles Simeon used to say that there were some, in his day, who thought that the very word "predestination" sounded almost like blasphemy; and I have no doubt that there are some left who cannot bear to hear of the will and the purpose of God, but to us these words sound like sweetest music. I do not believe that there ever would have been a man delivered from this present evil world if it had not been according to the will, the purpose, the predestination of God, even our Father. It needs a mighty tug to get a man away from the world. It is a miracle for a man to live in the world, and yet not to be of it; it is a continuous miracle of so vast a kind that I am sure it would never have been wrought if it had not been according to the will of God our Father. Yet so it stood in the divine decree, that there should be a people chosen from among men, a people who should be called out from among the mass of the ungodly, who should be drawn by supernatural power to follow after that which is right and good and holy, who should be washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Holy Spirit in the spirit of their minds, and henceforth should be a peculiar people, in the world but not of it, the people of God set apart unto himself, to be his now, and his hereafter for ever and ever. I delight to remember that this is the will of God, even our sanctification, our separation from the world.

Now I want to push home this truth into your very hearts. If this be

indeed the purpose of God, let us see to it, my brethren, everyone of us, that we fulfill that purpose in our daily lives. Do let us come out from the world more clear and straight than we have hitherto done. I believe that there would be much more persecution than there is if there were more real Christians; but we have got to be so like the world, that therefore the world does not hate us as once it did. If we would but be more just, more upright, more true, more Christlike, more godly, we should soon hear all the dogs of hell baying with all their might against us; but what of that? It would just be the fulfillment of the divine purpose, and God would be well pleased with us. Come, then, and let us fall back upon the omnipotent strength which ever slumbers within the divine will. Lord, if it be thy will, fulfill it in me; if this be thy purpose, accomplish it in me. Oh, what brave men and women those early saints were! I do not wonder that our friend cried out just now when I depicted the martyr; but there were tens of thousands of such holy men and women in the days of persecution. Have you never heard of her whom they set in a red-hot iron chair because she would not turn away from Christ, or of that other poor feeble woman, who was tossed on the horns of bulls, but who, nevertheless, spoke up right bravely for her Master as she came to die? Yes, and there have been boys and girls, who, for Christ's sake, sooner than sin, have braved the most fearful deaths. Remember John Bunyan when he refused to give up preaching. They put him in prison, and said to him, "Mr. Bunyan, you can come out of prison whenever you will promise to cease preaching the gospel." He said, "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again to-morrow, by the grace of God." "Well," said they, "then you must go back to prison:" and he answered, "I will go back and stay there if need be till the moss grows on my eyelids; but I will never deny my Master." This was the stuff of which the godly were made then; may the Lord make many of us to be like them, men and women who cannot and will not do that which is evil, but will, in the name of God, stand to the right and the true, come what may!

IV. Lastly, WHAT SHALL WE SAY CONCERNING IT ALL? Why, just this, "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

First, God is glorified in Christ's death. Has the Father given his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us? Then there is glory enough in Jesus Christ

upon the cross to last throughout eternity. Fix your eye upon that bleeding Savior; behold the glorious justice of God in laying guilt on him, and punishing it on him, and behold also the inconceivable love of God in thus putting his Only-begotten to death that we might live through him. You need not range the world around to see the glory of God in nature, though that is a delightful employment, for there is enough glory in the cross of Christ to last throughout all eternity. The apostle says, "To whom be glory for ever and ever." How long that is, I cannot tell. "For ever" is without any end, but Paul says, "For ever and ever," and there is glory enough in the cross of Christ to last for ever and ever, as long as the Eternal Jehovah himself exists.

Well then, has Jesus Christ delivered us from the world? Have we fled to him, and been pardoned? Are we accepted in the Beloved? Then, let us begin to glorify God now. Let us glorify his dear Son, let us praise him. Let every beat of our heart tell out our joyous thankfulness, and so continually yield sweet music unto God. I would that every breath were like a verse of a psalm, and our whole life an endless hallelujah to his glory.

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies;"

for it is indeed a subject of great praise to be separated from the world, and to be made holy unto the Lord.

But, brothers and sisters, when you once begin the music, never leave off, because, as the apostle says, glory is to be given to God "for ever and ever." I saw, last week, a brother from the backwoods of America, and he said to me, "Twenty years ago, I was in your vestry, and you did me much good by something that you said to me." I asked, "What did I say?" And the good man replied, "You said, 'Brother, as a minister, there are two occasions upon which you ought to preach Jesus Christ.' I enquired, 'What are those two occasions?' You answered, 'In season, and out of season.'" Well now, there are two occasions upon which we ought to

praise God, "in season, and out of season." Praise him when you feel like praising; and when you do not feel like it, praise him till you do. When you can say,—

"I feel like singing all the time,"

then sing; and when you say, "I do not feel like singing," make a point of singing then, just to let the devil know that he is not your master. It is a good thing to praise Christ in the presence of his friends; it is sometimes a better thing to extol him in the presence of his enemies. It is a great thing to praise Jesus Christ by day; but there is no music sweeter than the nightingale's, and she praises God by night. It is well to praise the Lord for his mercy when you are in health, but make sure that you do it when you are sick, for then your praise is more likely to be genuine. When you are deep down in sorrow, do not rob God of the gratitude that is due to him; never stint him of his revenue of praise whatever else goes short. Praise him sometimes on the high-sounding cymbals,—crash, crash,—with all your heart and being; but when you cannot do that, just sit, and mean his praise in solemn silence in the deep quiet of your spirit. To be redeemed from a dying world, to be fetched out from a condemned world, to be brought out from slavery, to be made a child of God, is enough to make you emulate the angels, and even to excel them. They cannot rise to so high a pitch of gratitude as you ought to reach even now, and ought to keep up all the days of your life, and then "for ever and ever "in the presence of the King.

O you poor souls who are still in the world, God help you to get out of it! O you who are lost and ruined, there is no hope for you but in Jesus Christ our Savior! Tell all men about him, brethren and sisters. You who are saved, talk about Christ everywhere; let no man whom you ever meet be without a knowledge of the way of salvation. "I do not know what to say," says one; "I do not know much about it myself yet." Do not say it, then, if you do not know it; but, if you do know it, tell it. If you have tasted and handled it, tell of it as best you can; in broken English, if in no other style,—

"Tell to sinners round

What a dear Savior you have found."

So, even through you, the purpose for which Christ bled shall be accomplished, that is, the severance of his elect from the great mass of mankind among whom they lie, and this shall be to the praise of the glory of his grace for ever and ever. Amen.

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Offended With Christ

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. - Matthew 11:6

The connection of the passage assists us in feeling its force. John had sent his disciples to ask the Master whether he was indeed the Messiah, and the Savior, after giving abundant proof that he was the sent one who had long been promised, then adds, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Had John begun to suspect a stumbling-block in reference to the Nazarene? Did he question if so lowly a person could indeed be the promised Christ? Had he expected Messiah to be a glorious prince with an earthly kingdom? Was he staggered to find himself in prison under Herod's power? Was John himself in doubt, and did the Savior, therefore, say, "Blessed is he whosoever is not made to stumble concerning anything about me"? There have been many surmises as to why and wherefore John sent his disciples, and perhaps we shall never know, and need not wish to know, seeing it did not please God to leave it on record. Some have said he sent the messengers for his own sake, for he was then under a fainting fit of unbelief. I hardly think so, and yet it is possible, for John was an Elijah-like man—a man of stern iron mould, and such men are apt to have occasional sinkings of a terrible sort. With most of the children of God their weakness is most seen where their strength lies. Elijah failed in courage, though he was one of the most courageous of

men. After he had slain the priests of Baal he was afraid of a woman-afraid of Jezebel, and fled to hide himself, and said, "Let me die I am no better than my fathers." It seems to be a law of nature that the strongest men should have the worst fits of weakness. Martin Luther's life is remarkable as illustrating this. He fainted as few men ever fainted: his despair on some occasions was almost equal to his confidence at other times. So it is possible that John, being of that class of men, after having boldly confronted Herod and declaring "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," may have fainted in spirit when he found himself shut up in prison with no known and manifest token of Messiah's kingdom coming. Prison may have been a severe trial to the Baptist; we are all affected by the atmosphere in which we dwell. To-day has been a very heavy day to many a spirit, because the atmosphere has been loaded with damp and smoke. I do believe that there is more than a little truth in the rhyme,

"Heaviest the heart is
In a heavy air,
Every wind that rises
Blows away despair."

Now John the Baptist, after living in the wilderness in the open air by the river side, must have felt a strange difference when he was shut up in the close, oppressive dungeon of Herod, and the body may have helped to act upon the soul, and so the mind, after its extraordinary tension in the great service to which John was called, may have been dragged down by the half stifled body till faith began to tremble. And so it may be that John, for his own satisfaction, found it necessary to ask, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" If so, the Savior well said, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me"; for, after all, notwithstanding his severe trial and deep depression, John was not really offended in Christ; he was not actually scandalized as to the Lord whose forerunner he had been, but he held on to his testimony and sealed it with his death. Blessed is his memory as that of one who was not offended in Christ.

Others, however, think that John sent these disciples not at all for his own sake, but for theirs, and that strikes me as being the more probable.

He wished to transfer them from himself to his Lord, and he, therefore, bade them go and enquire for themselves. He felt that the answer which Jesus would be sure to give would be the best means of convincing them that they ought to follow the servant no longer, but cast in their lot with his Master. Our Lord after showing that he was indeed the Messiah, by working miracles in their presence and preaching the gospel, then said to them, "And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me. You see me here despised and rejected of men, notwithstanding that I work miracles. You see that I am called Beelzebub and treated with the utmost scorn. You shall be blessed if, believing me to be the Christ of God, you follow me without being staggered at anything you see, or annoyed at anything you are called to bear for my sake."

Whatever may have been John's motive, the text will, I trust, serve us for a useful purpose. May we be among the number of those who are blessed because we are not offended in Christ; and let us now look at various characters that we may know to which class we belong.

First, there are some who are so offended with Christ that they never accept him as their Savior at all. Secondly, there is another class of persons who, after professing to accept him, and apparently casting in their life-lot with him, are, after all, scandalized. They find stumbling-blocks, and go back and forsake the way which they professed to tread. But then, thirdly, there are others who, by the grace of God, take Christ as he is with all their hearts and are not offended in him, and these are they that are blessed in very deed, and shall enter into eternal blessedness in heaven.

I. First, then, I shall try to speak, and God help me to speak effectually, TO SOME WHO ARE SO OFFENDED IN CHRIST THAT THEY NEVER TRUST HIM AT ALL, OR ACCEPT HIM AS THEIR SAVIOR. Let us tell the reasons why some men do not receive Christ and are offended in him. O that the Spirit of God may drive these unreasonable reasons from their souls, and lead them to Jesus. Some in his own day were offended with him because of the humbleness of his appearance. They said, "He is the son of a carpenter. His father and his mother we know, and his brothers, are they not all with us? When Messias cometh we know not whence he

is, but as for this man, we know from whence he is." He came among them as a mere peasant. He wore the ordinary raiment of the people: a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, stood him in good stead; no soft raiment and gorgeous apparel decorated and distinguished him. He did not affect any dignity; he came with no chariot and horses and pomp of a prince. He was meek and lowly. Even in the grandest day of his triumph he rode upon a colt, the foal of an ass, and, therefore, they said, "Is this the Son of David? Is this the King, the glorious one, of whom prophets spoke in ages long gone by?" And so they were scandalized and offended in him because there was a lack of that earthly glory and splendor for which they had looked. Men feel in the same manner now. There are some who would be Christians, but then Christianity must be a very respectable thing; and if the truth is to be found amongst poor people, well, then, the truth may keep there for them, for they will not go with it to hear a plain preacher and mix with common people. If truth walks the streets in silver slippers then they do not mind owning it and walking with it; but if it toils in rags through the by-lanes, and by miry pathways, then they say, "I pray thee have me excused." The religion of Jesus Christ never was, nor ever can be, the religion of this present evil world. He has chosen a people out of the world who believe it, but the world itself has always hated it. Did not our Lord tell us (John 14:17), concerning the Spirit of truth, that the world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him? Whenever you find a religion which unites itself with pomp and show and worldly power, if there be any truth in it at all, it has, at any rate, deteriorated from the standard of its purity, and is not according to the mind of Christ. But there are some who are so fond of everything that is fashionable-everything that is great and famous-that, if the Lord Jesus Christ be despised and rejected of men, they despise and reject him too. Ah, but I hope that I address some to whom the Lord has given a nobler spirit. Some men and women I hope are here to-night who will never reject the truth because it is unfashionable, or refuse to follow Christ because he is despised. No, but the noble spirit says, "Is it right? Then I will espouse it. Is it true? Then I will believe it in the name of God. Though it may mean poverty and shame, yet that is the side on which I will enlist." There is a lordlier chivalry than all the chivalry of war: it is the chivalry of the heart that dares be nailed to the cross with Christ

sooner than turn aside to seek flowery pathways and follow the trail of the serpent. Yet many do reject Christ because of the humbleness of his exterior. Who is on the Lord's side, and will dare avow it before a scoffing world?

Again, there are others who reject him because of the fewness of his followers. They like to go where the many go and they say, "Well, but there are so few that go that way, I do not wish to be singular." Yet every honest heart must own that truth never could be decided by votes yet, for, as a rule, it has been in the minority. If we are to count heads we must go to the Pope, or the Sultan, or the Brahmin. For my part I think that a minority of one with Christ is stronger than a majority of fifty millions against him, for Christ, the Son of God, in his own person, sums up a total greater than all the multitudes that ever can be against him. There are some who quite forget that our Lord has said, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" and again, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The way that leadeth to life eternal, though it be the King's highway, is often as little frequented as a country lane. If you must be on the side of the majority, then you will certainly be on the side of deadly error, unless there should come some happier times, when the Lord has more greatly increased the number of his people than at the present. May you be spared to see such days, but those days have not, come as yet; and if you will not go with the Lord until the multitudes are with him, you will perish in your sin. Do not, I pray you, therefore stumble at him because of this.

Some are offended with Christ for quite another reason, namely, because of the grandeur of his claims. He claims to be God over all, blessed for ever. He counted it not robbery to be equal with God though he made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant. Now some spirits cavil greatly at this. They did so in his own day. They took up stones to stone him because he made himself equal with God. Proud, carnally wise minds cannot endure the doctrine that the Redeemer is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, very God of very God. To my mind it is a reason why I accept him. If he were not God, how could he save me.

The weight of my sins would stagger all the angels and cherubim and seraphim if they should try to lift it. I must have a God to save me, or saved I never can be, and to me it is the greatest consolation possible that he who was the son of Mary is also the Son of God; that though human, even as we are human, sin excepted, he was altogether divine. Oh do not, do not be offended with him because of this, but rather rejoice in Immanuel, God with us, and trust your soul in his hands.

A certain number of unconverted men are grievously offended with our Lord because of his atonement. This which to us is the very center of all his excellence-that he saves us by standing in our stead, and bearing the wrath of God on our behalf-this is dreadfully kicked at by some; and I have heard these fastidious people finding fault with ministers for talking too much of the blood. They cannot endure the very term "the precious blood of Christ." We shall never listen to their fastidiousness, not for a single moment; but if we knew such to be present we would go out of our way on purpose to shock them, because we think that no respect should be shown to such a wicked taste. If the doctrine of the atonement be kicked at, the answer of Christ's minister should be to preach the atonement again and again and again in the plainest possible terms, and declare with even greater vigor and frequency the glorious substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ in the room, place, and stead of his people. This is the very heart of the gospel, and should be preached in your hearing every Sabbath-day at the least. Leave that out? You have left out the life of the gospel, for "the blood is the life thereof." Without shedding of blood there is no remission, and therefore, as remission is the great privilege of the gospel, we have no salvation to declare, and we have no remission to preach, unless the blood

"From his riven side which flowed"

be continually set forth before you. Oh, why should men cavil at that which is their salvation? If they ever be redeemed it must be, "not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." If they ever are cleansed from all sin it must be because of that divine declaration, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." May we never stumble at Christ because of his cross, for that

were to reject our only hope, that were to quarrel with our life, that were to insist upon shutting the gates of mercy upon our own souls, that were to become enemies to our best friend and to ourselves. God save us from such an infatuation as that!

We have found a good many also who are offended with Christ for a different reason altogether, namely, because of the graciousness of the gospel. It has too much free grace in it for them. They would like a mingle- mangle of grace and works. You will constantly hear it said that the doctrine of justification by faith is very dangerous, and ought to be preached with great caution. Occasionally our secular papers, which, as you know, understand a great deal about religion, will instruct us as to what we should preach. The moral virtues ought to be our main theme, and justification by faith should be so qualified as to be virtually denied. It is very wrong, they say, to sing that hymn "Nothing, either great or small,

Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago"

and to tell the sinner that until he believes in Jesus Christ

"Doing is a deadly thing:
Doing ends in death,"

is regarded as a crime so manifest that it needs only to be mentioned, and every reader of the paper will be dreadfully shocked; and yet the editor of the paper, or the writer, probably, calls himself a Protestant, and justification by faith is the one doctrine upon which all Protestantism turns. Very likely the writer of the stinging article calls himself a churchman, and yet the doctrine of the Church of England about that matter is as plain as words could possibly make it. Yes, and then they suppose us to be some modern sect of revivalists that have newly sprung up, although we are preaching that which is and always was the gospel, the doctrine by which you may test whether a church stands or falls- salvation, not by the works of the law, but according to the grace of God.

Crowds of people cannot endure grace. And as to the term "free grace," they say that it is a tautological expression. It may be so, but it is a very expressive term, and because they do not like it I always intend to use it. It will do them good to be made to know that we mean it, and therefore use doubly strong language. It shall not only be "gratis," which is free, but "free gratis"; and we will, one of these days, put something else on to make it plainer still, if possible, and say, "free, gratis, for nothing." Salvation through eternal love, salvation through mercy alone; salvation, not of merit, salvation, not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the flesh, but salvation by the eternal purpose of divine sovereignty, salvation by the will of God, who has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,"-this we will preach evermore. Grace free as the air, spontaneous, undeserved, but given of God because he delighteth in mercy. Ay, they kick against this; but, if they knew themselves, they would know that nothing else will ever suit the sinner but this. He who has broken the divine law is never in a right state of heart till he feels salvation by himself to be hopeless, till he is shut up in the condemned cell and hears the sentence read against him, condemning him to die, and knows that nothing that he can do can by any possibility reverse that sentence, and then sees Jesus interposing in all the freeness of his love, and saying, "Now thou hast nothing to pay. I frankly forgive thee all." Grace is the glory of the gospel. Do not be offended with it, I pray you, or you will be offended with your own life.

Then, on the other hand, there is another class of persons who are offended with our blessed Lord and Master because of the holiness of his precepts. Alas that there should be traitors in the camp who can get on very well with grace and free grace, but then, alas, they turn it into licentiousness and take liberty to sin because of the freeness of divine mercy. If you begin to declare that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," if you preach, as Jesus did, that he who forgiveth not his brother abideth in death; if you tell them that the omission of these outward virtues will prove that the inward life is absent, if you declare that the axe is laid to the root of the trees and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire, if you go on to insist upon it that there must be the outward marks and evidences of saintship or else the pretense of experience is a mere lie-then by-and-by they are offended and

exhibit a bitter spirit, Oh that none of us may act so. The highest holiness is the delight of the true believer. If he could be absolutely perfect he would rejoice above measure. It will be his heaven to be perfect, and the one thing he strives after here below is to get the mastery over all sin; not that he hopes to be saved by that, but because he is saved, and being saved, out of love to Jesus Christ, he desires to adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all things. May we never be offended by the purity and perfectness of our Lord and his teaching.

I might continue this long list of things by which men have been offended with Christ-some because the gospel is so mysterious, they say, and others because it is so very simple that it is not deep enough for such great intellects as theirs. Men, if they want to be offended with Christ, will be sure to find something or other to quarrel with. They stumble at this stumbling-stone, "Whereunto also," says the Lord very solemnly, "they were appointed." They put this stumbling-block in their own way, and God appoints that they shall fall. They fall upon it now and are broken, and one of these days that stone will fall on them and grind them to powder.

My dear hearers, I cannot stay longer on this subject, but if there are any of you that are offended with Christ, I pray the Lord to make you feel your extreme folly and wickedness. Offended with the Redeemer What madness! May you go and confess this insult to your Savior, and accept him at this very moment as your all in all.

II. Now I want to speak to professing Christians. THERE ARE SOME WHO JOIN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST WHO AFTER A TIME ARE OFFENDED. Now, why is it that some who profess to know him are offended with Christ? Well, with some it is because the novelty wears off. Very earnest services were held, and they were greatly affected, and they thought that they repented and believed; so they joined the church. Now the good men are gone who held the services, and everything seems rather flat after such excitement, and so they have gone back again. They jumped into religion like a man into a bath, and they have jumped out again, put on their clothes, and gone back to the world and to what they were before. Persons of this sort are very plentiful just now. If they were

ever born again, they were born with a fever upon them, and if you do not keep up the heat, and let them live in an oven, they will die. We know that such hothouse plants will never pay for the fuel used in forcing them; we are grieved that it is so, but we have seen it so often that we do not wonder at it so much as we did. Hot weather breeds flies, and warm showers bring out reptiles.

There are not a few who professed to become Christians and who thought that they were always going to be happy. The evidence that they gave of being Christians was "that they felt so happy." I do not know that mere happiness is any evidence of being a Christian at all, for many are living far from God and yet account themselves very happy, while some of those who live near to God are groaning because they cannot get nearer still. Yet a joyful feeling is by many regarded as conclusive evidence of salvation, and they add to this the notion that as soon as ever they believed in Jesus Christ the conflict was all over, and there remained nothing more to be done in the way of resisting sin and denying the lusts of the flesh. They dreamed that they had only to start on pilgrimage and get to the Celestial City in a trice-only to draw the sword from the scabbard and all Canaan was conquered in an hour. Very soon they find that it is not so. Their old corruptions are alive; the flesh begins to pull a different way from that which they profess to have chosen, the devil tempts them and they are so disappointed by their new discovery that they become offended with Christ altogether. A sudden victory would suit them, but to carry a cross before winning a crown is not to their mind.

Others of them have met an opposition they did not expect from their adversaries, while from their friends they have not met with all the respect that they think they ought to have. Their friends and acquaintances have laughed at them; their workmates in the shop have jeered at them; they did not reckon on this, they never counted the cost, and so they are offended with Christ. Is it not a strange thing that we who begin our religion at the cross, if we begin aright, should ever be astonished that the cross keeps close to us, or should be surprised that the world treats us with disdain?

But so it is. Persecution arises, and many are offended. It is not that they

burn them to death, or put them in prison. No, no, they only make a joke or two, or they give them the cold shoulder, and shut them out of society, but the poor creatures are so thin-skinned that they cannot endure even these light afflictions; and so they are offended, and miss the blessing. When they joined the Christian church everybody was so glad to see them at the first, as we always are when there is a new-born child; but many more new converts have come since then, and the former ones feel that they are not made so much of as they were, and so they become annoyed, and under one pretense or another slink away. Because Christ's people do not carry them about as wonders, and cry "Hosanna" over them all their days, they are ready to go back to the world and complain that they have been disappointed with religion and with Christians. Oh, but this is naughty this is a wrong spirit which must by no means be countenanced; yet I fear it is to be seen in many places. This is an offense which ought never to arise. We have known some who have become offended with Christ, or were in great danger of it because they began to find that religion entailed more self-denial than they had reckoned upon. The precepts of our blessed Master come very close home to their consciences and gall them somewhat. He told them that the yoke was easy and that the burden was light, and so it is to the meek and lowly in heart, but they are not changed in heart, and therefore they find the burden heavy and the yoke galling. I do not wonder that it is so, for that which is the delight of the renewed heart is bondage to the regenerate spirit, and self-denials, which really are no denials at all to the man who is born again, are an iron bondage to those who still remain in their unregenerate state; they get offended and they go away from the Master whom they professed to serve.

I have known some good souls almost offended at the Master through the hard speeches of those who ought to have encouraged them. I was speaking not long ago with a young lady who had for some time been devoting herself very earnestly to the cause of Christ. I do not know one who had done more than she had done in her own sphere; but she was in great distress because the person with whom she had worked for many months had spoken very bitterly of her. Though she had been his best helper he seemed to regard her as his worst enemy; and as she told me what he had said, I was very sorry, but the worst part about it was the

temptation which the devil put in her way. The evil one whispered, "Never take a prominent place again. Give up your work. You are said to be officious; now be quiet, and do nothing." Now, it will happen to all of us more or less that if we try to be zealous in the Master's cause we shall be misunderstood; wet blanket manufactories are pretty numerous, and some benevolent brother is sure to bring one of these articles for our use. He thinks that it will do us good; but it is mischievous to our spirits. Blessed is he who cannot be offended in that way. It may encourage you to know that, generally, those whom God largely blesses have to go through a great fight at first, from their own brethren. Look at David. He was to bring home giant Goliath's head, but those elder brethren of his all said, "Because of the pride and the naughtiness of thy heart, to see the battle art thou come." They recommended him to stop at home with his sheep, even as they told us to keep clear of a pulpit: but God did not mean that he should remain hidden. If the Lord means to bless you, some of his very dear people will be for putting you back among the sheep again; but do not be scandalized at Christ on that account. Stand firm as you have done.

Press forward; be not disgusted or discouraged, but, on the contrary, recollect that opposition is very often the sign of coming success. Press forward, for "Blessed is he that is not offended in me." Moreover, many young Christians are greatly staggered by the ill conduct of professors. I think that there is no worse trial to a babe in Christ than to see elderly Christians walking inconsistently, and living in a lukewarm state, and even speaking as if they were antagonistic to all earnest attempts to spread the kingdom of Christ. If you are one of God's children you will not die at their hands, any more than Joseph at the hands of his brethren. If the Lord has indeed quickened you with spiritual life you will press on and work for the Master and not be ashamed.

It has frequently occurred to me to deplore that some professors fall back through trials of providence. We occasionally miss members of the church because they were pretty well-to-do when they joined with us, but things have gone badly with them, and they feel as if they could not show themselves. They will even say that they have not got clothes fit to come in. I have often told you that any clothes are fit to come in as long as you

have paid for them; clothing, be it fine or threadbare, is nothing to me. As far as I am concerned, I really do not know what people wear. It never strikes my eye; I am too busy looking at your faces, when I can see you, to look at what you may happen to wear. Come, oh come, to the house of God, my suffering brother. Never let the devil prevail upon you to stop away. If your shoe leaks, if there is a hole in the elbow of your coat, the Lord does not look at that, nor do we. You come along. We shall be glad to see you, the most of us; and if there are some who will not be glad, they are nobodies: do not take any notice of them. But never stay away from the house of God because of your shabbiness; what can it matter? When you begin to get low in circumstances do not be proud and say, "I can't dress as I once did, or make such a dash as I did, and so I shall not go." Why you are just the same person: a man is a man notwithstanding the little or the much which he possesses; and when earthly comforts are going you ought to seek heavenly comforts all the more, and the poorer you get in substance the richer you ought to seek to be in grace. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." But I know that this is a temptation. I have heard it said that in Jamaica in the negro churches, when wages are low, attendance at the means of grace begins to decline: I know that it is so, but so it ought not to be. Do not be offended with Christ. If he chooses to let you be poor, be satisfied to be poor; yea, if you get to be as low as Job who sat on a dunghill, scraping himself with a piece of an old pot, yet learn to say with the heroic patriarch, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." If he is not ashamed of me I will not be ashamed of him, or ashamed to follow, even in rags, the standard of him who hung upon the cross and triumphed there for me. "They parted his garments among them, and for his vesture did they cast lots." I cannot be worse clad than he. Be not ashamed of him then.

III. The last head is to be, that THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE NOT OFFENDED IN CHRIST, AND TJEU ARE DECLARED TO BE BLESSED. They are so because if God had not blessed them they would not be found clinging to their Lord, but would have gone back like others. Apart from anything else it is a blessed thing to have grace enough given you to hold fast to Christ under all circumstances. If you were not one of those whom he has chosen from before the foundations of the world, if you were not one of those whom Christ specially redeemed with blood, if you were not

one of those in whom the Holy Spirit has placed a new heart and a right spirit, you would go back. But if you hold out to the end, you have in that the evidence that the Lord has loved you with an everlasting love.

Oh, you that are on and off with Jesus, what a poor hope yours must be. You that can run with the hare and hold with the hounds, you that try to serve God and Mammon,-you have no marks of being God's children. But those of you who put your foot down for Christ, and cannot be moved; you who have said unto your souls, "By his grace, I will not depart from following the Lord;"-you have, in that very fact, the evidence of being blessed. And then you shall find a blessedness growing out of your fidelity. I believe that persecuted ones have more blessedness than any other saints. There were never such sweet revelations of the love of Christ in Scotland as when the Covenanters met in the mosses and on the hill side. No sermons ever seemed to be so sweet as those which were preached when Claverhouse's dragoons were out and the minister read his text by the lightning's flash. The saints never sang so sweetly as when they let loose those wild bird notes among the heather. The flock of slaughter, the people of God that were hunted down by the foe, these were they who saw the Lord. I warrant you that in Lambeth Palace there were happier hearts in the Lollards' dungeon than there were in the archbishop's hall. Down there where men have lain to rot, as did Bunyan in Bedford jail, there have been more dreams of heaven, and more visions of celestial things, than in the courts of princes. The Lord Jesus loves to reveal himself to those of his saints who dare take the bleak side of the hill with him. If you are willing to follow him when the wind blows in your teeth, and the snow flakes come thickly till you are almost blinded, and if you can say,

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes,"

you shall have such unveilings of his love to your soul as shall make you forget the sneers of men and the sufferings of the flesh. God shall make you triumphant in all places. You know this already by experience, do you not? You that are his people must know that whenever you have had to suffer for Christ it has been a blessed thing for you. Whenever anybody

jeered at you, and you have felt it for the time, yet, if you have been able to bear it well, it has brought many a sweet reflection afterwards. Somebody pushed good Mr. Kilpin into the gutter and slapped him on the face at the same time, and said, "Take that, John Bunyan"; whereupon the good man took off his hat and said, "I would take fifty times as much as that to have the honor to be called John Bunyan." Learn to look upon insults for Christ in the same light, and when they call you by an ill name do you reply, "I could bear a thousand times as much as that for the pleasure of being associated with Christ in the world's derision." But what blessedness awaits you if you are not offended in Jesus. You are blessed while you are waiting for him, but your best reward is to come, In that hereafter, when the morning breaks on the everlasting shore, how will they be ashamed and disgusted with themselves who sought their own honor and esteem, and denied their Lord and Master! Where will Demas be then, who chose the present world and forsook his Lord? Where will that son of perdition be who chose the thirty pieces of silver and sold the Prince of Life? What shame will seize upon the coward, the fearful, the unbelieving, the people who checked conscience and stifled conviction because a fool's laugh was too much for them! Then they will have to bear the Savior's scorn and the everlasting contempt of all holy beings. But the men who stood meekly forward to confess their Lord,-who were willing to be set in the pillory of scorn for Christ, ready to be spit upon for him, ready to be called ill names for his sake, ready to lose their character, their substance, their liberty, and their lives for him-oh how calmly will they await the great assize, when loyalty shall receive honor from the great King. How bright will be their faces when he that sitteth on the throne will say, "They confessed me before men, and now will I confess them before my Father which is in heaven. These are mine, my Father," says he "they are mine. They clave unto me, and now I own them as my jewels." These are they that followed the Lamb whithersoever he went. They read the word, and what they found there they believed. They saw their Lord's will in the Scriptures, and they labored to do it. They were faithful to conscience and to conviction, and the Spirit dwelt in them and guided their lives; they shall be the Redeemer's crown and the beloved of his Father.

They were the poor of this world; they were considered to be mere idiots

by some, and were thought to have gone mad by others; but they are the Lord's own elect. Jesus will say, "They were with me in my tribulation; they were with me in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and now they are mine, and they shall be with me on my throne. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world."

Oh, you are happy, you people of God who lose good situations because you cannot do dishonest things, you who cannot break the Sabbath, and therefore shut the shop up and lose a large part of your incomes, you who for Christ's sake dare to be singular and are not ashamed to be called "puritanical," and to be pointed out as hypocrites, you who bravely refuse to indulge in the intoxicating cup and utterly turn aside from evil companions, you who will not be found in the haunts of vice which men call pleasure; you who though you may think a thing to be lawful will, nevertheless, deny yourselves because it is not expedient, and will avoid the appearance of evil, you who try to put your feet down in the footprints of Christ, and follow him in all things,- you are and shall be truly blessed.

With all your faults and imperfections which you mourn over, your Lord is not ashamed of you, and he will confess you at the last. Oh, may you all be true adherents of Jesus. I set up a standard tonight and try to act as recruiting officer. Who will be enlisted into the army of Christ to-night? Is any young man ready to say "I will"? Yes, but count the cost. Are you prepared to be ridiculed? Are you prepared to suffer? Are you willing to put up with the hatred of your own family sooner than forsake God and his Christ and the truth? We will not have you else. Christ will not own you else. It must be a thorough coming out. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." Who is on the Lord's side?-Who? Let your hearts answer, for there shall come a day when that same word shall thunder over all the earth, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" Many then will rue the day in which they were ashamed to confess a persecuted Christ. May we be on his side to-night, first trusting him, relying upon him alone for salvation, and then surrendering ourselves to him to be his for ever. Amen.

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Oh, How He Loves!

Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! - John 11:36

It was at the grave of Lazarus that Jesus wept, and his grief was so manifest to the onlookers that they said, "Behold how he loved him!" Most of us here, I trust, are not mere onlookers, but we have a share in the special love of Jesus. We see evidences of that love, not in his tears, but in the precious blood that he so freely shed for us; so we ought to marvel even more than those Jews did at the love of Jesus, and to see further into his heart than they did, and to know more of him than they could in the brief interval in which they had become acquainted with him. When we think of his love to us, we may well cry, "Behold how he has loved us!"

These Jews expressed their wonder at the love that Jesus had for his friend Lazarus: they did not keep that wonder to themselves, but they said, "Behold how he loved him!" In these days, we are too apt to repress our emotions. I cannot say that I greatly admire the way in which some enthusiastic folk shout "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "Amen," and so on, in the midst of sermons and prayers; yet I would sooner have a measure of that enthusiastic noise than have you constantly stifling your natural emotions, and checking yourself from giving utterances to your heart's true feelings. If we were in a right state of mind and heart, we should often say to one another, "How wondrous has the love of Jesus been to us!" Our conversation with one another, as brethren and sisters in Christ, would often be upon this blessed subject. We waste far too much of our time upon trifles, it would be well if the love of Jesus so engrossed our thoughts that it engrossed our conversation too. I fear that many, who profess to be Christians, go for a whole year, or even longer, without

telling out to others what they are supposed to have experienced of the love of Jesus; yet this ought not to be the case. If we were as we should be, one would frequently say to another, "How great is Christ's love to me, my brother! Dost thou also that it is great to thee?" Such talk as that between the saints on earth would help us to anticipate the time when we shall want no other theme for conversation in the land beyond the river.

I am going just to remind you of some very simple truths in order to excite the hearts of those of you who are coming to the communion to increased love to the dear Lord and Saviour who has loved you so intensely as to die for you. And first, beloved, let us think of what the love of Christ has done for us; secondly, of what his love has done to us; and then thirdly, I want to say that I am afraid our love to Christ will never cause any wonder except on account of the littleness of it.

I. So, first, let us quietly think over **WHAT THE LOVE OF CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US.**

When did Christ's love begin to work for us? It was long before we were born, long before the world was created; far, far back, in eternity, our Saviour gave the first proof of his love to us by espousing our cause. By his divine foresight, he looked upon human nature as a palace that had been plundered, and broken down, and in its ruins he perceived the owl, the bittern, the dragon, and all manner of unclean things. Who was there to undertake the great work of restoring that ruined palace? No one but the Word, who was with God, and who was God. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." Ere the angels began to sing, or the sun, and moon, and stars threw their first beams athwart primeval darkness, Christ espoused the cause of his people, and resolved not only to restore to them all the blessings that he foresaw that they would lose, but also add to them richer favours that could ever have been theirs except through him. Even for eternity his delights were with the sons of men; and when I think of him, in that far-distant past of which we can form so slight a conception, becoming "the head over all things to the church" which then existed only in the mind of God, my very soul cries out in a rapture of delight, "Behold how he loved

us!"

Remember, too, that in that eternal secret council, the Lord Jesus Christ became the Representative and Surety of his chosen people. There was to be, in what was then the far remote future, a covenant between God and man; but who was there who was both able and willing to sign that covenant on man's behalf, and to give a guarantee that man's part of that covenant should be fulfilled? Then it was that the Son of God, well knowing all that such suretyship would involve, undertook to be the Surety for his people, to fulfil the covenant on their behalf, and to meet all its demands which he foresaw that they would be unable to meet. Then the eternal Father gave into Christ's charge the souls that he had chosen unto eternal life through ages, of which we can have so faint an idea, were to elapse before those souls were to be created; and the eternal Son covenanted to redeem all those souls after they had fallen through sin, to keep them by his grace, and to present them "faultless" before the presence of his Father with exceeding joy. Thus, as Jacob became accountable to Laban for the whole flock committed to his charge, Jesus Christ, "that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," undertook to redeem and guard the whole flock entrusted to his care, so that when, at the last great muster, they should pass under the hand of him that telleth them, not one of them should be missing, and the blessed Shepherd-Son should be able to say to his Father, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and not one of them is lost." It was in the everlasting covenant that our Lord Jesus Christ became our Representative and Surety, and engaged on our behalf to fulfill all his Father's will; and as we think of this great mystery of mercy, surely all of us who are truly his must exclaim with grateful adoration, "Behold how he loved us!"

I have been speaking of very ancient things, but let us now come to matters that we can more clearly comprehend. In the fulness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ left the glories of heaven, and took upon him our nature. We know so little of what the word "heaven" means that we cannot adequately appreciate the tremendous sacrifice that the Son of God must have made in order to become the Son of Mary. The holy angels could understand far better than we can what their Lord and ours

gave up when he renounced the royalties of heaven, and all the honour and glory which rightly belonged to him as the Son of the Highest, and left his throne and crown above to be born as the Babe of an earthly mother, yet even to them there were mysteries about his incarnation which they could not fathom; and as they followed the footprints of the Son of man on his wondrous way from the manger to the cross and to the tomb, they must often have been in that most suggestive attitude of which Peter wrote, "which things the angels desire to look into." To us, the incarnation of Christ is one of the greatest marvels in the history of the universe, and we say, with Paul, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The omnipotent Creator took the nature of a creature into indissoluble union with his divine nature; and, marvel of marvels, that creature was man. "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." For an angel to become an emmet, if that were possible, would be nothing at all in comparison with the condescension of Christ in becoming the Babe of Bethlehem; for, after all, angels and emmets are only creatures formed by Christ, working as one of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, for John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, expressly says, "All things were made by him; and with him was not anything made that was made." O glorious Bridegroom of our hearts, there never was any other love like thine! That the eternal Son of God should leave his Father's side and stoop so low as to become one with his chosen people, so that Paul could truly write, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, is such a wonder of condescending grace and mercy that we can only exclaim again and again, "Behold how he loved us!"

Then, "being found in fashion as a man," he took upon himself human sickness and suffering. All our infirmities that were not sinful Jesus Christ endured,—the weary feet, the aching head, and the palpitating heart, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sickness." This was a wondrous proof of love, that the ever-blessed Son of God, who needed not to suffer, should have been willing to be compassed with infirmity just like any other man is. "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we

are, yet without sin."

But if you want to see the love of Jesus at the highest point it ever reached, you must, by faith, gaze upon him when he took upon himself the sins of all his people, as Peter writes, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Oh, how could one who was so pure, so absolutely perfect, ever bear so foul a load? Yet he did bear it, and the transfer of his people's sin from them to him was so complete that the inspired prophet wrote, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and the inspired apostle wrote, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." When a man marries a woman who is deeply in debt, well knowing the burdens that he is taking upon himself even though it is enough to crush him all his life, we may well say, "Behold how he loves her!" That was what Christ did for his Church when he took her into an eternal marriage union with himself, although she had incurred such liabilities as could not have been discharged if she had spent eternity in hell; he took all her debts upon himself, and then paid them unto the uttermost farthing; for we must never forget that, when Christ bore his people's sins, he also bore the full punishment of them. In fulfillment of the great eternal covenant, and in prospect of all the glory and blessing that would follow from Christ's atoning sacrifice, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." We cannot have the slightest conception of what that bruising and that grief must have been. We do not know what our Lord's physical and mental agonies must have been, yet they were only the shell of his sufferings; his soul-agony was the kernel, and it was that which made him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then it was that the precious "corn of wheat" fell into the ground and died; and dying, brought forth "much fruit" of which heaven and eternity alone can tell the full tale. I cannot speak of this wondrous mystery as I fain would do, but you know even in part what it means must join me in saying, "Behold how he loved us!"

Further, than that, Christ has so completely given himself to us that all that he has is ours. He is the glorious Husband, and his Church is his bride, the Lamb's wife; and there is nothing that he has which he is not also hers even now, and which he will not share with her for ever. By a

marriage bond which cannot be broken, for he hateth putting away, he hath espoused her unto himself in righteousness and truth, and she shall be one with him throughout eternity. He has gone up to his Father's house to take possession of the many mansions there, not for himself, but for his people; and his contrary prayer is, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, bee with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." Jesus has an ever-flowing fountain of joy in his heart, but he desires that his joy may be in you if you belong to him, and that your joy may be full; and everything else that he has is yours as much as it is his, so surely you will again join with me in saying, "Behold how he loved us!"

II. Now, secondly, let us consider WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE TO US, for each of his acts of love should cause us to exclaim, "Behold how he loved us!"

Think, dear brethren and sister ins Christ, how the Lord dealt with us in the days of our unregeneracy. He called us again and again, but we would not go to him; and the more lovingly he called us, the more resolutely we hardened our hearts, and refused to accept his gracious invitation. With some of us, this refusal lasted for years; and we wonder now that the Lord waited for us so long. If a rich man invites a pauper to a feast, and the poor man is indifferent to the invitation, or positively refuses to accept it, he gets no second invitation, for man does not press his charity upon the needy; but when we even scoffed at our Lord's call, and made all manner of excuses for not coming to the gospel banquet, he would not take our "No" for an answer, but called, and called, again and again, until last we could hold out no longer, and had to yield to the sweet compulsion of his grace. Do you not remember, beloved, how you received pardon, and justification, and adoption, and the indwelling of the Spirit, and how many "exceeding great and precious promises" were brought to you, like that various courses at a royal festival served upon golden dishes adorned with priceless gems? Oh, that blessed, blessed day in which you first came and sat among the guests at the great King's table! As you look back upon it, your heart glows in grateful remembrance of Christ's mercy to you, and you cannot help saying, "Behold how he loved us!"

Many days have passed since then, and I asked you now to recollect what Christ has done to us since we first trusted in him. Has his love for you cooled in the slightest degree? We have all of us tried that love by our wondering and waywardness, but we have not quenched it, and its fire still burns just as vehemently as at the first. We have, sometimes, fallen so low that our hearts have been like adamant, incapable of emotion; yet Jesus has loved us all the while, and softened our hard hearts as the glorious sun melts the icebergs of the sea. We were like the insensible grass which calls not for the dew, yet the dew of his love gently fell upon us; and though we had not sought it, our hearts was refreshed by it. Our Lord has indeed proved how he loved us by the gracious way in which he has borne with our many provocations; and think too, beloved, with what gifts he has enriched us, with what comforts he has sustained us, with what divine energy he has renewed our failing strength, with what blessed guidance he has led and is still leading us! Take thy pencil and paper, and try to set down in figures or in words they total indebtedness to his love; where wilt thou begin, and when thou hast begun, where wilt thou finish? If thou wert to record only one out of a million of his love-gifts to thee, would the whole world be able to contain the books that might be written concerning them! No; all thou canst say is, "Behold how he has loved us!"

There have been times—of which I will not say much just now, for some here would not understand what I mean,—when we have seemed to stand in the very suburbs of heaven, where we could hear the bells pealing forth celestial music from the invisible belfries, and our hearts were ravished with the sound of the heavenly harpers harping with their harps, and the ten thousand times ten thousand white-robed choristers singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Nay, more than that, the King himself hath brought us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us has been love. He has not only permitted us to sit at his feet, as Mary did, but he has allowed us to pillow our head on his bosom, as John did, and even condescended to let us put our finger into the print of the nails in our rapturous familiar fellowship with him who is not ashamed to call us his brethren. I must not continue in this strain,—not for the lack of matter, but lack of time in which to speak concerning him, so must again say,

"Behold how he loved us!"

I must, however, mention one more proof of Christ's love, and that is this, he has made us long for heaven, and gives us at least a measure of preparation for it. We are expecting that, one of these days, if the chariot and horses of fire do not stop at our door, our dear Lord and Saviour will fulfil to us his promise, "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," To a true believer in Jesus, the thought of departing from this world, and going to be "for ever with the Lord," has nothing of gloom associated with it. This earth is the place our banishment and exile; heaven is our home. We are like the loving wife who is sundered by thousands of miles of sea and land from her dear husband, and we are longing for the great re-union with our beloved Lord, from whom we shall then never again be separated. I cannot hope to depict the scene when he shall introduce us to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and bid us sit with him in his throne, even as he sits with his Father in his throne. Surely then the holy angels, who have never sinned, will unite in exclaiming, "Behold, how he loved them!" It is a most blessed thought, to my mind, that we may be up there before the hands of that clock complete another round; and if not so soon as that, it will not be long before all of us who love the Lord will be with him where he is, and then the last among us shall know more of his love than the greatest of us can ever know while here below. Meanwhile, we have much of the joy of heaven even while we are upon this earth; for, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

III. The closing portion of my sermon is to very practical. Did anybody ever say of any one of us here, "Behold how he loves Christ"? If someone did say that of you, my brother or sister, was it true? I think I hear your answer, " Oh, I do love him! He knows all things, and he knows that I love him." But do you love him so fervently that strangers or even your more intimate acquaintances would say of your love to Jesus what the Jews said of his love to Lazarus, "Behold how he loved him"? "I wish," says

one, "I could do so." Then listen for a minute or two while I tell you of WHAT SOME SAINTS HAVE DONE TO SHOW HOW THEY LOVED THEIR LORD.

There have been those who have suffered for Christ's sake. They have lain in damp dungeons, and have refused to accept liberty at the price of treachery to their Lord and his truth. They have been stretched upon the rack, yet no torture could make them yield up their fidelity to God. If you have read Foxe's Book of Martyrs, you know how hundreds of brave men and women, and children too, stood at the stake, gloriously calm, and often triumphantly happy, and were burnt to death for Christ's sake, while many of those who looked on learnt to imitate their noble example, and others who heard their dying testimonies, and their expiring songs, (not groans,) could not help exclaiming, "Behold how these martyrs love their Master!"

There have been others, who have shown their love to their Lord by untiring and self-sacrificing service. They have laboured for him, at times, under great privations and amid many perils, some as missionaries in foreign lands, and others with equal zeal in this country. Their hearts were all aglow with love for their dear Lord and Saviour, and they spent their whole time and strength in seeking to win souls for him, so that those who knew them could not help saying, "Behold how they love their Lord!" Some of us can never hope to wear the ruby crown of martyrdom, yet we may be honoured by receiving the richly-jeweled crown from the hand of Christ as he says to each of his true labourers, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Then we have known some saints who showed their love to their Lord by weeping over sinners and praying for their conversion. There have been gracious men and women, who could not sleep at night because of their anxiety about the eternal welfare of their relatives and friends, or even of lost ones who were personally unknown to them; and they have risen from their beds to agonize in prayer for sinners who were either calmly sleeping, and not even dreaming of their doom, or else at that very hour were adding to their previous transgressions. There have been others, who could not hear a blasphemous word, as they passed along the street,

without feeling a holy indignation at the injury that was being done to their best Friend, and at the same time their eyes filled with tears of pity for the poor blasphemers, and their hearts poured out a stream of supplication for those who were thus ignorantly or wantonly sinning against the Most High. They have been like Jeremiah weeping over the lost, and like Moses and Paul ready to sacrifice their own souls for the sake of others, until men have been compelled to say, "Behold how these weeping and pleading saints love their Lord, and love lost sinners for his sake!"

Others have proved their love to their Lord by the way in which they have been given of their substance to his cause. They have not only given a tithe of all they had to the great Melchizdeck, but they have counted it a high privilege to lay all that they had upon his altar, counting that their gold was never so golden as when it was all Christ's and that their lands were never so valuable to them as when they were gladly surrendered to him. Alas, that there should be so few, even in the Church of Christ, who thus imitate their Lord who freely gave himself and all he had that he might save his people! Blessed will the Church be when she gets back to the Pentecostal consecration which was the fitting culmination of the Pentecostal blessing: "all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Another most admirable way of proving our love to Christ is by being scrupulously carefully to please him in little things as well as in the important matters. One of the worst signs of this present evil age is that so little is thought of even the great things of Christ,—his atoning sacrifice, his high priestly character and work, his kingly rule, and so on; while the little things of Christ, those that are less by comparison with these, are often utterly despised. There was a time, in Scotland, when men of God signed the Solemn League and Covenant with their blood; how many would do that to-day? One jewel in Christ's crown, that priceless Koh-I-noor of the crown rights of the King of kings, was sufficient to call into battlefield the noblest of Scotland's sons; but, to-day, the very crown of Christ itself is kicked about, like a football, by some of his professed servants, for they set up their own fallible judgments

against his infallible revelation, and so practically say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" In this land, in the most glorious days that England has ever seen, our Puritan forefathers were so scrupulous that men called them strait-laced, sour-faced, bigoted, and I know not what; but, nowadays many of them resisted even unto the blood, are said to be unimportant or of no account whatever. The special truth which distinguishes us as a denomination is regarded by many with supreme contempt. Not long ago, a professedly Christian minister said that he did not care a penny about baptism! If he belongs to Christ, he will have to answer to his Master for that saying; but I could not utter such a sentence as that without putting my very soul in peril. He who really loves his Lord will not trifle with the least jot or tittle of his Lord's will. Love is one of the most jealous things in the universe. "God is a jealous God" because "God is love." The wife who truly loves her husband will not harbour even a wanton imagination; her fidelity to him must not be stained even by an unchaste thought; so must it be with every true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ. God grant that we, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, may do our Lord's will so scrupulously, in great things and little things, and in all things alike, that those who see us in our daily life may be compelled to say, "Behold how these Christians love Jesus Christ their Saviour!"

Yet, beloved, remember that, when our love has reached its climax, it can only be like a solitary dewdrop trembling on a leaf compared with the copious showers of love that pour continually from the heart of our dear Lord and Master. Put all our loves together, and they will not fill a tiny cup, and there before us flows the fathomless, limitless, shoreless ocean of the love of Jesus; yet let us have all the love for him that we can. May the Holy Spirit fill our souls to the brim with love to Jesus, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

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The Oil Of Gladness

Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. - Psalm 45:7

We know that the anointing received by our Lord Jesus Christ was the resting of the Spirit of God upon him without measure. We are not left to any guesswork about this, for in Isaiah 61 we are told, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me." Our Lord appropriated these very words to himself when he went into the synagogue at Nazareth and opened the book at the place wherein these words are written, and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The Apostle Peter also, in Acts 10:38, speaks of "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power": so that we know both on Old and New Testament authority that the anointing which rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ was the unction of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, by the "oil of gladness" which we have before us in the text is intended the Holy Spirit himself, or one of the gracious results of his sacred presence. The divine Spirit has many attributes, and his benign influences operate in divers ways, bestowing upon us benefits of various kinds, too numerous for us to attempt to catalogue them. Amongst these is his comforting and cheering influence. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." In Acts 13:52 we read, "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." Wherever he comes as an anointing, whether upon the Lord or upon his people, upon the Christ or the Christians, upon the Anointed or upon those whom he anoints, in every case the ultimate result is joy and peace. On the head of our great High Priest he is joy, and this oil of gladness flows down to the skirts of his garments. To the Comforter, therefore, we ascribe "the oil of gladness."

From this great truth we learn another, namely, the perfect co-operation of the three persons of the blessed Trinity in the work of our redemption.

The Father sends the Son, the Son with alacrity comes to redeem us, and the Spirit of God is upon him; so that Father, Son, and Spirit have each a part in the saving work, and the one God of heaven and earth is the God of salvation. A very interesting subject is the work of the Spirit upon the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see the Holy Ghost mysteriously operating in the formation and birth of the holy child Jesus, for by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost was he born of a woman. This work of the Holy Spirit was manifested to all believing eyes when the Lord Jesus came out of the waters of the Jordan after his baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon him. Before he was said to "wax strong in spirit," but afterwards he is described as "full of the Holy Ghost." Then was he led of the Spirit and inspired by his divine energy, and this was shown throughout the whole of his life, for the Spirit was with him in innumerable miracles and in the demonstration and power which followed his words, so that he spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. In him was abundantly fulfilled the prophecy which saith, "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." The Holy Spirit had also a peculiar interest in his resurrection, for he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." He was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." That same Spirit wrought even more fully when the Lord ascended up on high, and led captivity captive; then, succeeding his ascension, the gifts of the cloven tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind were witnessed by his disciples, for the Spirit of God was given abundantly to the church in connection with the ascension of the Redeemer. Oh, how sweetly doth the Spirit co-operate with Christ at this very day, for it is he that takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. He is the abiding witness in the church to the truth of the gospel, and the worker of all our gifts and graces. Jesus gives repentance, but the Spirit works it; faith fixes upon Christ, but the Spirit of God first creates faith and opens the eye which looks to Jesus. The whole of this dispensation through it is the peculiar

office of the Spirit of God to be revealing Christ to his people, and Christ in his people, and Christ in the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation, for a testimony against them. Blessed be the name of the Holy Spirit, that he is the divine anointing, and so proves his hearty assent to the great plan of redemption.

We now come, however, more closely to the text. The Spirit of God is here considered in one of his influences or operations as "the oil of gladness": we shall speak of this in the following way. First, the saviour's anointing with gladness; secondly, the reason for the bestowal of this oil of joy upon him; and, thirdly, the manner of the operation of this sacred anointing upon ourselves.

I. Let us carefully consider THE SAVIOR'S ANOINTING WITH GLADNESS. We are, perhaps, surprised to read of our Lord in connection with gladness. Truly he was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet this sorrowful aspect was that which he presented to the superficial outside observer; and those who look within the veil of his flesh know well that a mystic glory shone within his soul. Did not David say of him as the King of Israel—"His glory is great in thy salvation: honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." I fully believe that there was never on the face of the earth a man who knew so profound and true a gladness as our blessed Lord. Did he not desire that his joy might be in his people that their joy might be full? Does not benevolence beget joy, and who so kind as he? Is it not a great joy to suffer self-sacrifice for beloved ones? And who so disinterested as he? Is there not sure to be happiness in the heart where the noblest motives are paramount and the sweetest graces bear sway? And was not this pre-eminently the case with our Lord? Let us see.

The gladness of our Lord Jesus may be viewed, first, as the gladness which he had IN his work. The Son of God delighted in the work which his Father had given him to do. This delight he declared as God, in the old eternity! "Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." This delight he had shown as man even before his great public anointing, for when he was yet a child he said,

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Evidently, even while yet a youth, he anticipated with delight the great business which he had to do for his Father, and commencing in a measure to do it amongst the doctors in the temple at Jerusalem. But the day came in which he had reached the appointed age, and he at once went forth to John to be baptized by him in Jordan, being eager to fulfill all righteousness. Then the Spirit of God came down upon him, and he was openly and visibly anointed, and you see from the moment when he began to stand before the public eye, with what alacrity he pursued his life work. We find him fasting, but he has been speaking to a woman by the well's brink, and the joy which he has felt while blessing her has made him quite forget the necessity for food, and he tells his disciples "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He felt great gladness in that woman's joy, as she believed in him, and in the expectation of yet more numerous converts from those who were flocking from Samaria, of whom he said "Lift up now your eyes, for behold the fields are white already unto the harvest." That joy in his work made him abhor all idea of turning from its awful consummation, and led him to say to Peter's suggestion "Get thee behind me, Satan." We see it also in such expressions as this, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." We read that when the time came that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. His frequent allusions to his own decease by a shameful death, all showed that he viewed with intense satisfaction the great object after which he was reaching. Once, indeed, his joy flowed over so that others could see it, when he said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." Let it never be forgotten that we must not expect see in the life of Christ great ebullitions of manifest exultation, because he was sent on purpose to bear our sicknesses, and to be "stricken of God and afflicted." His deep joy was concealed by his many griefs, even as the inner glory of the tabernacle of old was hidden beneath coverings of badgers' skins. He was the sun under a cloud, but he was the sun still. If you have a small burden to carry, you may have an excess of strength which you can display in leaping or running, but if you have an enormous load to sustain your steady bearing of it may be an equally sure proof of your strength: so also, if your trials are light, your joyous spirits may vent themselves in

smiles and songs, but if you are severely afflicted it will need all your joyfulness to keep you from sinking. Our blessed Lord had a load upon him infinitely transcending any weight of sorrow ever borne by the most burdened of his people, and it needed the wonderful joy which I feel sure we are justified in ascribing to him to balance the marvellous grief which he had to endure. The uplifting influence of this joy sufficed to bring him into a condition of calm, quiet, serene majesty of spirit. Nothing strikes you more in the Savior than the quiet peacefulness with which he pursues the even tenor of his way. Now, if he had not possessed great stores of secret joy his spirit would have been famished for want of sustenance. You would have found him constantly sighing and weeping; his words and tones would have become a terror to those around him, and his whole appearance would have appeared melancholy and depressing to the last degree, whereas his manner was cheerful and attractive—let the little children who thronged around him bear witness to that. He was a man of sorrows, but he was not a preacher of sorrows, neither do his life or his discourses leave an unhappy impression upon the mind. The fact, probably, is, that he was both the greatest rejoicer and the greatest mourner that ever lived, and between these two there was an equilibrium of mind kept up, so that wherever you meet him, with the exception of his agony in the garden, he is peaceful and serene. You neither see him dancing like David before the ark, nor yet like David bewailing the loss of one he loved with a "Would God I had died for thee." He does not, like Elijah, run before the king's chariot, nor lie down under the juniper to die. He neither strives nor cries, nor causes his voice to be heard in the streets; his peace is like a river, and his heart abides in the Sabbath of God.

We see, then, that in his work our great High Priest was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, but we also note that those who are his fellows do in their degree partake in this oil of gladness, and are enabled to feel joy in the work which is appointed them of the Lord. While our King is anointed with the oil of gladness it is also written of the virgin souls who wait upon his church, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought, they shall enter into the King's palace." If any professing Christian man here is engaged in a work which he does not feel glad to do, I question if he is in his right place. Occasional fits of depression there

may be, but these are not because we do not love the work, but because we cannot do it so well as we would desire. We are tired in the work, but not tired of it. The Lord loves to employ willing workmen. His army is not made up of pressed men, but of those whom grace has made volunteers. "Serve the Lord with gladness." Our Lord does not set us task work, and treat us like prisoners in gaol, or slaves under the lash. I sometimes hear our life-work called a task. Well, the expression may be tolerated, but I confess I do not like it to be applied to Christian men. It is no task to me at any rate to preach my Master's gospel, or to serve him in any way. I thank God every day that "to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." You teachers in the school, I hope your labor of love is not a bondage to you! An unwilling teacher will soon make unwilling scholars. Yea, I know that those of you who serve the Lord find a reward in the work itself, and gladly pursue it. I am sure you will not prosper in it if it be not so. If you follow your work unwillingly, and regret that you ever undertook it, and feel encumbered by it, you will do no good. No man wins a race who has no heart in the running. In this respect the joy of the Lord is your strength, and as your Master was anointed with the oil of gladness in his work, so must you be. Yet, beloved fellow laborer, you will never be so glad in your work as he was in his, nor will you ever be able to prove that gladness by such self-denials, by such agonies, and such a death. He has proved how glad he was to save sinners, because "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." Blessed Emanuel, thou art justly anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

We further note that our Lord had this oil of gladness FROM his work. Even while he was engaged in it he derived some joy from it, though it was but as the gleanings of the vintage compared with the after results. He did reap in joy as well as sow in tears, for many became his disciples, and over each one of these he rejoiced. It was impossible that the Good Shepherd should have saved so many sheep as he did without rejoicing when he threw them on his shoulders to bear them to the fold. Assuredly he rejoiced that he had found the sheep which he had lost. But the fullness of his joy was left till after he had ascended on high, then indeed was he anointed with the oil of gladness, and the voice was heard, "To

forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." My brethren, the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ now that he knows his beloved are securely his, and no longer the slaves of sin and heirs of wrath, is too great to be measured. He has redeemed unto himself a people in whom his soul delights. For them the price is fully paid, for them the penalty has been completely endured, for them all chains are broken, and for them the prison house is razed to its foundation: for them hath he bruised the serpent's head, for them hath he by death destroyed death, and led captive him that had the power of death, even the devil.

"All his work and warfare done,
He into his heaven is gone,
And before his Father's throne
Now is pleading for his own."

He now continues to receive into his joy the multitudes whom the Spirit brings to him, for whom of old he shed his precious blood. You cannot conceive the gladness of Christ. If you have ever brought one soul to Christ you have had a drop of it, but his gladness lies not only in receiving them, but in actually being the author of salvation to every one of them. The Savior looks upon the redeemed with an unspeakable delight, thinks of what they used to be, thinks of what they would have been but for his interposition, thinks of what they now are, think of what he means to make them in that great day when they shall rise from the dead; and as his heart is full of love to them he joys in their joy, and exults in their exultation. Their heavens swell their Mediator's heaven, and their myriad embodiments of bliss, each one reflects his own felicity, and so (speaking after the manner of men) increases it, for he lives ten thousand lives by living in them, and joys unnumbered joys in their joys. I speak with humblest fear lest in any word I should speak amiss, for he is God as well as man, but this is certain, that there is a joy of our Lord into which he will give his faithful ones to enter, a joy which he has won by passing through the shame and grief by which he has redeemed mankind. The oil of gladness is abundantly poured on that head which once was crowned with thorns.

Now, brethren, you, also, can be partakers in this joy. When he makes you in your little measure to be instrumentally saviours of others, then you also partake of his gladness, but as I have said before, you cannot know its fullness, for he is in this respect anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Returning from the battle and the spoil he has a joy with which none can intermeddle, for his own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten unto him the victory.

Again, our Lord Jesus has the oil of gladness poured upon him in another sense, namely, because his person and his work are the cause of ineffable gladness in others. Oh, I wish I had a week in which to talk upon this point—a week—one could scarcely enter upon the theme in that time! We sang just now—

"Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast."

The oil of gladness upon him is so sweet that we have only to think upon it and it fills us with delight. There is gladness in his very name.

"Exult all hearts with gladness
At sound of Jesu's name;
What other hath such sweetness,
Or such delight can claim?"

What gladness he created when here below. His birth set the skies ringing with heavenly music, and made the hearts of expectant saints to leap for joy. In after days a touch of the hem of his garment made a woman's heart glad when she felt the issue of her blood stanch'd, and a word from his lips made the tongue of the dumb to sing. For him to lay his hand upon the sick was to raise them from their beds of sickness, and deliver them from pain and disease. His touch was gladness then, and a

spiritual touch is the same now. To-day to preach of him is gladness, to sing of him is gladness, to trust him is gladness, to work for him is gladness, to have communion with him is gladness. To come to his table, and there to feast with him, is gladness; to see his image in the eyes of his saints is gladness; to see that image only as yet begun to form in the heart of a young convert is gladness. Everything about him is gladness. All his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Nothing comes within a mile of him but what it makes you glad to think that he has been so near it. The very print of his foot has comfort in it, and the wounds in his hands are windows of hope. I have known some who have had to carry a cross for his dear sake, and they have kissed and hugged that cross, and gloried in their tribulations because they were borne for him. Fellowship with him has turned the bitterest potion into generous wine. Beloved, if these distant glimpses are so precious, what must it be to see him face to face? I have tried to conceive it, and I protest that even in attempting the conception my spirit seems to swoon at the prospect of such supreme delight. Only to hear the music of his footfall on the other side the partition wall raises longings in my heart too strong, too eager to be long endured. What, death, art thou all that divides me from seeing my Lord? I would gladly die a million deaths to see him as he is and to be like him. What, a slumber in the grave for this poor body! Is that all I have to dread? Then let it slumber, and let the worms consume it, for "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh, what will it be to see him? To see HIM that loved us so, to mark the wounds with which he purchased our redemption, to behold his glory, to listen to that dear voice of his, and to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." To lie in his bosom for ever, truly neither eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the like of this bliss. More than the bride longs for the marriage day do we expect the bridal feast of heaven, but of all the dainties on that royal table there will not be one that will be equal to himself, for to see him will be all the heaven we desire. He is better than heaven's harp or angels, and the cause of greater gladness than streets of gold or walls of jasper.

Brethren, can we share this power to distribute joy? Assuredly we can. If the Lord Jesus be with us we can give joy to others. I know some whose

very presence comforts their fellows; their words are so full of consolation, and their hearts so overflowing with sympathy that they make gladness wherever they go. Ay, but the best of you, ye sons of consolation, are not anointed with the oil of gladness to the same extent as he was. Above his fellows, even above Barnabas the son of consolation; above the best and the tenderest sympathizers is he thus anointed, and from him there pours forth a continual stream of effectual consolation which becomes the oil of joy to those who wear the garments of heaviness. Thus much upon the first point, the Savior's anointing of gladness.

II. Let us now consider THE REASON FOR THE BESTOWAL OF THIS ANOINTING UPON HIM? It is given in the text. He is anointed above his fellows, because it is said of him, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness." The perfect righteousness of Christ has brought to him this gladness, because perfect holiness there must be before there can be perfect happiness. Sin is the enemy of joy. Let the sinner say what he likes, sin can no more dwell with real joy than the lion will lie down with the lamb. To be perfectly glad you must be perfectly cleansed from sin, for until you are so cleansed you cannot possess the oil of gladness to the measure that Christ possessed it. As the believer is delivered from the power of sin he is brought into a condition in which the joy of the Lord can more and more abide in him. Now, every way Jesus loved righteousness intensely and hated wickedness intensely. He died that he might establish righteousness and that he might destroy wickedness from off the face of the earth; therefore it is that he has greater gladness, because he had greater holiness. Moreover, you know that in any holy enterprise if the business succeeds the joy of the worker is proportionate to the trial it has cost him. In the great battle of righteousness our Lord has led the van, in the great fight against wickedness our Savior has borne the brunt of the battle, therefore, because he to the death loved righteousness and to the agony and bloody sweat strove against sin, the accomplished conquest brings him the greatest joy. He has done the most for the good cause, and therefore he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

Now, note there is another reason why he is anointed, and there is

another view of the anointing. He is anointed above his fellows, which shows that those who are in fellowship with him are anointed too. You observed in our reading that the high priest had the oil poured on his head, but the sons of Aaron who were minor priests were sprinkled with this same oil mixed with the blood of the sacrifice. On Christ this anointing is poured above his fellows, and then upon his fellows in communion with himself there comes the sprinkling of the oil. We have our measure; he has it without measure. Now, beloved, Christ is anointed above his fellows that his fellows may be anointed with him. Even as he ascended above all things that he might fill all things, so is he anointed above his fellows that he may anoint his fellows; and through the power of the anointing we are told that his people come into the same condition of righteousness as himself. Turn to Isaiah 61., which passage we have already had before us, and you find as follows—"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that"—mark this!—"that they might be called trees of righteousness". Now, observe, that we first read, "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," and then we meet with the parallel with reference to ourselves, "The oil of joy for mourning, that they may be called trees of righteousness." He is anointed because he is righteous; we are anointed that we may be righteous, and thus in Christ we come into the condition in which it is safe for us to be glad, and possible for joy to dwell in us. To the unrighteous the oil of gladness cannot come, but to the righteous there ariseth light even in darkness. "There is no peace saith my God, unto the wicked." The holy oil was forbidden to be placed upon a stranger to God's holy house; and upon man's flesh it could not be poured, because man's flesh is a corrupt, polluted thing. This oil of gladness comes only on those who are born into God's Israel by regeneration, and are delivered from walking after the flesh; these the Lord makes to be as "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." See then the two reasons why Christ has received the anointing, first because he is righteous himself; and secondly, that he may make others righteous. Therefore is the Spirit of the Lord God upon him that he may give the oil of joy to his own chosen, and make them righteous, even as he is righteous, glad as he is glad.

III. We will now meditate upon THE MANNER OF THE OPERATION OF THIS OIL OF GLADNESS UPON US. Jesus is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Now, we have to show that his fellows are anointed with the oil of gladness too. Did not David say, "Thou anointest mine head with oil; my cup runneth over"? so that we can say of ourselves what we say of our Lord, we are anointed, for he was anointed. Now, in what respects does the anointing of the Holy Spirit give us gladness? I shall notice eight things, and touch but very briefly on each.

First, we too, through Jesus Christ, are anointed to an office, "for he hath made us"—whisper it to one another in the joy of delight—"He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever." When the oil went on Aaron's head, you know how it ran down his beard, even Aaron's beard, unto the skirts of his garments, and now this day this anointing oil, which made the king and the priest, has fallen upon us too. Blessed be his name, shall we not be glad? It is very inconsistent with our position if we are not. Are you a king and do you not rejoice?

"Why should the children of our King
Go mourning all their days?
Sweet Comforter, descend and bring
Some unction of thy grace."

May the gladness now come to you. You are priests to God. Shall the anointed priests serve their Lord with gloomy countenances? No: rejoice in the Lord always, all ye priests of his that are anointed to this blessed work. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron."

We, too, are consecrated to the Lord, for the oil poured upon the priest was the oil of consecration. From that time forward he was a dedicated man; he could not serve anyone but God; he, above all the rest of the congregation, was the man of God for ever as long as ever he lived. So beloved, we have been consecrated: the Spirit of God has sanctified us and set us apart unto the Lord, as it is written, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Our Lord said in his matchless prayer, "they are

not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Sanctify them," said he, "by thy truth, thy word is truth." Yes, blessed be God, we are consecrated men and women: we belong to the Lord, and are vessels for the Master's use, hallowed from all other uses to be the Lord's. "For I will be to them a God, they shall be to me a people." Does not this make you glad? Are you really set apart to be the Lord's own sons and daughters, and hallowed to be used by him in his service both here and hereafter, and do you not rejoice? O my soul, dost thou not feel the trickling of the consecrating oil adown thy brow even now, and does it not make thy face to shine and make thy heart happy, because thou art now the Lord's?

Thirdly, by this oil we are also qualified for our office. You see the Spirit descended upon Christ that he might have the spirit of wisdom, and power, and so be strengthened and qualified to discharge his sacred work. Now, the Spirit of God is upon every believer in this sense. Remember how in his First Epistle, second chapter, and twentieth verse, John says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," or "ye are able to discern all things." And further on, in that same chapter, he says, "This anointing teacheth you all things." Well, if we are to serve the Lord a main gift is knowledge, for how can we instruct the ignorant, or guide the perplexed, except we know ourselves? And it is this anointing which teaches us, and makes us fit for the service to which the Master has called us. Oh, does the Holy Spirit then lead us into all truth, and give us knowledge, and shall we not rejoice? Ignorance means sorrow, but the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ means joy. O brethren, will ye not bless God to-day for what the Spirit of God has taught you? If you do not, what must you be made of? for he has taught you such wonderful lessons so full of joy. Even if he has never taught you more than this, that whereas you were once blind now you see, he has taught you enough to make your heart rejoice as long as you live. Is he not the oil of gladness?

Fourthly, the Spirit of God heals us of our diseases. The Eastern mode of medicine was generally the application of oil, and I should not wonder if in the course of years it should be discovered that the modern pharmacy, with all its drugs, is not worth so much as the old-fashioned method. Certainly, when the Holy Spirit spake concerning sick men, and advised

that medicines should be used, and prayer for their restoration, he prescribed anointing with oil. I suppose that anointing with oil was mentioned because it was the current medicine of the times, but it could not have been injurious or altogether absurd, or the Holy Spirit would not in any measure have sanctioned it. I will not raise the question, however. But a frequent medicine of the olden time was, undoubtedly, anointing with oil, and it is well known that olive oil does possess very remarkable healing qualities. I have read in books of one or two instances of the bites of serpents having the venom effectually removed by the use of olive oil. It is more commonly used in countries where it grows than here, and it is in many ways a very useful medicine. Certainly the Holy Spirit is that to us. What wounds and bruises have been healed with this oil. Before the Spirit came they were putrefying, they had not been bound up nor mollified with ointment, but now this ointment, mixed after the art of the apothecary, with the costliest spices, has effectually healed us, and what remains of the old sores and wounds it continues still to heal; and so wonderful is its power it will ultimately take out every scar, and we shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing through its healing power. Shall we not, therefore, be glad and rejoice in the Lord, for if restoration to health makes us happy surely the renewal of our spiritual youth should make our hearts bound for joy?

Thus also we are suppled and softened. Oil applied to the body supples and softens, and, believe me, brethren, nothing is more akin to joy than softness and tenderness of heart. If ever you meet with a hard-hearted proud man, he is not a happy man and if he should seem to be happy in his pride it is a dangerous and deadly happiness, and the sooner it is taken away the better. Where God dwells is heaven, and where does he dwell? With the humble and the contrite heart. That is a beautiful expression of David's, I have drunk joy out of it, "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Oh, there is never a bone in manhood's system that knows how to rejoice till God has broken it, and when it is broken then comes the mighty Physician and applies the oil and restores the bone to infinitely more than its former strength, and then the bones which had been broken become each one so many new arguments for gratitude, and all our healed wounds become mouths of praise unto the Most High. We are thus softened and

gladdened.

By the oil of the Holy Spirit we are also strengthened. Oil well rubbed into the system was anciently assumed to be a great strengthener, and I suppose it was. Certainly the Holy Spirit is the strength of Christians, and where he is the strength there is sure to be joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Oil, too, is a beautifier. The Easterns did not think themselves fit for their banquets till they had washed their face and anointed themselves with perfumed oil. They were very fond of locks dripping with oil and faces bright therewith. Certainly there is a beauty which the Spirit gives to men, which they can never obtain in any other way. Oh, the excellence of the character that is formed by the hand of the Spirit of God! It is a beautiful thing which even God himself delights to look upon; it is a thing of beauty, and in the most emphatic sense a joy for ever. He that is made comely with the comeliness which the Holy Spirit gives must be a happy man. Other beauty may bring sorrow, but the beauty of holiness makes us akin to angels.

Once more, it becomes a perfume. When oil was poured on a man his presence scented the air around him, and when the Spirit of God is given to us it is perceived by other spiritual minds. Cannot you detect in a brother's prayer that he has been with Jesus? Do you not know by the lives of some of Christ's dear saints that he is very familiar with them? Do you not perceive that they have had a special anointing? The ungodly world cannot tell it, but saints discern it. The nostril of the wicked is only pleased by the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt, but the believing nostril has been sanctified, and it perceives the delicate myrrh and cinnamon, and sweet calamus and cassia, which make up the anointing oil. The rare combination of sacred qualities which make up a holy character will be seen in the believer in whom the Holy Spirit displays his power, and as a consequence he will be glad at heart.

Furthermore, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now, for the time is spent. Therefore I will only say, I pray, brethren, that the anointing may be ours in all the various senses I have

mentioned. I should like all of you to go away happy. You children of God, be as glad as ever you can be. I would to God that a sacred gladness rang through this house like a marriage peal: yet for all that, do not forget that Jesus has joy above you all. You may be very glad, but he is gladder still. You may sing his praises, but he leads the sacred orchestra of heaven. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee," saith he. Rejoice in his joy. I have often thought it did not matter any more what became of me so long as he is victorious. A soldier in battle, sorely wounded, lies bleeding in a ditch, but he hears the sound of the trumpets, and they tell him the commander is coming along, the King for whom his loyal heart is willing to bleed, and he enquires, "Have they won the day?" "Oh, yes," they say "he has won the day, and the enemy are flying before him." The soldier exclaims, "Thank God, I can die." It is the soldier's joy to die with victory ringing in his ears. Our Lord is glad, and therefore we are glad.

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

If it be so we will be content to say, like David, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." We have no more to pray for: we have done with the world, done with wishing, done with everything, if Christ reigns, and all things are under his foot. May this joy be yours. Amen.

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The Old, Old Story

In due time Christ died for the ungodly. - Romans 5:6

There is a doctor of divinity here to-night who listened to me some years ago. He has been back to his own dwelling-place in America, and he has come here again. I could not help fancying, as I saw his face just now, that he would think I was doting on the old subject, and harping on the old strain; that I had not advanced a single inch upon any new domain of thought, but was preaching the same old gospel in the same old terms as ever. If he should think so he will be quite right. I suppose I am something like Mr. Cecil when he was a boy. His father once told him to wait in a gateway till he came back, and the father, being very busy, went about the city; and amidst his numerous cares and engagements, he forgot the boy. Night came on, and at last when the father reached home, there was great enquiry as to where Richard was. The father said, "Dear me, I left him early in the morning standing under such-and-such a gateway, and I told him to stay there until I came for him; I should not wonder but what he is there now." So they went, and there they found him. Such an example of childish simple faithfulness it is no disgrace to emulate. I received some years ago orders from my Master to stand at the foot of the cross until he came. He has not come yet, but I mean to stand there till he does. If I should disobey his orders and leave those simple truths which have been the means of the conversion of souls, I know not how I could expect his blessing. Here, then, I stand at the foot of the cross and tell out the old, old story, stale though it sound to itching ears, and worn threadbare as critics may deem it. It is of Christ I love to speak—of Christ who loved, and lived, and died, the substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

It is somewhat singular, but just as they say fish go bad at the head first, so modern divines generally go bad first upon the head and main doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ. Nearly all our modern errors, I might say all of them, begin with mistakes about Christ. Men do not like to be always preaching the same thing., There are Athenians in the pulpit as well as in the pew who spend their time in nothing but hearing some new thing. They are not content to tell over and over again the simple message, "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." So they borrow novelties from literature, and garnish the Word of God with the words which man's wisdom teacheth. The doctrine of

atonement they mystify. Reconciliation by the precious blood of Jesus ceases to be the corner-stone of their ministry. To shape the gospel to the diseased wishes and tastes of men enters far more deeply into their purpose, than to re-mould the mind and renew the heart of men that they receive the gospel as it is. There is no telling where they will go who once go back from following the Lord with a true and undivided heart, from deep to deep descending, the blackness of darkness will receive them unless grace prevent. Only this you may take for a certainty.

"They cannot be right in the rest,
Unless they speak rightly of Him."

If they are not sound about the purpose of the cross, they are rotten everywhere. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this rock there is security. We may be mistaken on any other points with more impunity than this. They who are builded on the rock, though they build wood, and hay, and stubble, thereupon to their sore confusion, for what they build shall be burned, themselves shall be saved yet so as by fire. Now that grand doctrine which we take to be the keystone of the evangelical system, they very corner-stone of the gospel, that grand doctrine of the atonement of Christ we would tell to you again, and then, without attempting to prove it, for that we have done hundreds of times, we shall try to draw some lessons of instruction from that truth which is surely believed among us. Man having sinned, God's righteousness demanded that the penalty should be fulfilled. He had said, "The soul that sinneth shall die;" and unless God can be false, the sinner must die. Moreover, God's holiness demanded it, for the penalty was based on justice. It was just that the sinner should die. God had not appended a more heavy penalty than he should have done. Punishment is the just result of offending. God, then, must either cease to be holy, or the sinner must be punished. Truth and holiness imperiously demanded that God should lift his hand and smite the man who had broken his law and offended his majesty. Christ Jesus, the second Adam, the federal head of the chosen ones, interposed. He offered himself to bear the penalty which they ought to bear; to fulfil and honour the law which they had broken and dishonoured. He offered to be their day's-man, a surety, a substitute, standing in their room, place, and stead. Christ became the vicar of his

people; vicariously suffering in their stead; vicariously doing in their stead that which they were not strong enough to do by reason of the weakness of the flesh through the fall. This which Christ proposed to do was accepted of God. In due time Christ actually died, and fulfilled what he promised to do. He took every sin of all his people, and suffered every stroke of the rod on account of those sins. He had compounded into one awful draught the punishment of the sins of all the elect. He took the cup; he put it to his lips; he sweat as it were great drops of blood while he tasted the first sip thereof, but he never desisted, but drank on, on, on, till he had exhausted the very dregs, and turning the vessel upside down he said, "It is finished!" and at one tremendous draught of love the Lord God of salvation had drained destruction dry. Not a dreg, not the slightest residue was left; he had suffered all that ought to have been suffered; had finished transgression, and made an end of sin. Moreover, he obeyed his Father's law to the utmost extent of it; he fulfilled that will of which he had said of old—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God: thy law is my delight;" and having offered both an atonement for sin and a complete fulfilment of the law, he ascended up on high, took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool, and interceding for those whom he bought with blood that they may be with him where he is. The doctrine of the atonement is very simple. It just consists in the substitution of Christ in the place of the sinner; Christ being treated as of he were the sinner, and then the transgressors being treated as if he were the righteous one. It is a change of persons; Christ becomes sinner; he stands in the sinner's place and stead; he was numbered with the transgressors; the sinner becomes righteous; he stands in Christ's place and stead, and is numbered with the righteous ones. Christ has no sin of his own, but he takes human guilt, and is punished for human folly. We have no righteousness of our own, but we take the divine righteousness; we are rewarded for it, and stand accepted before God as though that righteousness had been wrought out by ourselves. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," that he might take away their sins.

It is not my present object to prove this doctrine. As I said before, there is no need to be always arguing what we know to be true. Rather let us say a few earnest words by way of commending this doctrine of the atonement;

and afterwards I shall propound it by way of application to those who as yet have not received Christ.

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDATION.

There are some things to be said for the gospel which proclaims the atonement as its fundamental principle. And the first thing to be said of it is, that in comparison with all modern schemes how simple it is! Brethren, this is why our great gentlemen do not like it, it is too plain. If you will go and purchase certain books which teach you how sermons ought to be made, you will find that the English of it is this,—pick all the hard words you can out of all the books you read in the week, and then pour them out on your people on Sunday; and there is a certain set of people who always applaud the man they cannot understand. They are like the old woman who was asked when she came home from Church, "Did you understand the sermon?" "No;" she answered, "I would not have the presumption;" she thought it would be presumption to attempt to understand the minister. But the Word of God is understood with the heart, and makes no strange demands on the intellect.

Now, our first commendation on the doctrine of the atonement is, that it commends itself to the understanding. The way-faring man, though his intellect be but one grade beyond an idiot, may get a hold on the truth of substitution without any difficulty. Oh, these modern theologians, they will do anything to spirit away the cross! They hang over it the gaudy trappings of their elocution, or they introduce it with the dark mysterious incantations of their logic, and then the poor troubled heart looks up to see the cross and sees nothing there but human wisdom. Now I say it again, there is not one of you here but can understand this truth, that Christ died in the stead of his people. If you perish, it will not be because the gospel was beyond your comprehension. If you go down to hell, it will not be because you were not able to understand how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It is astonishing in this age how little is known of the simple truisms of the Bible; it seems to be always admonishing us how simple we ought to be in setting them forth. I have heard that when Mr. Kilpin was once preaching a very good and earnest sermon, he used the word "Deity," and a sailor sitting down below leaned

forward and said, "Beg your pardon, sir, but who's he, pray? Do you mean God Almighty?" "Yes," said Mr. Kilpin, "I do mean God, and I ought not to have used a word which you could not understand." "I thank you sir," said the sailor, and looked as if he would devour the rest of the sermon in the interest which he felt in it even to the close. Now that one unvarnished face is but an index of that which prevails in every land. There must be simple preaching. A doctrine of atonement that is not simple, a doctrine which comes from Germany, which needs a man to be a great scholar before he can comprehend it himself, and to be a still greater adept before he can tell it to other—such a doctrine is manifestly not of God, because it is not suited to God's creatures. It is fascinating to one in a thousand of them, but it is not suited to those poor of this world who are rich in faith; not suited to those babes to whom God has revealed the things of the kingdom while he has hidden them from the wise and prudent. Oh, you may always judge of a doctrine in this way. If it is not a simple doctrine, it does not come from God; if it puzzles you, if it is one which you cannot see through at once because of the mysterious language in which it is couched, you may begin to suspect that it is man's doctrine, and not the Word of God.

Nor is this doctrine of the atonement to be commended merely for its simplicity, but because while suiting the understand it also suits the conscience. How it satisfies the conscience no tongue can tell! When a man is awakened and his conscience stings him, when the Spirit of God has shown him his sin and his guilt, there is nothing but the blood of Christ that can ever give him peace. Peter might have stood up at the prow of the boat and have said to the winds and to the waves, "Peace, be still," but they would have gone on to roaring with unabated fury. The Pope of Rome, who pretends to be Peter's successor, may stand up with his ceremonies and say to the troubled conscience, "Peace, be still," but it will not cease its terrible agitations. The unclean spirit that sets conscience in so much turmoil cries out, "Jesus I know, and his cross I know, but who are ye?" Yea, and it will not be case out. There is no chance whatever of our finding a pillow for a head which the Holy Ghost, has made to ache save in the atonement and the finished work of Christ. When Mr. Robert Hall first went to Cambridge to preach, the Cambridge folks were nearly Unitarians. So he preached upon the doctrine of the

finished work of Christ, and some of them came to him in the vestry and said, "Mr Hall, this will never do." "Why not?" said he, "Why, your sermon was only fit for old women." "And why only fit for old women?" said Mr. Hall. "Because," said they, "they are tottering on the borders of the grave, and they want comfort, and, therefore, it will suit them, but it will not do for us." "Very well," said Mr. Hall, "you have unconsciously paid me all the compliment that I can ask for; if this is good for old women on the borders of the grave, it must be good for you if you are in your right senses, for the borders of the grave is where we all stand." Here, indeed, is a choice feature of the atonement, it is comforting to us in the thought of death. When conscience is awakened to a sense of guilt, death is sure to cast his pale shadow on all our prospects, and encircle all our steps with dark omens of the grave. Conscience is accompanied generally in its alarms with the thoughts of the near-approaching judgment, but the peace which the blood gives is conscience-proof, sickness-proof, death-proof, devil-proof, judgment-proof, and it will be eternity-proof. We may well be alarmed at all the uprisings of occupation and all the remembrance of past defilement, but only let our eyes rest on they dear cross, O Jesus, and our conscience has peace with God, and we rest and are still. Now we ask whether any of these modern systems of divinity can quiet a troubled conscience? We would like to give them some cases that we meet with sometimes—some despairing ones—and say, "Now, here, cast this devil out if you can try your hand at it," and I think they would find, that this kind goeth not out save by the tears, and groans, and death of Jesus Christ the atoning sacrifice. A gospel without an atonement may do very well for young ladies and gentlemen who do not know that they ever did anything wrong. It will just suit your lackadaisical people who have not got a heart for anybody to see; who have always been quite moral, upright, and respectable; who feel insulted if you told them they deserved to be sent to hell; who would not for a moment allow that they could be depraved or fallen creatures. The gospel, I say, of these moderns will suit these gentlefolks very well I dare say, but let a man be really guilty and know it; let him be really awake to his lost state, and I aver that none but Jesus—none but Jesus, nothing but the precious blood can give him peace and rest. For these two things, then, commend us to the doctrine of the atonement, because it suits the understanding of the mostly lowly, and will quiet the conscience of the

most troubled.

It has, moreover, this peculiar excellency, that it softens the heart. There is a mysterious softening and melting power in the story of the sacrifice of Christ. I know a dear Christian woman who loved her little ones and sought their salvation. When she prayed for them, she thought it right to use the best means she could to arrest their attention and awaken their minds. I hope you all do likewise. The means, however, which she thought best calculated for her object was the terrors of the Lord. She used to read to her children chapter after chapter of Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted. Oh, that book! how many dreams it gave her boy at night about the devouring flames and the everlasting burnings. But the boy's heart grew hardened, as if it were annealed rather than melted by the furnace of fear. The hammer welded the heart to sin, but did not break it. But even then, when the lad's heart was hard, when he heard of Jesus's love to his people, though he feared he was not one of them, still it used to make him weep to think Jesus should love anybody after such a sort. Even now that he has come to manhood, law and terrors make him dead and stolid, but thy blood, Jesus, thine agonies, in Gethsemane and on the tree, he cannot bear; they melt him; his soul flows through his eyes in tears; he weeps himself away from grateful love to thee for what thou hast done. Alas for those that deny the atonement! They take the very sting out of Christ's sufferings; and then, in taking out the sting, they take out the point with which sufferings of Christ pierce, and probe, and penetrate the heart. It is because Christ suffered for my sin, because he was condemned that I might be acquitted and not be damned as the result of my guilt: it is this that makes his sufferings such a cordial to my heart.

"See on the bloody tree,
The Illustrious sufferer hangs,
The torments due to thee,
He bore the dreadful pangs;
And cancelled there, the might sum,
Sins present, past, and sins to come."

At this present hour there are congregations met in the theatres of London, and there are persons addressing them. I do not know what their

subjects are, but I know what they ought to be. If they want to get at the intellects of those who live in the back-slums, if they want to get at the consciences of those who have been thieves and drunkards, if they want to melt the hearts of those who have grown stubborn and callous through years of lust and iniquity, I know there is nothing will do it but the death on Calvary, the five wounds, the bleeding side, the vinegar, the nails, and the spear. There is a melting power here which is not to be found in all the world besides.

I will detain you yet once more on this point. We commend the doctrine of the atonement because, besides suiting the understand, quieting the conscience, and melting the heart, we know there is a power in it to affect the outward life. No man can believe that Christ suffered for his sins and yet live in sin. No man can believe that his iniquities were the murderers of Christ, and yet go and hug those murderers to his bosom. The sure and certain effect of a true faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the purging out of the old leaven, the dedication of the soul to him who bought it with his blood, and the vowing to have revenge against those sins which nailed Jesus to the tree. The proof, after all, is the trial. Go into any parish in England where there lives a philosophical divine who has cut the atonement out of his preaching, and if you do not find more harlots, and thieves, and drunkards there than is usual, write me down mistaken; but go, on the other hand, into a parish where the atonement is preached, and that with rigid integrity and with loving earnestness, and if you do not find the ale-houses getting empty, and the shops shut on the Sunday, and the people walking in honesty and uprightness, then I have looked about the world in vain. I knew a village once that was perhaps one of the worst villages in England for many things; where many an illicit still was yielding it noxious liquor to a manufacturer without payment of the duty to the Government, and where, in connection with that, all manner of riot and iniquity were rife. There went a lad into that village, and but a lad, and one who had no scholarship, but was rough, and sometimes vulgar. He began to preach there, and it pleased God to turn that village upside down, and in a short time the little thatched chapel was crammed, and the biggest vagabonds of the village were weeping floods of tears, and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessings; and where there had been robberies and villainies

of every kind all round the neighbourhood, there were none, because the men who did the mischief were themselves in the house of God, rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified. Mark me, I am not telling you an exaggerated story now, nor a thing that I do not know. Yet this one thing I remember to the praise of God's grace, it pleased the Lord to work signs and wonders in our midst. He showed the power of Jesus' name, and made us witnesses of the gospel which can win souls, draw reluctant hearts, and mould the life and conduct of men afresh. Why, there are some brethren here who go to the refuges and homes to talk to those poor fallen girls who have been reclaimed. I wonder what they would do if they had not the gospel tale to carry with them to the abodes of wretchedness and shame. If they should take a leaf out of some divinity essays, and should go and talk to them in high-flowing words, and philosophies, what good would it be to them? Well, what is not good to them is not good to us. We want something we can grasp, something we can rely upon, something we can feel; something that will mould our character and conversation, and make us to be like Christ.

II. Secondly, one or two points BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Christian man, you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them. What shall we say to you? To you first we say, what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, what matters what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven. If thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt;" as if he felt like a child who had done wrong, and cared not how his father might whip him if he would but forgive him. So I think you can say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, slander, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad, and my spirit is rejoiced." And then, Christian, if thou art thus saved, and Christ really did take thy sin, whilst thou art glad, be grateful and be loving. Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou him who served thee. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal bubble over with some little ebullition of song. You may say,

"I love my God with zeal so great, that I could give him all,"

but sing it not in words unless thou dost mean it. Oh, do mean it! Is there nothing in your life that you do because you belong to Christ? Are you never anxious to show your love in some expressive tokens? Love the brethren of him who loved thee. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake. If there be a poor tired believer, try and weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of him who wept for thee and carried thy sins.

And yet, again, Christian, if this be true that there is an atonement made for sin, tell it, tell it, tell it. "We cannot all preach," say you; no, but tell it, tell it. "I would not prepare a sermon;" tell it; tell out the story; tell out the mystery and wonder of Christ's love. "But I should never get a congregation;" tell it in your house; tell it by the fire-side. "But I have none but little children:" tell it to your children, and let them know the sweet mystery on the cross, and the blessed history of him who lived and died for sinners. Tell it, for you know not into what ears you may speak. Tell it often, for thus you will have the better hope that you may turn sinners to Christ. Lacking talent, lacking the graces of oratory, be glad that you lack these, and glory in your infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon you, but do tell it. Sometimes there are some of our young men get preaching who had better hold their tongues, but there are many others who have gifts and abilities which they might use for Christ, but who seem tongue-tied. I have often said that if you get a young man to join a rifle corps, he has got something to do, and he puts his heart in it; but if you get the same young man to join a church, well, his name is in the book, and he has been baptized, and so on, and he thinks he has nothing more to do with it. Why, brethren, I do not like to have member of the church who feel they can throw the responsibility on a few of us while they themselves sit still. That is not the way to win battles. If at Waterloo some nine out of ten of our soldiers had said, "Well, we need not fight; we will leave the fighting to the few, there they are; let them go and do it all." Why, if they had said that, they would very soon have all been cut in pieces. They must every one of them take their turns, home, and foot, and artillery; men who were light-armed, and men of all kinds;

they must march to the fray; yes, and even the guards, if they are held back as a reserve to the last, yet they must be called for,—“Up guards, and at 'em;” and if there are any of you here that are old men and women and think you are like the guards, and ought to be spared the heavy conflict, yet up and at them, for now the world needs you all, and since Christ has bought you with His blood, I beseech you be not content till you have fought for him, and have been victorious through His name. Tell it; tell it' tell it; with a voice of thunder tell it; year, with many voices mingling together as the sound of many waters; tell it till the dwellers in the remotest wilderness shall hear the sound thereof. Tell it there shall be ne'er a cot upon the mountain where it is not known, ne'er a ship upon the sea where the story has not been told. Tell it till there is never a dark alley that has not been illuminated by its light, nor a loathsome den which has not been cleansed by its power. Tell out the story that Christ died for the ungodly.

With a few words of application to unbelievers I draw to a close. Unbeliever, If god cannot and will not forgive the sons of penitent men without Christ taking their punishment, rest assured he will surely bring you to judgment. If, when Christ, God's Son, had imputed sin laid on him, God smote him, how will he smite you who are his enemy, and who have your own sins upon your head? God seemed at Calvary, as it were, to take an oath—sinner, hear it!—he seemed, as it were, to take an oath and say. “By the blood of my Son I swear that sin must be punished,” and if it is not punished in Christ for you, it will be punished in you for yourselves. Is Christ yours, sinner? Did he die for you? Do you trust him? If you do, he died for you. Do not way, “No, I do not?” Then remember that if you live and die without faith in Christ, for every idle word and for every ill act that you have done, stroke for stroke, and blow for blow, vengeance must chastise you.

Again, to another class of you, this word. If God has in Christ made an atonement and opened a way of salvation, what must be your guilt who try to open another way; who say, “I will be good and virtuous; I will attend to ceremonies; I will save myself?” Fool that thou art, thou hast insulted God in his tenderest point, for thou hast, in fact, trampled on the blood of Christ, and said, “I need it not.” Oh, if the sinner who repents not

be damned, with what accumulated terrors shall he be damned, who, in addition to his impenitence, heaps affronts upon the person of Christ by going about to establish his own righteousness. Leave it; leave your rags, you will never make a garment of them; leave the pilfered treasure of thine; it is a counterfeit; forsake it. I counsel thee to buy of Christ fine raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and fine gold that thou mayest be rich.

And consider this, one and all of you, oh my hearers! If Christ hath made atonement for the ungodly, then let the question go round, let it go round the aisles and round the gallery, and let it echo in every heart, and let it be repeated by every lip,— "Why not for me?" And "Why not for me?" Hope, sinner, hope; he died for the ungodly. If it had said he died for the godly, there were no hope for thee. If it had been written that he died to save the good, the excellent, and the perfect, then thou hast no chance. He died for the ungodly; thou art such an one; what reason has thou to conclude that he did not die for thee? Hark thee, man; this is what Christ said to thee, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" that is, trust, and thou shalt be saved. Trust thy soul in the hands of him who carried thy load upon the cross; trust him now. He died for you; your faith is to us the evidence, and to you the proof that Christ bought you with his blood. Delay not; you need not even stay to go home to offer a prayer. Trust Christ with your soul now. You have nothing else to trust to; hang on him. You are going down; you are going down. The waves are gathering about you, and soon shall they swallow you up, and we shall hear your gurglings as you sink. See, he stretches out his hand. "Sinner," saith he, "I will bear thee up; though hell's fiery waves should dash against thee I will bear thee through them all, only trust me." What sayest thou, sinner? Wilt thou trust him? Oh, my soul, recollect the moment when first, I trusted in him! There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, but I hardly think that is greater joy than the joy of the repenting sinner when he first finds Christ. So simple and so easy it seemed to me when I came to know it. I had only to look and live, only to trust and be saved. Year after year had I been running about hither and thither to try and do what was done beforehand, to try and get ready for that which did not want any readiness. Oh, happy was that day when I ventured to step in by the open door of his mercy, to set at the table of grace ready spread, and to eat and

drink, asking no question! Oh, soul, do the same! Take courage. Trust Christ, and if he cast thee away when thou has trusted him—my soul for thine as we meet at the bar of God, I will be pawn and pledge for thee at the last, great day if such thou needest; but he cannot and he will not cast out any that come to him by faith. May God now accept and bless us all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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Omniscience

Thou God seest me. - Genesis 16:13

There are more eyes fixed on man than he wots of: he sees not as he is seen. He thinks himself obscure and unobserved, but let him remember that a cloud of witnesses hold him in full survey. Wherever he is, at every instant, there are beings whose attention is riveted by his doings, and whose gaze is constantly fixed by his actions. Within this Hall, I doubt not, there are myriads of spirits unseen to us—spirits good and spirits evil; upon us to-night the eyes of angels rest: attentively those perfect spirits regard our order; they hear our songs; they observe our prayers; it may be they fly to heaven to convey to their companions news of any sinners who are born of God, for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we wake and when we sleep; midnight is peopled with shadows unseen, and daylight hath its spirits too. The prince of the power of the air, attended by his squadron of evil spirits, flits through the ether oft; evil spirits watch our halting every instant, while good spirits, battling for the salvation of God's elect, keep us in all our ways and watch over our feet, lest at any time we dash them against a stone. Hosts of invisible beings attend on every one of us at different periods of our lives. We must remember, also, that not only do the spirits of angels, elect or

fallen, look on us, but "the spirits of the just made perfect" continually observe our conversation. We are taught by the Apostle that the noble army of martyrs, and the glorious company of confessors, are "witnesses" of our race to heaven, for he says, "seeing, then, that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us." From yon blue heaven the eyes of the glorified look down on us; there the children of God are sitting on their starry thrones, observing whether we manfully uphold the banner around which they fought; they behold our valour, or they detect our cowardice; and they are intent to witness our valiant deeds of noble daring, or our ignominious retreat in the day of battle.

Remember that, ye sons of men, ye are not unregarded; ye do not pass through this world in unseen obscurity. In darkest shades of night eyes glare on you through the gloom. In the brightness of the day angels are spectators of your labours. From heaven there look down upon you spirits who see all that finite beings are capable of beholding. But if we think that thought worth treasuring up, there is one which sums up that and drowns it, even as a drop is lost in the ocean; it is the thought, "Thou God seest me." It is nought that angels see me, it is nought that devils watch me, it is nought that the glorified spirits observe me, compared with the overwhelming truth, that thou God at all times seest me. Let us dwell on that now, and may God the Spirit make use of it to our spiritual profit!

In the first place, I shall notice *the general doctrine*, that God observes all men. In the second place, I shall notice *the particular doctrine*, "Thou God seest *me*." And in the third place, I shall *draw from it some practical and comforting inferences* to different orders of persons now assembled, each of whom may learn something from this short sentence.

1I. In the first place, THE GENERAL DOCTRINE, that God sees us.

1. This may be easily proved, even from the nature of God. It were hard to suppose a God who could not see his own creatures; it were difficult in the extreme to imagine a divinity who could not behold the actions of the works of his hands. The word which the Greeks applies to God implied that he was a God who could see. They called him *Theos* (*Theos*); and

they derived that word, if I read rightly, from the root *Theisthai* (*Theisthai*), to see, because they regarded God as being the all-seeing one, whose eye took in the whole universe at a glance, and whose knowledge extended far beyond that of mortals. God Almighty, from his very essence and nature, must be an Omniscient God. Strike out the thought that he sees me, and you extinguish Deity by a single stroke. There were no God if that God had no eyes, for a blind God were no God at all. We could not conceive such an one. Stupid as idolators may be, it were very hard to think that even they had fashioned a blind god: even they have given eyes to their gods, though they see not. Juggernaut hath eyes stained with blood; and the gods of the ancient Romans had eyes, and some of them were called far-seeing gods. Even the heathen can scarce conceive of a god that hath no eyes to see, and certainly we are not so mad as to imagine for a single second that there can be a Deity without the knowledge of everything that is done by man beneath the sun. I say it were as impossible to conceive of a God who did not observe everything, as to conceive of a round square. When we say, "*Thou God*," we do, in fact, comprise in the word "God" the idea of a God who sees everything. "Thou God seest me."

2. Yet, further, we are sure that God must see us, for we are taught in the Scriptures that *God is everywhere*, and if God be everywhere, what doth hinder him from seeing all that is done in every part of his universe? God is here: I do not simply live near him, but "*in him I live, and move, and have my being*." There is not a particle of this mighty space which is not filled with God: go forth into the pure air, and there is not a particle of it where God is not. In every portion of this earth whereon I tread, and the spot whereon I moved, there is God.

"Within thy circling power I stand;
On every side I find thy hand:
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God."

Take the wings of the morning and fly beyond the most distant star, but God is there. God is not a being confined to one place, but he is everywhere; he is there, and there, and there; in the deepest mine man

ever bored; in the unfathomable caverns of the ocean; in the heights, towering and lofty; in the gulfs that are deep, which fathom can never reach; God is everywhere. I know from his own words that he is a God who filleth immensity; the heavens are not wide enough for him; he graspeth the sun with one hand and the moon with the other; he stretcheth himself through the unnavigated ether, where the wing of seraph hath never been flapped, there is God; and where the solemnity of silence has never been broken by the son of Cherub, there is God. God is everywhere. Conceive space, and God and space are equal. Well, then, if God be everywhere, how can I refrain from believing that God sees me wherever I am? He doth not look upon me from a distance: if he did, I might screen myself beneath the shades of night; but he is here, close by my side, and not *by* me only, but *in* me; within this heart; where these lungs beat; or where my blood gushes through my veins; or where this pulse is beating, like a muffled drum, my march to death; God is there: within this mouth; in this tongue; in these eyes; in each of you God dwells; he is within you, and around you; he is beside you, and behind, and before. Is not much knowledge too wonderful you? Is it not high, and you cannot attain unto it? I say, how can you resist the doctrine, which comes upon you like a flash or lightning, that if God be everywhere he must see everything, and that therefore it is a truth, "Thou God seest me."

3. But, lest any should suppose that God may be in a place, and yet slumbering, let me remind him that in every spot to which he can travel, there is, not simply God, but also *God's activity*. Wherever I go I shall find, not a slumbering God, but a God busy about the affairs of this world. Take me to the green sward, and pleasant pasture—why, every little blade of grass there has God's hand in it, making it grow; and every tiny daisy, which a child likes to pluck, looks up with its little eye, and says, "God is in me, circulating my sap, and opening my little flower." Go where you will through this London, where vegetation is scarcely to be found, look up yonder and see those rolling stars; God is active there: it is his hand that wheels along the stars, and moves the moon, in her nightly course. But if there be neither stars nor moon, there are those clouds, heavy with darkness, like the cars of night, who steers them across the sea of azure? Doth not the breath of God blowing upon them drive them along the heavens? God is everywhere, not as a slumbering God, but as an active

God. I am upon the sea; and there I see God making the everlasting pulse of nature beat in constant ebbs and flows. I am in the pathless desert, but above me screams the vulture, and I see God winging the wild bird's flight. I am shut up in a hermitage; but an insect drops from its leaf, and I see in that insect, life which God preserves and sustains; yea, shut me out from the animate creation, and put me on the barren rock, where moss itself cannot find a footing; and I shall there discern my God bearing up the pillars of the universe, and sustaining that bare rock as a part of the colossal foundation whereon he hath built the world.

"Where'er we turn our gazing eyes,
Thy radiant footsteps shine;
Ten thousand pleasing wonders rise,
And speak their source divine.

The living tribes of countless forms,
in earth, and sea, and air,
The meanest files, the smallest worms,
Almighty power declare."

Ye shall see God everywhere: if ye see him not around you, look within you; and is he not there? Is not your blood now flowing through every portion of your body, to and fro your heart? And is not God there active? Do you not know that every pulse you beat needs a volition of Deity as its permit, and yet more, needs an exertion of Divine power as its cause? Do you not know that every breath you breathe needs Deity for its inspiration and expiration, and that you must die if God withdraw that power? If we could look within us, there are mighty works going on in this mortal fabric—the garment of the soul—which would astonish you, and make you see, indeed, that God is not asleep, but that he is active and busy. There is a working God everywhere, a God with his eyes open everywhere, a God with his hands at work everywhere; a God doing something, not a God slumbering, but a God labouring. Oh! sirs, does not the conviction flash upon your mind with a brightness, against which you cannot shut your eyes, that since God is everywhere, and everywhere active, it follows, as a necessary and unavoidable consequence, that he must see us, and know all our actions and our deeds?

4. I have one more proof to offer which I think to be conclusive. God, we may be sure, sees us, when we remember that *he can see a thing before it happens*. If he beholds an event before it transpires, surely reason dictates, he must see a thing that is happening now. Read those ancient prophecies, read what God said should be the end of Babylon and of Nineveh; just turn to the chapter where you read of Edom's doom, or where you are told that Tyre shall be desolate; then walk through the lands of the East, and see Nineveh and Babylon cast to the ground, the cities ruined; and then reply to this question—"Is not God a God of foreknowledge? Can he not see the things that are to come?" Ay, there is not a thing which shall transpire in the next cycle of a thousand years which is not already past to the infinite mind of God; there is not a deed which shall be transacted to-morrow, or the next day, or the next, through eternity, if days can be eternal, but God knoweth it altogether. And if he knows the future, does he not know the present. If his eyes look through the dim haze which veils us from the things of futurity, can he not see that which is standing in the brightness of the present? If he can see a great distance, can he not see near at hand! Surely that Divine Being who discerneth the end from the beginning, must know the things which occur now; and it must be true that "Thou God seest us," even the whole of us, the entire race of man. So much for the general and universally acknowledged doctrine.

II. Now, I come, in the second place, to the SPECIAL DOCTRINE: "Thou God seest *me*."

Come now, there is a disadvantage in having so many hearers, as there is always in speaking to more than one at a time, because persons are apt to think, "He does not speak to me." Jesus Christ preached a very successful sermon once when he had but one hearer, because he had the woman sitting on the well, and she could not say that Christ was preaching to her neighbour. He said to her, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." There was something there which smote her heart; she could not evade the confession of her guilt. But in regard to our congregations, the old orator might soon see his prayer answered, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," for when the gospel is preached, we lend our ears to

everybody; we are accustomed to hear for our neighbours, and not for ourselves. Now, I have no objection to your lending anything else you like, but I have a strong objection to you lending your ears; I shall be glad if you will keep them at home for a minute or two, for I want to make you hear for yourselves this truth "Thou God seest me."

Mark, God sees *you*—selecting any one out of this congregation—he sees you, he sees you *as much as if there were nobody else in the world for him to look at*. If I have as many people as there are here to look at, of course my attention must be divided; but the infinite mind of God is able to grasp a million objects at once, and yet to set itself, as much upon one, as if there were nothing else but that one; so that you, to-night, are looked at by God as much as if throughout space there were not another creature but yourself. Can you conceive that? Suppose the stars blotted out in darkness, suppose the angels dead; imagine the glorified spirits above are all gone, and you are left alone, the last man, and there is God looking at you. What an idea it would be for you to think of—that there was only you to be looked at! how steadily he could observe you! how well he would discern you! But mark you, God does really look at you this night as much, as entirely, as absolutely without division of sight, as if you were the only being his hands had ever made. Can you grasp that? God sees you with all his eyes, with the whole of his sight—you—you—you—you are the particular object of his attention at this very moment. God's eyes are looking down upon you; remember that!

In the next place God sees you *entirely*. He does not merely note your actions; he does not simply notice what is the appearance of your countenance; he does not merely take into his eyesight what your posture may be; but remember, God sees what you are thinking of; he looks within. God has a window in every man's heart, through which he looks; he does not want you to tell him what you are thinking about—he can see that, he can read right through you. Do you not know that God can read what is written on the rocks at the bottom of the ocean, even though ten thousands fathoms of dark water roll above? And I tell you he can read every word that is in your breasts; he knows every thought, every imagination, every conception, yea every unformed imagination, the thought scarce shot from the bow, reserved in the quiver of the mind; he

sees it all, every particle, every atom of it.

"My thoughts, scarce struggling into birth,
Great God! are known to thee:
Abroad, at home, still I'm enclosed
With thine immensity.

"Behind I glance, and thou art there:
Before me, shines thy name;
And 'tis thy strong almighty hand
Sustains my tender frame."

Can you appropriate that thought? From the crown of your head to the sole of your foot, God is examining you now; his scalpel is in your heart, his lancet in your breast. He is searching your heart and trying your reins; he knows you behind and before. "Thou God seest me;" thou seest me entirely.

Note again, God sees you *constantly*. You are sometimes watched by man, and then your conversation is tolerably correct; at other times you seek retirement, and you indulge yourselves in things which you would not dare to do before the gaze of your fellow creatures. But recollect, wherever you are, God sees you; you may lay yourselves down by the side of the hidden brook where the willows shelter you, where all is still, without a sound—God is there looking at you! You may retire to your chamber, and draw the curtains of your couch, and throw yourself down for repose in midnight's gloomiest shade—God sees you there! I remember going into a castle sometime ago, down many a winding stair, and round and round, and round, and round, where light never penetrated; at last I came to a space, very narrow, about the length of a man. "There," said the keeper, "such-and-such-a-one was shut for so many years, a ray of light never having penetrated: sometimes they tortured him, but his shrieks never reached through the thickness of these walls, and never ascended that winding staircase: here he died, and there, sir, he was buried," pointing to the ground. But though that man had none on earth to see him, God saw him. Yea, you may shut me up for ever, where ear shall never hear my prayer, where eye shall never see my

misery; but one eye shall look upon me, and one countenance smile on me, if I suffer for righteousness' sake. If for Christ's sake I am in prison, one hand shall be upon me, and one voice shall say, "Fear not; I will help thee"—at all times, in all places, in all your thoughts, in all your acts, in all your privacy, in all your public doings, at every season; this is true, "Thou God seest me."

Yet once more, "Thou God seest me," *supremely*. I can see myself, but not as well as either my friends or foes. Men can see me better than I can see myself, but man cannot see me as God sees me. A man skilled in the human heart might interpret my deeds and translate their motives, but he could not read my heart as God can read it. None can tell another as God can tell us all: we do not know ourselves as God knows us: with all your self knowledge, with all you have been told by others, God knows you more fully than you know yourself: no eye can see you as God sees you—you may act in daylight; you may not be ashamed of your actions, you may stand up before men and say, "I am a public man, I wish to be observed and noticed:" you may have all your deeds chronicled, and all men may hear of them, but I wot men will never know you as God will know you; and if you could be chained, as Paul was, with a soldier at your arm; if he were with you night and day, sleeping with you, rising with you; if he could hear all your thoughts, he could not know you as God knows you, for God sees you superlatively and supremely.

Let me now apply that to you: "Thou God sees *me*." This is true of each of you; try and think of it for a moment. Even as my eye rests on *you*, so, in a far, far greater sense does God's eye rest on *you*; standing, sitting, wherever you are, this is true, "Thou God sees *me*." It is said that when you heard Rowland Hill, if you were stuck in a window, or farther away at the door, you always had the conviction that he was preaching at you. Oh! I wish I could preach like that; if I could make you feel that I was preaching at you in particular; that I singled you out, and shot every word at you, then I should hope for some effect. Try and think, then, "Thou God seest me."

III. Now I come to DIFFERENT INFERENCES for different persons, to serve different purposes.

First, to the *prayerful*. Prayerful man, prayerful woman, here is a consolation—God sees you: and if he can see you, surely he can hear you. Why, we can often hear people, when we cannot see them. If God is so near to us, and if his voice is like the thunder, sure his ears are as good as his eyes, and he will be sure to answer us. Perhaps you cannot say a word when you pray. Never mind; God does not want to hear; he can tell what you mean even by seeing you. "There," says the Lord, "is a child of mine in prayer. He says not a word; but do you see that tear rolling down his cheek? do you hear that sigh?" Oh! mighty God, thou canst see both tear and sigh; thou canst read desire when desire hath not clothed itself in words. The naked wish God can interpret; he needs us not to light the candle of our desires with language; he can see the candle ere it is lit.

"He knows the words we mean to speak,
When from our lips they cannot break,"

by reason of the anguish of our spirit. He knows the desire, when words stagger under the weight of it; he knows the wish when language fails to express it. "Thou God seest me." Ah, God, when I cannot pray with words, I will throw myself flat on my face, and I will groan my prayer; and if I cannot groan it I will sigh it; and if I cannot sigh it I will wish it: and when these eye-strings break, and when death has sealed these lips, I will enter heaven with a prayer, which thou wilt not hear but which thou wilt see—the prayer of my inmost spirit, when my heart and my flesh fail me, that God may be the strength of my life and portion for ever. There is comfort for you, you praying ones, that God sees you. That is enough; if you cannot speak he can see you.

I have given a word for the prayerful; now a word for the *careful*. Some here are very full of care, and doubts, and anxieties, and fears. "Oh! sir," you say, "if you could come to my poor house, you would not wonder that I should feel anxious. I have had to part with much of my little furniture to provide myself with living; I am brought very low; I have not a friend in London; I am alone, alone in the wide world." Stop, stop, sir! you are not alone in the world; there is at least one eye regarding you; there is one hand that is ready to relieve you. Don't give up in despair. If your case be

ever so bad, God can see your care, your troubles, and your anxieties. To a good man it is enough to *see* destitution to relieve it; and for God it is enough to see the distresses of his family at once to supply their wants. If you were lying wounded on the battle-field, if you could not speak, you know right well your comrades who are coming by with an ambulance will pick you up, if they do but see you; and that is enough for you. So if you are lying on the battle-field of life, God sees you; let that cheer you: he will relieve you; for he only needs to look at the woes of his children at once to relieve them. Go on then; hope yet; in night's darkest hour, hope for a brighter morrow. God sees these, whatever thou art doing;

"He knows thy cares, thy tears, thy sighs;
He shall lift up thy head."

And now a word to the *slandered*. There are some of us who come in for a very large share of slander. It is very seldom that the slander market is much below par; it usually runs up at a very mighty rate; and there are persons who will take shares to any amount. If men could dispose of railway stock as they can of slander, those who happen to have any scrip here would be rich enough by to-morrow at twelve o'clock. There are some who have a superabundance of that matter; they are continually hearing rumours of this, that, and the other; and there is one fool or another who has not brains enough to write sense, nor honesty sufficient to keep him to the truth, who, therefore, writes the most infamous libels upon some of God's servants, compared with whom he himself is nothing, and whom for very envy he chooses to depreciate. Well, what matters it? Suppose you are slandered; here is a comfort: "Thou *God* seest me." They say that such-and-such is your motive, but you need not answer them; you can say, "God knows that matter." You are charged with such-and-such a thing of which you are innocent; your heart is right concerning the deed, you have never done it: well, you have no need to battle for your reputation; you need only point your finger to the sky, and say, "There is a witness there who will right me at last—there is a Judge of all the earth, whose decision I am content to wait; his answer will be a complete exoneration of me, and I shall come out of the furnace, like gold seven times purified." Young men, are you striving to do good, and do others impute wrong motives to you? Do not be particular about answering

them. Just go straight on, and your life will be the best refutation of the calumny. David's brethren said that in his pride and the naughtiness of his heart he had come to see the battle. "Ah!" thought David, "I will answer you by-and-bye." Off he went across the plain to fight Goliath; he cut off his head, and then came back to his brethren with a glorious answer in his conquering hand. If any man desires to reply to the false assertions of his enemies, let him go and do good, and he needs not say a word—that will be his answer. I am the subject of detraction, but I can point to hundreds of souls that have been saved on earth by my feeble instrumentality, and my reply to all my enemies is this, "You may say what you like; but seeing these lame men are healed, can you say anything against them? You may find fault with the style or manner, but God saves souls, and we will hold up that fact, like giant Goliath's head, to show you that although it was nothing but a sling or stone, so much the better, for God has gotten the victory." Go straight on and you will live down your slanderers; and remember when you are most distressed, "Thou God seest me."

Now, *a sentence or two to some of you who are ungodly* and know not Christ. What shall I say to you but this,—how heinous are your sins when they are put in the light of this doctrine! Remember, sinner, whenever thou sinnest, thou sinnest in the teeth of God. It is bad enough to steal in darkness, but he is a very thief who steals in daylight. It is vile, it is fearfully vile to commit a sin which I desire to cover, but to do my sin when man is looking at me shows much hardness of heart. Ah! sinner, remember, thou sinnest with God's eyes looking on thee. How black must be thy heart! how awful thy sin! for thou sinnest in the very face of justice when God's eye is fixed on thee. I was looking the other day at a glass beehive, and it was very singular to observe the motions of the creature inside. Well, now this world is nothing but a huge glass bee-hive. God looks down on you, and he sees you all. You go into your little cells in the streets of this huge city; you go to your business, your pleasure, your devotions, and your sins; but remember, whenever you go, you are like the bees under a great glass shade, you can never get away from God's observation. When children disobey before the eyes of their parents it shows that they are hardened. If they do it behind their parents' back, it proves that there is some shame left. But you, sirs, sin when God is

present with you; you sin while God's eyes are searching you through and through. Even now you are thinking hard thoughts of God while God is hearing all those silent utterances of your evil hearts. Does not that render your sin extremely heinous? Therefore, I beseech you, think of it, and repent of your wickedness, that your sins may be blotted out through Jesus Christ.

And one more thought. If God sees thee, O sinner, *how easy it will be to condemn thee*. In the late horrible case of Palmer, witnesses were required, and a jury was empanelled to try the accused. But if the judge could have mounted the bench and have said, "I saw the man, myself, mix the poison; I stood by and saw him administer it; I read his thoughts; I knew for what purpose he did it; I read his heart; I was with him when he first conceived the black design, and I have tracked him in all his evasions, in all those acts by which he sought to blindfold justice; and I can read in his heart that he knows himself to be guilty now;" the case then would have been over; the trial would have been little more than a form. What wilt thou think, O sinner, when thou art brought before God, and God shall say, "Thou didst so-and-so," and will mention what you did in the darkness of the night when no eye was there? You will start back amazed, and say, "Oh, heavens! how shall God know? is there knowledge in the Most High?" He will say, "Stop, sinner; I have more to startle thee yet;" and he will begin to unfold the records of the past: leaf after leaf he will read of the diary he has kept of your existence. Oh! I can see you as he reads page after page, your knees are knocking together, your hair is standing on end, your blood is frozen in your veins, congealed for fright, and you stand like a second Niobe, a rock bedewed with tears. You are thunder struck to find your thoughts read out before the sun, while men and angels hear. You are amazed beyond degree to hear your imaginations read, to see your deeds photographed on the great white throne, and to hear a voice saying, "Rebellion at such a time; uncleanness at such a time; evil thoughts at such an hour; hard thoughts of God at such a period; rejection of his grace on such a day; stiflings of conscience at another time;" and so on to the end of the chapter, and then the awful final doom. "Sinner, depart accursed! I saw thee sin; it needs no witnesses; I heard thy oath; I heard thy blasphemy; I saw thy theft; I read thy thought. Depart! depart! I am clear when I judge thee; I am justified

when I condemn thee: for thou hast done this evil in my sight."

Lastly, you ask me what you must do to be saved; and I will never let a congregation go, I hope, till I have told them that. Hear, then, in a few words, the way of salvation. It is this. Christ said to the Apostles, "Preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Or, to give you Paul's version, when he spoke to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thou asked what thou art to believe. Why, this: that Christ died and rose again; that by his death he did bear the punishment of all believers; and that by his resurrection he did wipe out the faults of all his children. And if God give thee faith, thou wilt believe that Christ died for thee; and wilt be washed in his blood, and thou wilt trust his mercy and his love to be thine everlasting redemption when the world shall end.

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One Antidote For Many Ills

Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. - Psalm 80:3

THIS SEEMS TO BE the only prayer the Psalmist puts up in this Psalm, as being of itself sufficient for the removal of all the ills over which he mourned. Though he sighs over the strife of neighbors and the ridicule of foes; and lamenting the ill condition of the goodly vine, he deplores its broken hedges, and complains of the wild beasts that waste and devour it, yet he does not petition the Most High against these evils in detail; but gathering up all his wishes into this one prayer, he reiterates it o'er and o'er - "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." The reason is obvious. He had traced all the calamities to one source, "O Lord God, how long wilt thou be angry - ?" And now he seeks refreshing from one fountain. Let thy face no longer frown, but let it

beam upon us with a smile and all shall then be well. This is a select lesson for the church of Christ. "In your troubles, trials and adversities, seek first, chiefly, and above everything else, to have a revival of religion in your own breast, the presence of God in your own heart; having that, you have scarcely anything beside to pray for; whatever else may befall you shall work for your good, and all that seems to impede your course, shall really prove to be a prosperous gale, to waft you to your desired haven: only, take care that you seek of God that you yourselves are turned again unto him, and that he would give you the light of his countenance; so shall you be saved."

This morning's sermon, then will be especially addressed to my own church, on the absolute necessity of true religion in our midst, and of revival from all apathy and indifference. We may ask of God multitudes of other things, but amongst them all, let this be our chief prayer: "Lord, revive us; Lord, revive us!" We have uttered it in song; let me stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, to utter it in your secret prayers, and make it the daily aspiration of your souls. I feel, beloved, that notwithstanding all opposition, God will help us to be "more than conquerors, through him that loved us," if we are true to ourselves, and two to him. But though all things should go smoothly, and the sun should always shine upon our heads, we should have no prosperity if our own godliness failed; if we only maintained the form of religion, instead of having the very power of the Holy Spirit manifested in our midst.

I shall endeavor to urge upon you this morning, first of all, *the benefits of revival*, as we shall find some of them suggested in this Psalm; and secondly, *the means of revival* - "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts;" then, thirdly I shall exhort you to *use these means, that you may acquire these benefits*.

I. THE BENEFITS OF REVIVAL TO ANY CHURCH IN THE WORLD will be a lasting blessing. I do not mean that false and spurious kind of revival which was so common a few years ago. I do not mean all that excitement attendant upon religion, which has brought men into a kind of spasmodic godliness and translated them from sensible beings, into such as could only rave about a religion they did not understand. I do not think that is a

real and true revival. God's revivals, whilst they are attended with a great heat and warmth of piety, yet have with them knowledge as well as life, understanding as well as power. The revivals that we may consider to have been genuine, were such as those wrought by the instrumentality of such men as President Edwards in America, and Whitfield in this country, who preached a free-grace gospel in all its fullness. Such revivals I consider to be genuine, and such revivals, I repeat again, would be a benefit to any church under heaven. There is no church, however good it is, which might not be better; and there are many churches sunken so low, that they have abundant need, if they would prevent spiritual death, to cry aloud, "Lord, revive us."

Among the blessings of the revival of Christians, we commence, by noticing *the salvation of sinners*. When God is pleased to pour out his Spirit upon a church in a larger measure than usual, it is always accompanied by the salvation of souls. And oh, this is a weighty matter, to have souls saved. Some laugh, and think the salvation of the soul is nothing, but I trust, beloved, you know so much of the value of souls that you will ever think it to be worth the laying down of your lives, if you might but be the means of the saving of one single soul from death. The saving of souls, if a man has once gained love to perishing sinners, and love to his blessed Master, will be an all-absorbing passion to him. It will so carry him away, that he will almost forget himself in the saving of others. He will be like the stout, brave fireman, who careth not for the scorch or for the heat, so that he may rescue the poor creature on whom true humanity hath set his heart. He must, he will pluck such a one from the burning, at any cost and expense to himself. Oh the zeal of such a man as that Whitfield to whom I have alluded! He says in one of his sermons, "My God, I groan day-by-day over the salvation of souls. Sometimes," he says, "I think I could stand on the top of every hackney-coach in the streets of London, to preach God's Word. It is not enough that I can do it night and day, laboring incessantly by writing and by preaching, I would that I were multiplied a thousand-fold, that I might have a thousand tongues to preach this gospel of my blessed Redeemer." Ah, you find too many Christians who do not care about sinners being saved. The minister may preach, but what heed they the results" So long as he has a respectable congregation, and a quiet people, it is enough. I

trust, my friends, we shall never sink to so low a state as to carry on our services without the salvation of souls. I have prayed my God many a time, and I hope to repeat the prayer, that when I have no more souls to save for him, no more of his elect to be gathered home, he may allow me to be taken to himself, that I may not stand as cumberground in his vineyard, useless, seeing there is no more fruit to be brought forth. I know you long for souls to be converted. I have seen your glad eyes when, at the church-meetings; night after night, sinners have told us what the Lord has done for them. I have marked your great joy when drunkards, blasphemers, and all kinds of careless persons have turned with full purpose of heart unto God, and led a new life. Now, mark you, if these things are to be continued, and above all, if they are to be multiplied, we must have again a revival in our midst. For this we must and will cry, "O Lord our God, visit thy plantation, and pour out again upon us thy mighty Spirit."

Another effect of a revival in a church, is generally *the promotion of true love and unanimity in its midst*. I will tell you the most quarrelsome churches in England, if you will tell me the most lazy churches. It has actually become a proverb now-a-days. People say, when persons are sound asleep, "He is as sound asleep as a church;" - as if they really thought the church was the soundest asleep of anything that exists! Alas that there should be so much truth in the proverb. Where a firm, established for business would have all its eyes open - where a company, that had for its object the accumulation of wealth, would be ever on the watch - churches, for the most part, seem to neglect the means of doing good and fritter away holy opportunities of advancing their Master's cause; and for this reason, many of us are split in sunder. There are heart-burnings, achings, ranklings of soul, quarellings amongst each other. An active church will be a united church; a slumbering church will be sure to be a quarrelsome one. If any minister desires to heal the wounds of a church, and bring the members into unanimity, let him ask God to give them all enough to fill their hands, and when their hands are full of their Master's work, and their mouths are full of his praise, they will have no time for devouring one another, or filling their mouths with slander and reproach. Oh, if God gives us revival, we shall have perfect unanimity. Blessed be God, we have much of it; but oh for more of it that our hearts

may be knit together as the heart of one man, - that we, being one army of the Living God, may none of us have any anger or ill-will towards each other, but being - as I trust we all are - brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, we may live as becometh such. Oh that Christ would give us that spirit that loveth all, hopeth for all, and will bear burdens for all, passing by little things, and differences of judgment and opinion, that so we may be united with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken. A revival, I think, is necessary for the unanimity of the church.

A revival is also necessary, *in order that the mouths of the enemy of the truth may be stopped*. Do they not open wide their mouths against us? Have they not spoken hard things against us? - ay, and not only against us, but against the truth we preach, and against the God we honor. How shall their mouths be stopped? By our replying to them? No; foul scorn we think it to utter one single word in our own defense. If our conduct be not sufficiently upright to commend itself, we will not utter words in order to commend it. But the way we can shut our adversaries' mouths is this: by seeking a revival in our midst. What! do they rail against our ministry? If more souls are saved, can they rail against that? Ay, let them if they will. Do they speak against the doctrines? Let them; but let our lives be so holy that they must lie against us when they dare to say that our doctrines lead any into sin. Let us seek of God that we may be so earnest, so eminently holy, so God-like, and so Christ-like, that to all they say their own consciences may tell them, "Thou utterest a falsehood whilst thou speakest against him." This was the glory of the Puritans: they preached doctrines which laid them open to reproach. I am bold to say I have preached the doctrine of the Puritans, and I am bold to say, moreover, that those parts which have been most objected to in my discourses, have frequently been quotations from ancient fathers, or from some of the Puritans. I have often smiled when I have seen them condemned, and said, "There now, sir, thou hast condemned Charnock, or Bunyan, or How, or Doddridge," or some other saint of God whom it so happened I quoted at the time. The word condemn was theirs, and therefore it did not so much affect me. They were held up to reproach when they were alive, and how did they answer their calumniators? By a blameless and holy life. They, like Enoch, walked with God; and let the world say what they would of them, they only sought to keep their

families the most rigidly pious, and themselves the most strictly upright in the world; so that while it was said of their enemies, "They talk of good works," it was said of the Puritans, that "They did them," and while the Arminians, for such they were in those days, were living in sin, he who was called Calvinist, and laughed at, was living in righteousness, and the doctrine that was said to be the promoter of sin was found afterwards to be the promoter of holiness. We defy the world to find a holier people than those who have espoused the doctrines of free-grace, from the first moment until now. They have been distinguished in every history, even by their enemies, as having been the most devotedly pious, and as having given themselves especially to the reading of God's Word and the practice of his law; and whilst they said they were justified by faith alone, through the blood of Christ, none were found, so much as they, seeking to honor God in all the exercises of godliness, being "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Their faith let us follow, and their charity let us emulate. Let us seek a revival here; and so our enemies' mouths, if not entirely shut, shall be so far stopped that their consciences shall speak against them whilst they rail against us. We want no eminent reply to silence their calumny; no learned articles brought out in our vindication; no voice lifted up in our favor. I thank my friends for all they do; but I thank them little for the true effect it produces. Let us live straight on; let us work straight on; let us preach straight on, and serve our God better than heretofore, then let hell roar, and earth resound with tumult, the conscious integrity of our own spirit shall preserve us from alarm, and the Most High himself shall protect us from their fury. We need a revival, then, for these three reasons, each of which is great in itself.

Yet, above all, we want a revival, *if we would promote the glory of God*. The proper object of a Christian's life is God's glory. The church was made on purpose to glorify God; but it is only a revived church that brings glory to his name. Think you that all the churches honor God? I tell you nay; there are some that dishonor him - not because of their erroneous doctrines, nor perhaps because of any defect in their formalities, but because of the want of life in their religion. There is a meeting for prayer; six people assemble besides the minister. Does that proclaim your homage to God? Does that do honor to Christianity? Go ye to the homes of these people; see what is their conversation when they

are alone; mark how they walk before God. Go to their sanctuaries and hear their hymns, there is the beauty of music, but where is the life of the people? Listen to the sermon, it is elaborate, polished, complete, a master-piece of oratory. But ask yourselves, "Could a soul be saved under it, except by a miracle? Was there anything in it adapted to stir men up to goodness? It pleased their ears; it instructed them in some degree, perhaps, but what was there in it to teach their hearts?" Ah, God knows there are many such preachers. Notwithstanding their learning and their opulence, they do not preach the gospel in its simplicity, and they draw not near to God our Father. If we would honor God by the church, we must have a warm church, a burning church, loving the truths it holds, and carrying them out in the life. Oh that God would give us life from on high, lest we should be like that church of old of whom it was said, "Thou hast a name try live, and art dead." These are some of the benefits of revivals.

II. WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF REVIVAL? They are two-fold. One is, "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts;', and the other is, "Cause thy face to shine." There can be no revival without both of these. Allow me, my dear hearers, to address you one by one, in different classes, in order that I may apply the former of these means to you.

"Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts." Your minister feels that he needs to be turned more thoroughly to the Lord his God. His prayer shall be, God helping him, that he may be more fearless and faithful than ever; that he may never for one moment think what any of you will say with regard to what he utters, but that he may only think what God his Master would say concerning him; - that he may come into the pulpit with this resolve - that he cares no more for your opinion with regard to the truth than if you were all stones, only resolving this much: - come loss or come gain by it, whatsoever the Lord God saith unto him, that he must speak; and he desires to ask his Master that he may come here with more prayer himself than heretofore, that whatever he preaches may be so burnt into his own soul that you may all know, even if you do not think it true yourselves, that at any rate he believes it, and believes it with his inmost soul. And I will ask of God that I may so preach to you, that my words may be attended with a mighty and a divine power. I do forswear all pretense to

ability in this work. I forswear the least idea that I have aught about me that can save souls, or anything which could draw men by the attractions of my speech. I feel that if you have been profited by my preaching, it must have been the work of God, and God alone, and I pray to him that I may be taught to know more my own weakness. Wherein my enemies say aught against me, may I believe what they say, but yet exclaim, "Weak though I am, yet through his might, I all things can perform."

Will you ask such things for me, that I may be more and more turned to God, and that so your spiritual health may be promoted.

But there are some of you who are workers in the church. Large numbers are actively engaged for Christ. In the Sabbath-school, in the distribution of tracts, in preaching the Word in the villages, and in some parts of this great city - many of you are striving to serve God. Now what I ask and exhort you to is this: cry unto God - "Turn us again, O God." You want, my dear working friends, more of the Spirit of God in all your labors. I am afraid we forget him too much, we want to have a greater remembrance of him. Sunday-school teachers, cry unto God that you may attend your classes with a sincere desire to promote God's glory, leaning wholly on his strength. Do not be content with the ordinary routine, gathering your children there, and sending them home again but cry, "Lord, give us the agony which a teacher ought to feel for his child's soul." Ask that you may go to the school with deep feelings, with throes of love over the children's hearts, that you may teach them with tearful eyes, groaning before heaven that you may be the means of their salvation and deliverance from death. And you who in other ways serve God, I beseech you do not be content with doing it as you have done. You may have done it well enough to gain some approval of your fellows: do it better, as in the sight of the Lord. I do not mean better as to the outward form, but better as to the inward grace that goeth with it. Oh! seek from God that your works may be done from pure motives, with more simple faith in Christ, more firm reliance on him, and with greater prayer for your success. "Turn us again," is the cry of all, I hope, who are doing anything for Jesus.

Others of you are intercessors; and here I hope I have taken in all who

love the Lord in this place. Oh! how much the strength of a church depends upon these intercessors! I kind almost said we could do better without the workers than the intercessors: We want in every church, if it is to be successful, intercessors with God - men who know how to plead with him and to prevail. Beloved, I must stir you up again on this point. If you would see great things done in this place, or in any other place, in the salvation of souls, you must intercede more earnestly than you have done. I thank God our prayer-meetings are always full; but there are some of you whom I do not see so often as I would desire. There are some of you business-men who are accustomed to come in for the last half-hour, and I have seen you, and called on you to pray. For six months I have not seen some of you at all. There are others whom I know to be as much engaged as you are, who somehow or other manage to be always here. Why is it not so with you? If you do not love prayer, then I wish you not to come until you do. But I do ask of God to bring you into such a state of mind, that your soul may be more thoroughly with the Lord's church, and you may be more thoroughly devoted to his service. Our prayer-meeting is well attended, and is full, but it shall be better attended yet, and we shall have the men among us coming up "to the help of the Lord against the mighty." We do want more prayer. Your prayers, I am sure, have been more earnest at home than ever they were, during the last three weeks; let them be more earnest still. It is by prayer we must lean on God; it is by prayer that God strengthens us. I beseech you, wrestle with God, my dear friends. I know your love to one another, and to his truth. Wrestle with God, in secret and in public, that he would yet open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing upon us, such as we shall not have room enough to receive. There must be a turning again to God of the intercessors in prayer.

Again: we want a turning again to God of all of you who have been accustomed to hold communion with Jesus, but who have in the least degree broken off that holy and heavenly habit. Beloved, are there not some of you who were accustomed to walk with God each day? Your morn was sanctified with prayer, and your eventide was closed in with the voice of praise. You walked with Jesus in your daily business; you were real Enochs, you were Johns, you did lay your head on the bosom of your Lord. But ah! have not some of you known suspended communion of

late? Let us speak of ourselves personally, instead of addressing you; have not we ourselves held less communion with Jesus? Have not our prayers been fewer to him, and his revelations less bright to us? Have we not been content to live without Emmanuel in our hearts? How long is it with some of us since our morsel was dipped in the honey of fellowship? With some of you it is weeks and months, since you had your love visit from Jesus. Oh! beloved, let me beseech you, cry unto God, "Turn us again." It will never do for us to live without communion; we cannot, we must not, we dare not live without constant hourly fellowship with Jesus. I would stir you up in this matter. Seek of God that you may return, and experience the loveliness of Jesus in your eyes, that you may know more and more of your loveliness in his eyes.

And once more, beloved, "Turn us again" must be the prayer of all you, not only in your religious labors, but in your daily lives. Oh! how I do groan over each one of you, especially those of you who are my children in Christ, whom God has granted me to be the means of bringing from nature's darkness into marvellous light; that your lives may be on honor to your profession. Oh! my dear hearers, may none among you who make a profession, be found liars to God and man. There are many who have been baptized, who have been baptized into the waters of deception: there are some who put the sacramental wine between their lips, who are a dishonor and a disgrace to the church in which they assemble. Some who sing praises with us here can go and sing the songs of Satan elsewhere. Ay, are there not some among you, whom I cannot detect, whom the deacons cannot, nor your fellow-members either, but whose consciences tell you, you are not fit to be members of a church? You have crept into our number, you have deceived us, and there you are, like a cancer in our midst. God forgive you and change your hearts; God turn you to himself! And oh my brethren one and all of us, though we hope we have the root of the matter in us, yet how much room there is for improvement and amendment! How are your families conducted? Is there as much of that true and earnest prayerfulness for your children as we could desire? How is your business conducted? Are you above the tricks of trade? Do you know how to stand aloof from the common customs of other men, and say, "If all do wrong it is no reason why I should - I must, I will do right?" Do you know how to talk? Have you

caught the brogue of heaven? Can you eschew all foolishness, all filthy conversation, and seek to bear the image of Jesus Christ in the world? I do not ask you whether you use the "thee" and "thou," and the outward formalities of ostentatious humility, but I ask you whether you know how to regulate your speech by the Word of God. I trust, in some degree, that you all do but not as we could desire. Cry out, then, ye Christians, "Turn us again, O God!" If others sin, I beseech you, do not you sin, remember how God is dishonored by it. What! will you bring shame on Christ, and on the doctrines we profess? There is enough said against them without our giving cause of offense; lies enough are made up, without our giving any effuse that men should truthfully speak ill of us. Oh! if I thought it would avail, methinks I would go down upon my knees, my brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, to beg of you, as for my very life, that you would live close to Jesus. I do pray the Holy Spirit that he may so rest on you in every place, that your conversation may be "such as becometh the gospel of Christ;" and that in every act, great or small, and in every word of every sort, there may be the influence from on high, moulding you to the right, keeping you to the right, and in everything bidding you to become more and more patterns of godliness, and reflections of the image of Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, to be personal with each other again, are we where we want to be just now many of us? Can we put our hands to our hearts, and say, "O Lord, I am, in spiritual things just where I desire to be?" No, I don't think there is one of us that could say that. Are we now what we should desire to be if we were to die in our pews? Come now, have we so lived during the past week, that we could wish this week to be a specimen-week of our whole lives? I fear not. Brethren, how are your evidences? - are they bright for heaven? How is your heart?, - is it wholly set on Jesus? How is your faith? - doth it dwell on God alone? Is your soul sick, or is it healthy? Are you sending forth blossoms and bearing fruit, or do you feel dry and barren? Remember, blessed is the man who is planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. But how about yourselves? Are not some of you so cold and languid in prayer, that prayer is a burden to you? How about your trials? Do they not break your heart more, almost, than ever they did? That is because you have forgotten how to cast your burden on the Lord. How about your daily life?

Have you not cause to grieve over it, as not being all you could desire it? Ah! beloved, do not reckon it a light matter to be going backwards, do not consider it a small thing to be less zealous than you used to be. Ah! it is a sad thing to begin to decline. But how many of you have done so! Let our prayer be now, -

"Lord, revive us, Lord, revive us,
All our help must come from thee."

Do, I beseech you, I entreat you, in the name of God our Father, and Jesus Christ our brother, search into your own hearts; examine yourselves, and put up this prayer, "Lord, wherein I am right, keep me so, against all opposition, and conflict; but wherein I am wrong, Lord make me right, for Jesus' sake." We must have this turning again unto God, if we would have a revival in our breast. Every unholy liver, every cold heart, every one who is not entirely devoted to God, keeps us back from having a revival. When once we have all our souls fully turned unto the Lord, then I say but not till then, he will give us to see the travail of the Redeemer's soul, and "God, even our own God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear him."

The other means of revival is a precious one - "cause thy face to shine." Ah! beloved, we might ask of God, that we might all be devoted, all his servants, all prayerful, and all what we want to be; but it would never come without this second prayer being answered; and even if it did come without this, where would be the blessing? It is the causing of his face to shine on his church that makes a church flourish. Do you suppose that, if to our number there were added a thousand of the most wealthy and wise of the land, we should really prosper any the more without the light of God's countenance? Ah! no, beloved, give us our God, and we could do without them, but they would be a curse to us without him. Do you imagine that the increase of our numbers is a blessing, unless we have an increase of grace? No, it is not. It is the crowding of a boat until it sinks, without putting in any more provision, for the food of those who are in it. The more we have in numbers, the more we need have of grace. It is just this we want every-day: "Cause thy face to shine." Oh! there have been times in this house of prayer, when God's face has shone upon us. I can remember seasons, when every one of us wept, from the minister down

almost to the child; there have been times, when we have reckoned the converts under one sermon by scores. Where is the blessedness we once spoke of? Where is the joy we once had in this house? Brethren, it is not all gone; there are many still brought to know the Lord; but oh! I want to see those times again, when first the refreshing showers came down from heaven. Have you never heard that under one of Whitfield's sermons there have been as many as two thousand saved? He was a great man; but God can use the little, as well as the great to produce the same effect; and why should there not be souls saved here, beyond all our dreams? Ay, why not? We answer, there is no reason why not, if God does but cause his face to shine. Give us the shining of God's face; man's face may be covered with frowns, and his heart may be black with malice, but if the Lord our God doth shine, it is enough

"If he makes bare his arm,
Who can his cause withstand
When he his people's cause defends
Who, who can stay his hand?"

It is his good hand with us we want. I do think there is an opportunity for the display of God's hand at this particular era, such as has not been for many years before, certainly, if he doeth anything, the crown must be put on his head, and on his head alone. We are a feeble people: what shall we do? But if he doeth anything, he shall have the crown and the diadem entirely to himself. Oh that he would do it! Oh that he would honor himself! Oh that he would turn unto us that we might turn unto him, and that his face may shine! Children of God, I need not enlarge on the meaning of this. You know what the shining of God's face means; you know it means a clear light of knowledge, a warming light of comfort, a living light poured into the darkness of your soul, an honorable light, which shall make you appear like Moses, when he came from the mountain - so bright, that men will scarce dare to look upon you. "Cause thy face to shine;" Shall we not make this our prayer, dearly beloved? Have I one of my brethren in the faith, who will not this day go home to cry out aloud unto his God, "Cause thy face to shine?" A black cloud has swept over us, all we want is that the sun should come, and it shall sweep that cloud away. There have been direful things; but what of them, if God, our God, shall appear? Let this be our cry, "Cause thy face to shine."

Beloved, let us give no rest unto our God, until he hears this our prayer, "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."

III. Come, now, let me stir you all up, all of you who love the Saviour, to seek after this revival. Some of you, perhaps, are now resolving in your hearts that you will at once, when you reach your homes, prostrate yourselves before your God, and cry out to him that he would bless his church; and oh! do so I beseech you. It is common with us under a sermon to resolve, though after the sermon we are slow to perform. You have often said, when you left the house of God, "I will carry out that injunction of my pastor, and will be much in prayer." You thought to do it so soon as you arrived at home, but you did not, and so there was an untimely end of the matter - it accomplished not what was designed. But this time, I beseech you, while you resolve be resolute. Instead of saying within yourselves, "Now I will devote myself more to God, and seek to honor him more," anticipate the resolution by the result. Ye can do more in the strength of God than ye can think or propose to yourselves in the utmost might of man. Resolves may pacify the conscience very frequently for a while, without really benefitting it. You say you will do it, conscience therefore does not reproach you with a disobedience to the command, but ye do it not after all, and so the effect has passed away. Let any holy and pious resolution you now form be this instant turned into prayer. Instead of saying, "I will do it, put up the prayer, Lord enable me to do it; Lord, grant me grace to do it." One prayer is worth ten thousand resolutions. Pray to God that you, as a soldier of the cross, may never disgrace the banner under which you fight. Ask of him that you may not be like the children of Ephraim, who turned back in the day of battle, but that you may stand fast in all weathers, even as good old Jacob, when "in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night," - so may you serve that God who has galled you with so high a galling. Perhaps others of you think there is no need of a revival, that your own hearts are quite good enough; I hope but few of you think so. But if thou dost think so my hearer, I warn thee. Thou fanciest thou art right, and therein thou dost prove that thou art wrong. He who says within himself, "I am rich and increased with goods," let him know that he is "poor and naked and miserable." He who says he needs no revival knoweth not what he says.

Beloved, you shall find that those who are noted as best among God's people need to write themselves the word; and those who fancy all goes well in their hearts oftentimes little know that an under-current of evil is really bearing them away as with a tide where they would not wish to go, whilst they fancy they are going on to peace and prosperity.

Oh! beloved, carry into effect the advice I have just given. I know I have spoken feebly. It is the best I can do just now, I have only stirred you up by way of remembrance. Think not my desires are as feeble as my words; imagine not that my anxiety for you is or can be represented by my speech. Ask, I beseech you, ask of God, that to every one of you brethren and sisters, the simple exhortation of one who loves you as his own soul, may be blessed. God is my witness, beloved, that for him I seek to live: no other motive have I in this world, God knoweth, but his glory. Therefore do I bid and exhort you, knowing that you love the same God, and seek to serve the same Christ, do not now, in this hour of peril, give the least cause to the enemy to blaspheme. Oh! in the bowels of Christ, I entreat you for his sake who hung upon the tree and who is now exalted in heaven by his bloody sacrifice offered for your redemption, by the everlasting love of God, whereby you are kept. I exhort, I beseech, I entreat you, as your brother in Christ Jesus, and such an one as your pastor, be in nothing I moved by your adversaries. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for our Saviour's sake." But do ask that your life and conversation may be an honor to your Lord and Master; in nothing give occasion for the enemy to malign our sacred cause; in everything may your course be "like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

But oh! ye who come here and approve the truth with your judgment but yet have never felt its power in your hearts or its influence in your lives, for you we sigh and groan; for your sake I have stirred up the saints among us to pray. Oh how many of you there are that have been pricked in your consciences and hearts many a time. Ye have wept, ay, and have so wept that you have thought with yourselves "Never souls wept as we have done!" But ye have gone back again. After all the solemn warnings ye have heard, and after all the woosings of Calvary, ye have gone back again to your sins. Sinner! thou who heedest little for thyself, just hear

how much we think of thee. Little dost thou know how much we groan over thy soul. Man! thou thinkest thy soul nothing, yet morning, noon, and night, we are groaning over that precious immortal thing which thou despisest. Thou thinkest it little to lose thy soul, to perish, or mayhap to be damned. Dost thou account us fools that we should cry over thee? Dost thou suppose we are bereft of reason, that we should think thy soul of so much concern, whilst thou hast so little concern for it? Here are God's people, they are crying after thy soul; they are laboring with God to save thee. Dost thou think so little of it thyself, that thou wouldst fool away thy soul for a paltry pleasure, or wouldst procrastinate thy soul's welfare beyond the limited domain of hope; Oh! sinner, sinner, if thou lovest thyself, I beseech thee, pause and think that what God's people love must be worth something, that what we labor for, and strive for, must be worth something, that what was reckoned worth a ransom so priceless as Jesus paid must have its sterling value in the sight of heaven. Do, I beseech thee, pause? think of the value of thy soul; think how dreadful it will be if it is lost; think of the extent of eternity, think of thine own frailty; bethink thee of thine own sin, and of thy deserving. May God give thee grace to forsake thy wicked ways, turn unto him and live, for he "hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn unto him and live!" Therefore, saith he, "Turn thee, turn thee, why wilt thou die?"

And now oh Lord God of hosts, hear our ardent appeal to thy throne. "Turn us again." Lighten our path with the guidance of thine eye, cheer our hearts with the smiles of thy face. O God of armies, let every regiment and rank of thy militant church be of perfect heart, undivided in thy service. Let great grace rest upon all thy children. Let great fear come upon all the people. Let many reluctant hearts be turned to the Lord. Let there now be times of refreshing from thy presence. To thine own name shall be all the glory, "O thou that are more glorious and excellent then the mountains of prey!"

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One Greater Than The Temple

But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple. -
Matthew 12:6

Our Lord intended, of course, to assert that he himself was greater than the temple, but he used the most modest form of putting it. When in the interests of truth he is obliged to speak of himself his meekness and lowliness are always apparent in the mode in which he makes the personal allusion, and every one can see that he does not seek his own glory, or desire the praise of man. In the instance before us he says, "In this place is one," or, as some read it, "is something greater than the temple." He who is truly meek and lowly is not afraid to speak the truth about himself, for he has no jealousy about his reputation for humility, and is quite willing to be thought proud by the ungenerous, for he knows that he only speaks of himself in order to glorify God or promote truth. There is a native peculiarity in true lowliness which shows itself in the very form of its utterances, and wards off the imputation of boasting.

We do not find the passage now before us in any other gospel but that of Matthew. It is so important, so sententious, and withal must have been so startling to those who heard it, that we should not have been astonished if we had found it in all the four evangelists. Only Matthew records it, and he most fittingly, since he is in some respects the evangelist of the Hebrews; for, as you know, he began his book by saying, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," and he evidently adapted his gospel to the Jews. As the Jews would be the last to receive teaching which in any way lowered the temple, it is all the more remarkable that Matthew inserted our Lord's words in the gospel which he designed to be read by them. But, though the words occur but once, we must not, therefore, regard them as being any the less weighty, for the sentence comes with a preface which shows the force our Lord intends to throw into it. The declaration is prefaced by "I say unto you." Here is the authority before which we all bow—Jesus says it. He does not merely proclaim the truth, but he sets his personal stamp and royal seal upon it. "I say unto you"—I who cannot lie, who speak the things which I have received of my Father, upon whom the Spirit of God rests without measure,—I say unto you. He speaks as one having authority, and not as

the scribes; with a verily, verily of certainty he teaches, and therefore let us unquestionably accept his declaration, "I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple."

Let us now meditate upon this truth, first observing the fact that our Lord is greater than the temple; secondly, remarking that he ought to be so regarded; and, thirdly, suggesting and urging home some few reflections which arise out of the subject.

I. First, then, OUR LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE. He is so manifestly because he is God, "God over all, blessed for ever." He who dwells in the house is greater than the house in which he dwells, so that as God our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple. It needs no arguing that it must be so: the divine must be infinitely greater than anything which is of human workmanship; the self-existent must infinitely excel the noblest of created things. The temple was many years in building. Its huge stones were quarried with enormous labor and its cedar beams were shaped and carved with matchless skill; and though no hammer or tool of iron was used upon the spot, yet by the strength of men were the huge stones laid each one in its place. It stood upon Zion a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, but still a work of men's hands, a creation of human strength and human wisdom. Not thus is it with the Christ of God. Of him we may truly say, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." The temple being created, and having a beginning was a thing of time, and therefore had an end. The things which are seen, whether they be temples or taverns, are temporal, and must pass away. In due time the firebrand in the hand of the Roman soldier reduces to ashes a building which seemed as lasting as the rock upon which it stood. Go ye now to the place where once Zion stood, and mark well how the glory is departed, even as it departed from Shiloh of old. Deep down in the earth the base of the mighty arch which formed the ascent to the house of the Lord has been uncovered from the mountain of ruins, but scarce else will you find one stone left upon another which has not been thrown down. Though these masses of marble were so huge that it is an ordinary circumstance to find a stone twenty-four feet in length and nine feet in breadth, and sometimes they are even found forty feet in

length, weighing as much as one hundred tons, yet have they been flung from the seats as stones are cast upon the king's highway. Thus has the temple disappeared, and thus shall all creation pass away, but thou O Lord abidest". "They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The temple was no rival of Jehovah, but derived all its glory from his deigning to reveal himself therein. "Exceeding magnificent" as it was, it was far below the divine greatness, and only worthy to be called his footstool. If we were to dwell on any one of the attributes of his Godhead, it would be more and more clear that Christ is greater than the temple, but the point is one which none of us doubt. After all, the temple was but a symbol, and Jesus is the substance; it was but the shadow of which he is the reality. Albeit that every Hebrew heart leaped for joy when it thought of the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, and that this day every Jewish spirit laments the departed glories of Zion, yet was the holy and beautiful house a figure of good things to come, and not the very image of the covenant blessings. It was not essential to the world's well being, for lo! its disappearance has brought light and life to the Gentiles. It is not needful to true religion now, for the time is come when they that worship Jehovah adore him in no consecrated shrines, but worship him in spirit and in truth. But our Lord Jesus is truth and substance. He is essential to our light and life, and could he be taken from us earth's hope would be quenched for ever. Emmanuel, God with us, thou art greater than the temple!

This fact it was necessary for our Lord to mention, in order to justify his disciples in having rubbed ears of corn together to eat on the Sabbath day. He said, "the priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." They were engaged in the labors of sacrifice, and service all through the Sabbath-day, yet nobody accused them of breaking the law of the Sabbath. Why? Because the authority of the temple exempted its servants from the letter of the law. "But," saith our Lord, "I am greater than the temple, therefore, surely I have power to allow my servants who are about my business to refresh themselves with food now that they are hungry, and since I have given them my sanction to exercise the little

labor involved in rubbing out a few grains of wheat, they are beyond all censure. If the sanction of the temple allows the greater labor, much more shall the sanction of one who is greater than the temple allow the less. As the Son of God, Christ is under no law. As man he has kept the law, and honored it for our sakes, because he stood as our surety and our substitute; but he himself in the essence of his nature is the law maker, and above all law. Who shall arraign the eternal Son, and call the Judge of all the earth to account? "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth."

But now we must pass on to other meanings, and view our Lord in his blessed personality as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He is greater than the temple, for he is a more glorious enshrinement of Deity. The temple was great above all buildings because it was the house of God, but it was only so in a measure, for the Eternal is not to be contained within walls and curtains. "Howbeit," says Stephen, "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" How remarkably Stephen does, as it were, pass over the temple with a mere word; he merely mentions it in a sentence, "But Solomon built him a house," as if no stress needed to be laid upon the circumstance. It is remarkable that from the moment the temple was built true religion in Israel began to decline, and the abominable shrines of heathen idols were set up in the holy land. The glory of even an allowed ritualism is fatal to spiritual religion. From a pompous worship of the true to the worship of the false the step is very easy. When God dwelt in the tent, in the days of David, religion nourished far better than in the days when the ark abode in a great house garnished with precious stones for beauty, and overlaid with pure gold. Still within the holy of holies the Lord peculiarly revealed himself, and at the one temple upon Zion sacrifices and offerings were presented, for God was there. The presence of God, as you know, in the temple and the tabernacle was known by the shining of the bright light called the Shekinah between the wings of the cherubim over the ark of the covenant. We often forget that the presence of God in the most holy place was a matter of faith to all but the high priest. Once in the year the high priest went within the awful veil, but we

do not know that even he ever dared to look upon the blaze of splendor. God dwelleth in light that no man may approach unto. The smoke of the incense from the priest's censer was needed partly to veil the exceeding glory of the divine presence, lest even those chosen eyes should suffer blindness. No one else went into the hallowed shrine, and only he once in the year. That symbolical pavilion of Jehovah is not for a moment to be compared with our Lord Jesus, who is the true dwelling-place of the Godhead, for "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What a masterly sentence that is! None but the Holy Ghost could surely have compacted words into such a sentence,—"In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The manifestation of the Godhead in Christ is not unapproachable, for we may freely come to Jesus: a voice out of the excellent glory bids us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace. We cannot come too often, nor be too long in our approaches unto Jesus, the true mercy-seat. The atonement has been offered, and the veil of the temple, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, has been rent, and now we may approach the Godhead in Christ Jesus without trembling. Verily, as I think of God, incarnate God in Jesus Christ, and dwelling among the sons of men, I feel how true it is, "In this place is one greater than the temple."

Another sense of the words is this—Our Lord is a fuller revelation of truth than the temple ever was. The temple taught a thousand truths of which we cannot now speak particularly. To the instructed Israelite there was a wealth of meaning about each court of the temple, and every one of its golden vessels. Not a ceremony was without its measure of instruction. If the Spirit of God opened up the types of the holy and beautiful house to him, the Israelite must have had a very clear intimation of the good things to come. Still there was nothing in the temple but the type: the substance was not there. The blood of bulls and goats was there, but not the atonement that taketh away sin. The smoke of the holy incense from the golden censor was there, but not the sweet merits of the great law-fulfiller. The seven-branched candlestick was there, but the Spirit of God was not yet given. The shewbread stood on the holy table, but food for souls could not be found in the finest of the wheat. The temple had but the types; and Christ is greater than the temple because in him we have the realities, or, as Paul calls them, "the very image of the things." "The

figure for the time then present" had its uses, but it is by no means comparable to the actual covenant blessing. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. There were some truths, however, and these among the most precious, which the temple did not teach at all. I do not know, for instance, where we can read adoption in the symbols of the temple, or the great truth of our union with Jesus, and other priceless doctrines which cluster around the cross and the resurrection; but in the person of Jesus we read the exceeding riches of divine grace, and see by faith the inexhaustible treasures of the covenant. In Jesus we see at once "our Kinsman and our God." In the person of Christ we read the infinite eternal love of God towards his own redeemed ones, and the intimate intercourse which this love has established between God and man. Glimpses of this the temple may perhaps have given, for it did intimate that the Lord would dwell among his people, but only to eyes anointed seven times with the eye salve would these high mysterious doctrines have been visible. The fundamental truths of the everlasting gospel are all to be seen in Jesus Christ by the wayfaring man, and the more he is studied the more plainly do these matchless truths shine forth. God has fully revealed himself in his Son. There is in fact no wisdom needful to our soul's welfare but that which shines forth in him, and nothing worth the learning but that which the Spirit of God teaches us concerning him, for he is to the full "the wisdom of God." Know Christ and you know the Father. Does he not himself say, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"?

Again, the Redeemer is greater than the temple, because he is a more abiding evidence of divine favor. God for ever dwells in Christ Jesus, and this is the eternal sign of his favor to his people. There were some things in the first temple which were rich tokens of good to Israel, but none of these were in the temple to which our Lord pointed when he uttered these words. Remember, he looked at Herod's temple, the temple which you may call the second, but which in some respects was more truly a third temple. In Solomon's temple there were four precious things which were absent in Christ's day. First there was the ark of the covenant, which precious chest was above all other things the token of Israel's high relationship to God, and the assurance of the Lord's grace to his covenanted people. The ark was lost at the Babylonian destruction of the

city, and thus the Holy of Holies lost its most sacred piece of furniture: the throne of the great King was gone. There were no wings of cherubim above the mercy-seat of pure gold, no tables of stone engraved by the divine hand were within the golden coffer, and Aaron's rod that budded and the pot of manna were both gone. Now, in our blessed Lord you find the covenant itself and all that it contains, for thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." His blood is "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and he himself is given for "a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles," (Isaiah 42:6.). Jesus Christ is the covenant between God and his redeemed, he is its substance, its seal, its surety, its messenger, its all. In our Lord we see the fullness of covenanted blessing. His are the covering wings beneath which we dwell in safety; and his is the propitiatory, or mercy-seat, whereby we draw near to God. In him we see the tables of the law honored and fulfilled, priestly authority exercised with a living and fruit-bearing scepter, and heavenly food laid up for the chosen people. It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and all the promises are yea and amen in him. Thus in Jesus we find what the temple had lost.

The second temple also lacked the Shekinah. The throne being gone, the symbol of the royal presence departed too. The supernatural light did not shine forth within the holy place in Herod's temple. The glory had departed, or at least that particular form of it, and though the second temple became more glorious than the first because the Messiah himself appeared within it, yet it missed that symbolic splendor of which the Israelite was wont to say, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth." But in our Lord Jesus we may always see the brightness of the Father's glory, the light of Jehovah's smile. Around his brow abides the light of everlasting love. Have you not seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

They had lost also from the second temple the Urim and the Thummim. Precisely what the Urim and the Thummim may have been we do not know, but this peculiar mystery of blessing had a connection with the breastplate and with the high priest who wore it, so that when men went up to the temple to inquire, they received answers as from the sacred

oracle, and whatsoever cases were spread before the Lord, an answer was given by the high priest, through the lights and perfections, or the Urim and Thummim with which the priest was girded. That was lost also after the Babylonian captivity. But in Jesus Christ the lights and perfection always abide, and if any man would know anything, let him learn of him, for he by the Eternal Spirit still guides his children into all truth, solves their difficulties, removes their doubts, and comforts their hearts, giving to them still light and perfection, each one according to their measure as he is able to bear it now, and preparing for each one the unclouded light and the spotless perfection of eternal glory.

The second temple had also lost the sacred fire. You remember when the temple was opened the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice,—a fire from heaven, which fire was carefully watched both night and day, and always fed with the prescribed fuel, if indeed it needed to be fed at all. This the Jews had no longer, and they were compelled to use other fire to burn upon the altar of God, fire which they had probably consecrated by rites and ceremonies, but which was not the same flame which had actually descended from heaven. Behold, beloved, how far our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple, for this day is that word fulfilled in your ears—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He has given to his church now to be immersed in the fiery element of his Spirit. She dwells in the everlasting burnings of the divine power, the Lord himself has exalted her to this. Now are her lamps kindled by flame from heaven and her sacrifices are consumed by consecrated flames, while, around, that same Spirit is a wall of fire to preserve the chosen from their enemies. In the perpetual baptism of the Holy Ghost the saints find power and life. So that everything which of old was regarded as a special token of God's love to Israel, though missing from the second temple, is in reality to be found in Jesus Christ our Lord, and so he is greater than the temple.

Furthermore, he is greater than the temple, because he is a more sure place of consolation. Brethren, when a guilty conscience wished for relief the man in the olden times went up to the temple and presented his sin offering; but you and I find a more effectual sin offering in our crucified Lord whenever our soul is burdened, for by it we are in very deed

cleansed from sin. The Jew was not really cleansed, but only typically; ours is an actual and abiding deliverance from sin, its guilt, and its defilement. We have no more consciousness of it when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to our souls. Oh, come ye evermore, ye burdened ones, to Christ's body as to a temple, and see your sin put away by his finished atonement, and then go your way comforted. The Israelites were wont to go to the temple in time of trouble to make supplication: it is very pleasant to think of heart-broken Hannah standing in the tabernacle before the Lord pouring out her silent complaint. Come, beloved, you too may speak in your heart unto the Lord whenever you will, and you will be heard. No Eli is near to judge you harshly and rebuke you sharply, but a better priest is at hand to sympathise with you, for he himself is touched with a feeling of our infirmity. Fear not, you shall obtain an answer of peace, and the blessing given shall bear the sweet name of Samuel, because you asked it of the Lord. To Jesus you may come as to the temple, when like Hezekiah you are made to smart by a blasphemous letter, or any other oppression: here you may spread the matter before the Lord with a certainty that the Lord, who is greater than the temple, will give you an answer of peace in reference to the trial which you leave in his hands. No doubt some went to the temple without faith in the spiritual part of the matter, and so came away unconsolated; but you, coming to Jesus Christ, with your spirit taught of God, shall find sure consolation in him.

Only once more, our Lord is greater than the temple because he is a more glorious center of worship. Towards the temple all the Israelites prayed. Daniel prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem, and the scattered in every land turned towards that point of the compass where Jerusalem was situated, and so they made supplication. To-day not Jews alone but Gentiles, men of every race, speaking every language under heaven, turn towards thee, "thou great Redeemer," the true temple of the living God. Myriads redeemed by blood in heaven, and multitudes redeemed by blood on earth, all make the Christ of God the center of their perpetual adoration. The day shall come when all kings shall bow before him, and all nations shall call him blessed. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is God to the glory of God the Father. Brethren, is not it sweet to think of Jesus as being at this very

moment the central point to which all devout believers turn their eyes? Let the Mohammedan have his Keblah, and the Jew his temple, as for us we turn our eyes to the risen Savior, and with all the saints we offer prayer to God through him. Through him both Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

II. Now, secondly, and briefly, JESUS OUGHT TO BE REGARDED AS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE.

We ought to think of him then with greater joy than even the Jew did of the holy and beautiful house. The eighty-fourth Psalm shows us how the king of Israel loved the house of the Lord. He cries, "How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts." But oh, my soul, how amiable is Christ! How altogether lovely is thy Redeemer and thy God. If the devout Israelite could say, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and if at the sight of the temple he cried, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion," how ought our heart to exult at the very thought of Jesus, our incarnate God! What intense pleasure, what rapture it ought to cause us to think that God in very deed does dwell among men in the person of his well-beloved Son! I wonder we are not carried away into extravagances of delight at this thought, and that we do not become like them that dream. I marvel that we are so cold and chill when we have before us a fact which might make angelic hearts thrill with wonder. God incarnate! God my kinsman! Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh! Surely if we were to dance as David did before the ark, we might scarcely need to excuse ourselves to the heartless Michals who would ridicule our enthusiasm. Oh, the bliss of knowing that God is in Christ Jesus!

We ought also to consider our Lord with greater wonder than that with which men surveyed the temple. As I have already said, the temple was a great marvel, and would be so even now if it were still standing. Those huge stones were so well prepared by art, and were themselves so massive, that they did not need to be cemented together, and they fitted so closely that the thinnest knife could not be inserted between them, so polished and so compact were they. The house itself abounded with gold, silver, and precious stones; it was a treasury as well as a temple. For size

it was remarkable too, if we consider the entire range of the buildings attached to it. The level space within which the actual temple stood is said to have been about one thousand feet square and it is asserted that it would have contained twice as many people as the huge Colosseum at Rome. The actual temple was but a small building comparatively, but its appurtenances and Solomon's porch, which surrounded the square on which it stood, made up a great mass of building, and the magnificent bridge which joined the lone hill to the rest of Jerusalem was a marvel of architecture; Solomon's ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord was one of the sights which quite overcame the queen of Sheba. The brightness of the white marble, and the abundance of gold must have made it a sight to gaze upon with tears in one's eyes to think that man could erect such a house, and that it should be for the true God. I do not wonder at all that men were bidden to go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces. Neither are we astonished that invaders quailed before the strength of her defences, "They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away." The like of this temple was not to be seen on the face of the earth: neither the pyramids of Egypt, nor the piles of Nineveh, nor the towers of Babylon, could rival the temple of the living God at Jerusalem: but, my brethren, think of Jesus and you will wonder more. What are the huge stones? What are the delicate carvings, and what the cedar, and what the overlayings of gold, and what the veil of fine twined linen, and what all the gorgeous pomp of the ceremonials compared with God, the everlasting God, veiled in human flesh? Wonder, my brethren, wonder, bow low and adore. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh."

Being greater than the temple our Lord is to be visited with greater frequency. The males of Israel were to go up to the temple three times in a year. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house," says David: for they would be there always. Oh, my brethren, you may enjoy the happiness of these blessed ones, and dwell in Jesus always. You may come up to the Lord Jesus whensoever you will. All days are appointed feasts with him. You need not wait for the new moons or the Sabbaths, you may resort to him at all times. We that have believed do enter into a perpetual Sabbath, in which we may continually worship the Most High in the person of

Christ.

Let us also reverence him with still greater solemnity. The devout Jews put off their shoes from off their feet when they entered the temple enclosure. True, in our Lord's day, much of this solemnity had been forgotten and they bought and sold within the great enclosure around the temple the beasts and birds that were necessary for sacrifice; but as a rule the Jews always treated the temple with profound respect. With what reverence shall we worship our Lord Jesus? Let us never speak lightly nor think lightly of him, but may our inmost spirits worship him as the eternal God.

Let us honor him also with higher service. The service of the temple was full of pomp and gorgeous ceremonies, and kings brought their treasures there. With what assiduity did David store up his gold and silver to build the house, and with what skill did Solomon carry out the details of that mighty piece of architecture. Come ye and worship Christ after that fashion. Bring him the calves of your lips, bring him your body, soul and spirit, as a living sacrifice; yea bring him your gold and silver and your substance for he is greater than the temple and deserves larger gifts and higher consecration than the temple had from its most ardent lovers. Surely I need not argue the point, for you who love him know that you can never do enough for him.

So, too, he ought to be sought after with more vehement desire if he be greater than the temple. David said he "longed, yea even panted for the courts of the Lord." With what longings and partings ought we to long for Christ! In answer to her Lord's promise to come again the church cries, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." We ought to long more for the second advent of our Lord; especially ought we, if we mourn his absence from our own souls, never to rest until he reveals himself to us again. Oh, ye redeemed ones, love him so that you can no more live without his smile than the wife can live without her husband's love; and long ye for fellowship with him as the bride for the wedding day.

Set your hearts upon him, and hunger and thirst after him. The Jew pined to visit Mount Zion, and with such pinings I bid you long for Jesus

and for the time when you shall see him face to face.

III. Now, we have to spend a few minutes in urging home one or two PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS which arise out of this subject.

And the first is this: how carefully should the laws of Jesus Christ be observed. I believe that when you entered the temple by passing through the Beautiful Gate you saw a notice that worshippers should pass in on the right hand, and that afterwards they were to pass out on the left. I am quite sure that if the temple now stood, and any one of us could make a journey to Jerusalem we should be very careful to observe every order of the sanctuary, and if we found the porter at the gate said "you must take off your shoes," we should with gladness remove them, or if he bade us wash we would gladly enter the bath. Knowing that God dwelt there, had we been Israelites we should have been very attentive to every observance required of the law. Now, brethren, let us be equally attentive to all the laws of Christ, for he is greater than the temple. Never trifle with his commands, nor tamper with them. Remember, if you break one of the least of his commandments, and teach men so, you will be least in the kingdom of God. He is very gracious, and forgives, but still disobedience brings injury to our own souls. I beseech all Christians to search the Scriptures and see what Christ's mind is upon every moot point, whether it be baptism or church government, and when you know his will carry it out. Do not say of any precept, "That is non-essential," for everything that Jesus bids you do is essential to the perfection of your obedience. If you say it is not essential to salvation I am compelled to rebuke you. What, are you so selfish that you only think about your own salvation? and because you are saved will you kick against your Savior and say, "I do not care to do this because I can be saved even if I neglect it." This is not the spirit of a child of God. I pray you, dear friends, do what I anxiously wish to do myself, follow the Lord fully, and go step by step where he would have you go, for if you would obey temple rules much more should you obey the rules of Christ.

The next reflection is how much more ought we to value Christ than any outward ordinance. It is not always that all Christians do this. There is a dear brother who loves Christ, and I can see Christ in him, I am sure I

can; if I know anything about Christ at all in my own soul I see that he knows him too. Very well: but then he does not belong to my church! It is a pity; he ought to be as right as I am, and I wish he knew better. But at the same time his love to Christ is more to be esteemed than his correctness in outward things, for Christ is greater than the temple. I am not going to quarrel with any brother in Christ because he is somewhat in error about external ordinances, for he has the spirit if not the letter of the matter. I wish he had been baptized with water, but I see he is baptized with the Holy Ghost, and therefore he is my brother. I wish that he would observe the water baptism because Christ bids him, but still if he does not I am glad that his Master has given him the Holy Spirit, and I rejoice to own that he has the vital matter. Perhaps he does not come to the Lord's Supper, and does not believe in it. I am very sorry for him, for he loses a great privilege, but if I see that he has communion with Christ I know that Christ is greater than the temple, and that inward communion is greater than the external sign. Hence it happens that if we see Christ in persons with whose theology we do not agree, and whose forms of Church government we cannot commend, we must set the Christ within above the outward forms, and receive the brother still. The brother is wrong, but if we see the Lord in him, let us love him, for Christ is greater than the temple. We dare not exalt any outward ordinance above Christ, as the test of a man's Christianity. We would die for the defense of those outward ordinances which Christ commands, but for all that the Lord himself is greater than the ordinance, and we love all the members of his mystical body.

Another reflection is this: how much more important it is for you that you should go to Christ than that you should go to any place which you suppose to be the house of God. How many times from this pulpit have we disclaimed all idea that this particular building has any sanctity about it. We know that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, yet there may be some of you who come here very regularly, who have great respect for the place. If you did not go to any place of worship you would think yourselves very bad, and so you would be. If you never went on the Lord's day to the worship of God at all you would certainly be keeping yourselves out of the place where you may hope that God will bless you. But is it not a strange thing that you would not like to stop away from the temple, but

you stop away from Christ, and while you go up to the outward sanctuary to the real Christ you have never gone. I am sure you would feel ashamed if anybody were able to say of you "There is a man here who has not been to a place of worship for twelve months." You would look down upon a man of whom that could be said. Yes, but if there be any reasons for coming to what you think the temple, how many more reasons are there for coming to Christ: and if you would think it wrong to stop away from the public place of worship for twelve months, how much more wrong must it be to stop away from Jesus all your life; but you have done so. Will you please to think of that?

Now, had you gone to the temple, you would have felt towards it very great respect and reverence. And when you come to the outward place of worship, you are very attentive, and respectful to the place—let me ask you, have you been respectful to Christ? How is it that you live without faith in him? No prayer is offered by you to him, you do not accept the great salvation which he is prepared to give. Practically, you despise him, and turn your backs upon him. You would not do so to the temple, why do you do so to Christ? Oh, that you unconverted ones knew the uses of Christ. Do you remember what Joab did when Solomon was provoked to slay him. Joab fled, and though he had no right to go into the temple, yet he felt it was a case of necessity, and hoping to save his life he rushed up to the altar, and held by the altar's horn. Benaiah came to him with a sword, and said, "Come forth," and what did Joab say? "Nay," he said, "but I will die here;" and Benaiah had to go back and ask Solomon, "What is to be done?" and Solomon said. "Do as he hath said," and so he slew him right against the altar. Now, if you come to Christ, though the avenger of blood is after you, you will be safe. He may come to you and say, "Come forth," but you will reply, "I will die here." You cannot die there, for he shall hide thee in the secret of his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide thee, and with thy hand upon the blood-stained horn no Benaiah, and no devil, and no destroying angel can touch thee. Sinner, it is your only hope. You will be lost for ever, the sword shall pierce through your soul to your everlasting destruction; but fly now unto Christ the temple, and lay hold upon the altar's horn, and let this be on your mind—

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know
I must for ever die."

"But if I die with mercy sought,
When I've this altar tried,
This were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."

By faith, this morning, I put my hand upon the altar's horn. All my hope, dread Sovereign, lies in the blood of thy dear Son. Brethren in Christ, let us all lay our hands there once again. Poor sinner, if you have never done this before do it now, and say in your heart,

"My faith doth lay her hand
Upon that altar's horn,
And see my bleeding Lord at hand
Who all my sin has borne."

Christ is greater than the temple, may his great benediction rest upon you. Amen.

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The One Thing Needful

But one thing is needful. - Luke 10:42

We have no difficulty whatever in deciding what the one thing is. We are not allowed to say that it is the Saviour, for he is not a thing; and we are not permitted to say that it is attention to our own salvation, for although that would be true, it is not mentioned in the context. The one thing needful evidently is that which Mary chose—that good part which should

not be taken away from her. Very clearly this was to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. This and nothing less, this and nothing more.

The mere posture of sitting down and listening to the Saviour's word was nothing in itself: it was that which it indicated. It indicated, in Mary's case, a readiness to believe what the Saviour taught, to accept and to obey—nay to delight in, the precepts which fell from his lips. And this is the one thing needful—absolutely needful; for no rebel can enter the kingdom of heaven with the weapons of rebellion in his hands. We cannot know Christ while we resist Christ: we must be reconciled to his gentle sway, and confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To sit at Jesus' feet implies faith as well as submission. Mary believed in what Jesus said, and, therefore, sat there to be taught by him. It is absolutely necessary that we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in his power as God and man, in his death as being expiatory, in his crucifixion as being a sacrifice for our sins. We must trust him for time and eternity, in all his relationships as Prophet, Priest, and King. We must rely on him; he must be our hope, our salvation, our all in all. This one thing is absolutely necessary: without it we are undone. A believing submission, and a submissive faith in Jesus we must have, or perish.

But sitting at Jesus' feet implies, also, that having submitted and believed, we now desire to be his disciples. Discipleship is too often forgotten; it is as needful as faith. We are to go into all the world and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Ghost. A man cannot be saved unless he has become a learner in the school of Christ, and a learner, too, in a practical sense, being willing to practice what he learns. Only he who does the Master's will knows his doctrines. We are, if we have chosen the good part, sitters at the feet of Jesus, just as Saul of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel; Christ is to us our great Instructor, and we take the law from his lips. The believer's position is that of a pupil, and the Lord Jesus is his teacher. Except we be converted and become as little children, we can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. Sitting at the feet of Jesus indicates the child-like spirit of true discipleship; and this is the one thing needful: there is no salvation apart from it.

It meant, also, service, for though Mary was not apparently engaged in waiting upon Christ as Martha was, yet she was, in very truth, ministering unto him in a deeper and truer sense. No one gives greater joy to a public speaker than an attentive listener; no one serves a teacher better than he who is an apt and attentive scholar. The first duty, indeed, of the student to the tutor is that he be cheerful in accepting, and diligent in retaining, what is taught: in this sense, Mary was really waiting upon Christ in one of his loftiest capacities, namely—that of a teacher and prophet in the midst of Israel. In that same spirit, had the Master only intimated it, she would have risen to wash his feet, or anoint his head, or wait at table, as Martha did; but she would, while she was performing these active duties, have continued spiritually in her first posture; she could not, of course, have continued literally sitting at the feet of the Saviour, but her heart would have remained in the condition which that posture indicates. She was in the fittest position for service, for she waited to hear what her Lord would have her to do. We must all be servants, too; as we have been servants of unrighteousness, we must by grace submit ourselves unto the rules of Jesus, and become servants of righteousness, or, else, we miss the one thing that is indispensable for entrance into heaven.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus, also, signifies love. She would not have been sitting there at ease and happy in mind, if she had not loved him. There was a charm in the very tone of his words to her. She knew how he had loved her, and, therefore, each syllable was music to her soul. She looked up again and again, I doubt not, into that dear face, and often caught the meaning of the words more readily as she read his countenance, marked his eyes oftentimes suffused with tears, and ever bright with holy sympathy. Her love to his person made her a willing learner, and we must be the same. We must not learn of Christ like unwilling truant boys, who go to school and must needs have learning flogged into them; we must be eager to learn; we must open our mouth wide that he may fill it, like the thirsty earth when it needs the shower, our soul must break for the longing it hath towards his commandments at all times. We must rejoice in his statutes more than gold, yea, than much fine gold. When we are moved by this spirit, we have found the one thing needful.

Having laid before you the meaning of the text, that to sit at Jesus' feet is the one thing necessary, for a literal translation of the text would be—"of one thing there is a necessity;" let us take the text as it stands and notice in it four things. The first is a word of consideration: the disjunctive conjunction, "but." The Saviour bids us to make a pause. He says, "but one thing is needful." Then there comes a word of necessity: "one thing is needful." thirdly, a word of concentration: "one thing is needful;" and then a word of immediateness "one thing is needful—needful now, at once.

I.—To begin, then, here is a word of CONSIDERATION, which, as I have already said, is interjected into the middle of our Lord's brief word to Martha. Martha is very busy; she is rather quick tempered also, and so she speaks to the Saviour somewhat shortly; and the Master says, "Martha, Martha,"—very tenderly, kindly, gently, with only the slightest tinge of rebuke in his tone—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things—but, but, but, but, but, wait a while and hear." That wise and warning but may be very useful to many here. You are engaged to-day in business; very diligent you are in it. You throw your whole energy into your trading, as you must, if you would succeed. You rise up wearily, and you sit up late. Shall I say a word that should discourage your industry? I will not; but, but is there nothing else?—is this life all? Is making money everything? Is wealth worth gaining merely for the sake of having it said, "He died worth fifty thousand pounds?" Is it so?

Perhaps, you are a very hard-working man. You have very little rest during the week, and in order to bring up your family comfortably, you strain every nerve; you live as you should, economically, and you work diligently; from morning to night the thought with you is, "How shall I fill these many little mouths? How shall I bring them up properly? How shall I, as a working man, pay my way?" Very right; I wish all working men would be equally thoughtful and economical, and that there were fewer of those foolish spendthrifts who waste their substance when they have it, and who, the moment there is a frost, or they are out of employ, become paupers, loafing upon the charity of others. I commend your industry, but, but, but, at the same time, is that all? Were you made only to be a

machine for digging holes, laying bricks, or cutting out pieces of wood? Were you created only to stand at a counter and measure or weigh out goods? do you think your God made you for that and that only? Is this the chief end of man—to earn shillings a week, and try to make ends meet therewith? is that all immortal men were made for? As an animal like a dog, nor a machine like a steam engine, can you stand up and look at yourself, and say, "I believe I am perfectly fulfilling my destiny"? I beg this morning to interject that quiet "but," right into the middle of your busy life, and ask from you space for consideration, a pause for the voice of wisdom, that a hearing may be granted her. Business? Labour? Yes, but there is a higher bread to be earned, and there is a higher life to be considered. Hence the Lord puts it, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," that is to say, not for that first and foremost; "but for that which endureth unto life eternal." God hath made man that he may glorify him; and whatever else man accomplishes, if he fail to reach that end, and make eternal shipwreck, unless he comes to sit at Jesus' feet; there and there only can he learn how to sanctify his business and to consecrate his labour, and so bring forth unto God; through his grace, that which is due to him.

Now, I have spoken thus to the busy, but I might speak, and I should have certainly as good a claim to do so, to those who are lovers of pleasure. They are not cumbered with much serving; rather, they laugh at those who cumber themselves about anything. They are merry as the birds, their life is as the flight of a butterfly, which lightly floats from flower to flower, according to its own sweet will; with neither comb to make, nor hive to guard. Now, thou gay young man, what doth solomon say to thee? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but"—there comes in a pause, and the cool hand of wisdom is laid upon the hot brow of folly, and the youth is asked to think awhile—"but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgement." It cannot be that an immortal spirit was made of frivolities; a soul immortal spending all her fires on the playthings of the world, "resembles ocean into tempest toss'd, to waft a feather, or to drown a fly." So great a thing as an immortal soul could not have been made by God with no higher object than to spend itself upon trifles light as air. Oh, pause a while, thou careless, godless one, and hear the voice that saith

unto thee, "but." There is something more than the fool's hell; and should not life be? The charms of music, the merriment of the gay assembly, the beauties of art, and the delights of banqueting—there must be something more for thee than these; and something more must be required of thee than that thou shouldst waste from morn to night thy precious time upon nothing but to please thyself. Stop, stop, and let this admonitory "but" sound in thine ears.

I take liberty, moreover, to address the same word to religious people, who, perhaps, need it as much as the others. They will, of course, agree with anything I can say about the mere worldling or the profligate; but, will they listen to me when I say to them, "You are very diligent in your religion, you are attentive to all its outward rites and ceremonies, you believe the articles of your church, you practice the ceremonies ordained by its rulers; but, but, do you know that all this is nothing, unless you sit at Jesus' feet?" we may do what the church tells us, and never do what Christ tells us, for these may be different things; and the church is not our Saviour, but Christ. We may believe what a certain creed tells us, but not believe what Jesus teaches; for our creed and Christ may be two very different things. Ay, and we may believe even what the Bible itself teaches to us, or think we believe it; but, if our heart has never made submission to the Teacher himself, so as to sit at his feet, and receive the truth obediently from him, our religion is altogether vain. Traditional religion is not submission to Christ, but to custom. Obedience to a denomination is not obedience to Jesus himself. How I wish that all professing Christians would bring themselves to an examination and enquire, "Do I really believe in the person of my Lord, and accept him as my Teacher? Do I study the Word of God to learn the truth from him, and not accept it blindly and at second hand from my minister, or my parents, or the church of the nation, or the creed of my family?" We go to Jesus for teaching, desiring in our hearts to be taught by his book and his Spirit, cheerfully agreeing in all things to shape our faith to his declaration, and our life to his rule. For us, there must be no spiritual law-giver, and no infallible Rabbi, but the Blessed One, whom Magdalene called "Rabboni," and whom Thomas saluted as, "My Lord and my God."

Yes, and let me say, even to those of you who can honestly declare that

Christ is your sole confidence, it is possible for you to forget the necessity of sitting at his feet. You, dear brethren, are looking to his precious blood alone for your salvation, and his name is sweet to you, and you desire all things to be conformed to his will. So far it is well with you, for in this you have a measure of sitting at his feet; but so had Martha; she loved her Lord, and she knew his word, and she was a saved soul, for "Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus;" but you have not perhaps so much of this needful thing as Mary had, and as you ought to have. You have been very busy this week, and have been drifted from your moorings; you have not lived with your Lord in conscious fellowship; you have been full of care and empty of prayer; you have not committed your sorrows to your loving friend; you have blundered on in duty without asking his guidance or assistance, you have not maintained, in your Christian service, the communion of your spirit with the Well-Beloved, and, if such has been the case, let me say "but" to you, and ask you, as you sit here this morning, to make a little stop in your Sunday-school teaching or your street preaching, or whatever else it is that you are so laudably engaged in, and say to yourself: "To me, as a worker, the one thing needful is to keep near my Lord, and I must not so suffer the watering of others to occupy me, as to neglect my own heart, lest I should have to say 'woe is me, they made me keeper in the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.'" To the saints, as well as to others, the one thing needful is to sit at Jesus' feet. We are to be always learners and lovers of Jesus. Departure from him, and independence of him, let them not once be named among you. It is weakness, sickness, sin, and sorrow for a believer to leave his Lord and become either his own leader or reliance. We are only safe while we remain humbly and gladly subservient to him. You see, then, that this word "but" suggests a very useful and salutary pause to us all. May God help us to benefit thereby.

II. Secondly, our text speaks of NECESSITY—one thing is a necessity. If this be proven, it overrides all other considerations. We are nearly right when we say proverbially, "Necessity has no law." If a man steal, and it be found that he was dying of hunger, he is always half forgiven, and charity has been known to excuse him altogether. Necessity has been frequently accepted as a good excuse for what else might not have been tolerated; and when a thing is right, and necessity backs it, then indeed the right

become imperative, and pushes to the front to force its way. Necessity, like hunger breaks through stone walls. The text claims for sitting at Jesus' feet that it is the first and only necessity. Now, I see all around me a crowd of things alluring and fascinating. Pleasure calls to me I hear her syren song—but I reply, "I cannot regard thee, for necessity presses upon me to hearken to another voice." Philosophy and learning charm me, fain would I yield my heart to them; but, while I am yet unsaved, the one thing needful demands my first care, and wisdom bids me give it. Not that we love human learning less, but eternal wisdom more. Pearls? Yes. Emeralds? Yes; but bread, in God's name—bread at once, when I am starving in the desert! What is the use of ingots of gold, or bars of silver, or caskets of jewels, when food is wanting? If one thing be needful, it devours, like Aaron's rod, all the matters which are merely pleasurable. All the fascinating things on earth may go, but the needful things we must have. If you are wise, you will evermore prefer the necessary to the dazzling.

About us are a thousand things entangling. This world is very much like the pools we have heard of in India, in which grows a long grass of so clinging a character that, if a man once falls into the water, it is almost certain to be his death, for only with the utmost difficulty could he be rescued from the meshes of the deadly, weedy net, which immediately wraps itself around him. This world is even thus entangling. All the efforts of grace are needed to preserve men from being ensnared with the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life. The ledger demands you, the day-book wants you, the shop requires you, the warehouse bell rings for you; the theater invites, the ball-room calls: you must live, you say, and you must have a little enjoyment, and , consequently, you give your heart to the world. These things, I say, are very entangling; but we must be disentangled from them, for we cannot afford to lose our souls. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If a ship is going down, and a passenger has his gold in a bag about him, and he has upon him a costly cloak, see how he acts. Off goes the garment when he knows that he cannot possibly swim with it upon him. No matter though it be lined with miniver and be made of costliest stuff, off he throws it; and, as for his bag of treasure, with many a regret he flings them down upon the deck, for his life is dearer than they. If he may but

save his life, he is willing to lose all beside. Oh sirs! for the one thing needful, all entangling things must be give up. You must lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you, if by any means the one thing needful may be yours.

There are many things very puzzling, and some people have a strange delight in being bewildered. It is astonishing the many letters I receive and interviews I am asked to give, in order to adjust in people's minds the doctrine of predestination and the fact of free agency; and equally remarkable is the way in which young people, and old people too, will pick out extremely difficult texts, perhaps relating to the Second Advent, or to the battle of Armageddon, and they must needs have these opened up to them before they will believe the gospel. I think it utterly useless to begin upon such things with those who are unsaved. One thing is needful, sir, and that is by no means a puzzling matter; it is plainly this, that thou submit thyself to Jesus Christ and sit at his feet. That is needful: as for the doctrines of election and the second advent, they are important, but they are neither the most essential nor the most pressing. The one thing needful for a seeking soul is that it receives Jesus and become submissive to him, sitting as a disciple at his feet and as a servant doing his will. It is true there is the ninth chapter of Romans in the Bible, and a precious chapter it is: but the seeking sinner should take care to read first the third chapter of John, and till he has mastered that, he had better let the Romans alone. Go first to the business which concerns your salvation; attend to that, and when all is right with you, then, at Jesus' feet, you will be in the best possible position to learn all that can be learned of the higher mysteries and the deeper truths.

Moreover, there is much that is desirable, very desirable—desirable in the highest spiritual sense; but it must be second to that which is needful. If I read the experience of men who have known their own hearts and mourned before the Lord, I wish that I had as deep a sense of sin as they had; or, I read the story of saints who have lived the angelic life, and even here on earth have dwelt with Christ and walked the golden streets in fellowship with him, I wish I could rise to all their heights; but for all that, if my soul is still polluted with sin, for me the one thing needful is cleansing by the Redeemer's blood; I must at once believingly yield to

Jesus, for this is of necessity, and the desirable things will come to me afterwards, if I sit down at Jesus' feet. So near the source of all good things, it will be easy to be enriched with all knowledge and grace, but our first business is to get there, and by the Holy Spirit's blessing we may come there without either the deep experience or the elevated feelings we have described; we may come just as we are, all guilty and lost, and submit ourselves to the Saviour. Having done that, we are in the best position for spiritual attainments—yea, they shall surely be ours. Let the heart yield itself to our sole reliance and sure confidence, it is well with us: we have all that is needful, and the pledge of all that is desirable.

Tell us it is a necessity, and everything else must give way: necessity overrules all else. Now, what is it that sitting at Jesus' feet is a necessity? It is so, because it is needful for us to have our sins forgiven; but Jesus will never forgive the unhumiliated rebel. If he will not take Jesus to be a Master, the sinner cannot have him to be a Saviour. As long as we rebel against him, we cannot be saved by him. Submission, by repentance and faith, we must have, or our transgressions will remain upon us to our everlasting ruin. It is necessary, because we must have our inbred sins overcome; but none can stay corruption in a man but Christ, who has come to destroy the work of the devil, and to save his people from their sins. Jesus, the seed of the woman, is the only power that can crush the serpent's head. Only at the feet of Jesus can the divine power be gained which works in us holiness and sanctifies us practically; therefore, as you must be purified or you cannot enter heaven, you must come to Jesus' feet. Moreover, it is at the feet of Jesus that the soul's ignorance is removed; and since ignorance concerning ourselves and our God must be taken from us, we must be taught of him. God is "our light and our salvation;" our light first, and our salvation in consequence. We must have the light. The spiritually blind man cannot enter heaven, he must have his eyes opened, but Jesus alone can work that miracle of grace. Neither can we receive true light except from him, for he is "the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" none are ever enlightened, except by him. "In him is light—all light; and the light is the light of men." As God is the mind of the world, he who has not God is demented; and as Christ is the light of the world, he that believes not in him abideth in darkness even until now. We must come, then, and yield

ourselves unreservedly to Jesus, worshipping him, trusting him, and obeying him—in a word, we must sit at his feet, and hear his word; otherwise, we shall abide in darkness and death.

In order to enter heaven, it is necessary that our nature should become like the nature of Christ. This earth is for those who bear the image of the first Adam; but the new heaven and the new earth are for those who bear the image of the second Adam.. We must, by some means, acquire the nature of the second and heavenly Adam, and this must be wrought in us by regeneration, and developed by acquaintance with him. By sitting at his feet, and beholding him, we become changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If we reject the Lord Jesus as our trust, teacher, and exemplar, we have no new life, we are not new creatures in Christ, and we can never be admitted within the holy gates where those alone dwell who are fashioned after his likeness. We must, then, sit at his feet; it is absolutely necessary, and, without it, our whole life will be a complete failure; we may make money, but we shall lose our souls; we may gain honour, but shall have come short of the glory of God; we may enjoy pleasure, but we shall forfeit the pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore; we may have done our country some service, but to our God, and the higher country, we shall have rendered no service, for we cannot serve God if we will not obey Christ. "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." This life is a blank, a long rebellion, to the man who submits not to Jesus, and the life for ever hereafter will be darkness and confusion; as darkness itself, a land of sorrow, and of weeping, and of wailing, and of gnashing of teeth, a land of despair, upon which no star shall ever shine, or sun shall ever rise. Woe, woe, woe, woe to the Godless, Christless spirit that passeth across the river of death without a hope. Woe, woe, woe, woe eternally to the soul that will not sit at the feet of Jesus! he shall be trodden beneath his feet in his anger, and crushed in his hot displeasure. God grant that may never be our portion. To sit at Jesus' feet is the one thing needful then.

And, brethren, let me just say, and leave this point, it is needful to every one of you. It is not some of us who must be there, but all. The wisest must become fools to learn of him, or fools they are; the most educated

and cultured mind must submit to this further culture, or else it is nothing but a barren waste in his sight. One thing is a necessity to you all, high or low, rich or poor, queen or beggar—you must sit at Jesus' feet; and all alike must accept his teaching, or you know nothing that can save you.

Some things in this world are necessary, after a measure, but this is necessary without measure; infinitely needful is it that you sit at Jesus' feet, needful now, needful in life; needful in life for peace, in death for rest, and in eternity for bliss. This is needful always. Many things have their uses for youth, others come not into value till old age; but one thing, the one thing, is needful for childhood, and needful for palsied age; it is needful for the ruddy cheek, and the active limb, and needful everywhere and always. In the highest and most emphatic sense, "one thing is needful."

III. Thus much about the necessity, the next word is CONCENTRATION: "One thing is needful." I am glad it says "one thing," because a division of ends and objects is always weakening. A man cannot follow two things well. Our life-flood suffices not to fill two streams or three; there is only enough water, as it were, in our life's brooklet, to turn one wheel. It is a great pity when a man fritters away his energies by being "everything by turns, and nothing long;" trying all things, and mastering nothing. Oh soul, it is well for thee that there is only one thing in this world that is absolutely necessary, give thy whole soul to that. If other things are necessary in a secondary place, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these shall be added unto you."

One thing is needful, and this is well arranged, for we cannot follow two things. If Christ be one of them, we cannot follow another. Is it not written, "No man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Not only would it be very weakening to you to attempt to serve both, but it is absolutely impossible that you should do so. Jesus Christ is a monopolizer of human hearts, he will never accept a portion of our manhood. He bought us altogether, and he will have the whole of our personality. Christ must be everything, or he will be nothing.

He does not love Christ who loves anything as well as Christ, neither does he trust him who trusts in anything besides. Christ must reign alone. "Jesus only," must be the motto of our spirits. It is well for us, therefore, that only one thing is necessary, for only one thing is possible.

It is an unspeakable mercy that the one thing needful is a very simple one. Little child, thou couldst not climb the mountain, but thou canst sit down at Jesus' feet; thou canst not understand hard doctrine, but thou canst love him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Unlearned man, thou who hast no time to acquire earthly lore, if the one thing needful were something that belonged only to the learned, alas for thee; but if thou canst not teach, it is not needful that thou shouldst, it is only needful that thou shouldst learn. Take the Incarnate Wisdom to be thy Master, and sit as a little child at his feet to learn with all thine heart. That is all he asks of thee. Men will have it that they must do something to be saved. They must fret and worry like Martha, but after all, the right way is to end your doing and fretting by sitting down content with Jesus' doing, satisfied with his righteousness and with the merit of his precious blood. The one thing needful is very easy, except to proud hearts, which cannot brook to accept everything gratis, and to be beholden to sovereign mercy. To the poor in spirit it is not only simple but sweet to sit at Jesus' feet. I would be nothing but what he makes me, I would have nothing but what he gives me, I would ask nothing but what he promises me, I would trust in nothing but what he has done for me, and I would desire nothing but what he has prepared for me. To sit at Jesus's feet in humble submission and quiet rest, he the master and I the little child, I the vessel waiting to be filled, and he my fulness, I the mown grass, and he the falling dew, I the rain drop, and he the sun that makes me glisten in life with diamond brilliance, and then exhales me in death to be absorbed in him; this is all in all to me.

Let us remark that, though this is only one thing, and so concentrated, yet it is also comprehensive and contains many things. Imagine not that to sit at Jesus' feet is a very small, unmeaning thing. It means peace, for they who submit to Jesus find peace through his precious blood. It means holiness, for those who learn of Jesus learn no sin, but are instructed in

things lovely and of good repute. It means strength, for they that sit with Jesus, and feed upon him, are girded with his strength; the joy of the Lord is their strength. It means wisdom, for they that learn of the Son of God understand more than the ancients because they keep his statutes. It means zeal, for the love of Christ fires hearts that live upon it, and they that are much with Jesus become like Jesus, so that the zeal of the Lord's house eats them up. If we say that in an army the one thing needful is loyalty to the sovereign, we know what that means; for the loyal soldier will be sure to be obedient to his officers, and if attached to his queen, he will be brave in the day of battle, and do his duty well. If we said that the one thing needful in a family was love, we should not have required a small thing; for love will place husband and wife in their true position; love will produce obedience in children, and diligence in servants. Let love permeate everything, and other virtues will grow out of it, as flowers spring from the soil. So when we say that sitting at Jesus' feet is the one thing needful, we have not uttered a mere truism: it comprehends a world of blessings.

And here would I address a word to the church of God in this country at this present time. She, too, is as Martha, cumbered with much serving. It were her wisdom, and her strength, if she would become more like Mary, and sit at Jesus' feet. Just now we need revival. Oh that God would send it! Oh for a mighty flood of spiritual influences, that would bear the stranded churches right out into a sea of usefulness. But how can we get revival? We shall have it, brethren, when we commune with Christ. When the saints habitually sit at Jesus' feet they will be revived, and of necessity the revival will spread from them, and the hearts of sinners will be touched.

There is great talk now-a-days of union; the walls of the various churches are to be broken down, and the denominations are to be blended. Think not of it in such a fashion; the only union possible, or desirable, is that we all unite to sit at Jesus' feet. It is not allowable that we concede one truth and you another; that is not natural charity, but common treason to Christ. We have no right to yield an atom of the truth of God, under the pretence of charity. Truth is no property of ours; we are only God's stewards, and it behooves us to be faithful to our trust. Neither one

church nor another has any right to bate its testimony one jot, if it be true. To alter the statute-book of Christ is blasphemy. True union will come when all the churches learn of Christ, for Christ does not teach two things opposed to each other. There are not two baptisms in the Bible; we shall not find two sets of dogmas diametrically opposite to each other. If we give up the various things that are of man, and hold fast each of us only that which is of God, we shall be united in principle and in doctrine; and "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" will once again be emblazoned upon the banners of the church of God. Sit at Jesus' feet, O thou church of Christ, and true unity will come to thee.

We hear a great deal about the necessity of controversy. We ought to be ready to answer all that infidels object, so wise men say. Every absurdity of every fool we are to sit down and reply to, and when this labour of Hercules is accomplished, we are to begin again, for by that time new whimsies will be in men's brains, and new lies will have been begotten. Is this so? Am I to do nothing in winning souls and glorifying God, but to spend all my time in finding wind for the nostrils of the wild asses of the desert? Well, let those do it who please, we believe that the settlement of all controversy in the church and for the church would come from the Lord himself, if we believed more fully in him, and waited more upon him for guidance, and if we preached the gospel more in his own strength, and in his own Spirit.

And, as for missions: we appoint our committees, we amend our plans, and suggest schemes.. All very well and good; but missions will never flourish till the church, with regard to missions, sits at Jesus' feet. She will never convert the heathen in her own way: God will give success only when we work in his way. It may be very useful to make translations, and exceedingly beneficial to keep schools; but if I read my Bible right, it is not Christ's way. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," is the law of Jesus Christ, and when the church everywhere, at home and abroad, takes more earnestly to preaching, when the testimony of the truth is perpetual and incessant, in simple language, and popular speech, then Christ the Lord will look upon the church that, like Mary, sits at his feet, and say "Thou hast done thy part," and blessing shall follow. "Thy work is done, and I will give thee thy reward."

For us all, beloved, saints and sinners, one thing is needful: that we always sit, like Mary, at the Master's feet.

IV. The last word is IMMEDIATENESS, and there is no need that we say much upon it. One thing is a necessity, a necessity not of the future only, but of to-day. It is not written, "it shall be needful," on certain coming days, to sit at Jesus's feet; but it is so now. Young man, one thing is necessary to you while yet young; do not postpone it till advanced years. Christian, it is needful for thee to-day to have communion with Christ; do not think of it as indispensable to-morrow or to-night at the communion table; it is needful now. There are dangers thou canst not see, which can only be warded off by present and immediate fellowship with Christ. "One thing is needful." It is not that it was needful in the past, indeed it was so; but it is needful now. It was needful for me in the days of my sinfulness to submit to Christ, it is equally needful for me now. However much you advance, O believer, you never advance beyond this; whatever your experience, or your information, or your ripeness for glory, it is needful still to sit at Jesus' feet. You shall never get into a higher class in the school of wisdom than is the class which Christ teaches; his is the infant class in the school, but it is the highest class also. It is always needful, every moment needful, that we sit at Jesus' feet.

It is needful, I have already said, to the sinner. Life, and health, and peace will come to him when he becomes a disciple of the Crucified. Would God that he might be made so this very morning. There is life in a look at the Crucified One. To depend entirely upon the sinner's Saviour is the sinner's salvation. God bring you to his feet, dear hearers.

But it is equally needful for the saint. Covered with the fruits of righteousness, his root must still cling to the riven rock. You must never imagine, whatever you have done or whatever you have attained, that you are to leave Mary's seat; still must you abide there.

It is the one thing needful for the backslider. If you have fallen never so much, you will rise again if you come to the Master submissively and abide with him. It was the mark of the man who had the devil cast out of

him, that he was clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus; it shall show that you, too, are restored when you learn of your Lord. A seat at Jesus' feet is the place for all Christians to die in, they shall sleep sweetly with their heads in Jesus' bosom: it is the place for them to live in, for joy and bliss are there.

Beloved, I desire for myself never again to be worried with the cares of this church, but to take them all to my Master, and wait at his feet. I desire not to be troubled about my preaching, nor to be cumbered about anything beneath the sun, but to leave all these, as he would have me leave them, in his hands. You who are working in the classes, in the school, or anywhere else, I pray you look well to your fellowship with Jesus. You cannot slay the enemy by throwing away your sword, and nearness to Christ is your battle-axe and weapons of war; you have lost your power when you have left your Lord. One thing is needful—let the rest go. What if we have not learning?—what if we have not eloquence? If we live near to Christ, we have something better than all these; if we abide in him, and he abides in us, we shall go and bring forth fruit, and our fruit shall remain; if he abides in us, we shall enjoy heaven on earth, and be daily preparing of that eternal heaven which is to be our portion. "One thing is needful." God grant it to every one of us!—Amen.

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One Worker Preparing For Another

Now behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight: for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto. - 1 Chronicles 22:14

The building of the temple is an admirable type of the building of the Church of God. I am afraid that there are some present with us at this time who have never helped to build the spiritual temple for Christ. They are not, themselves, living stones. They are no part of God's spiritual house; and they have never helped to bring their cedar, or iron, or gold to the great Builder of the Church. In fact, there may be some here who have rather helped to pull it down, some who have delighted to throw away the stones, and who have tried to hide from the divine Builder the precious material which he intends to use in the sacred edifice. Judge your own hearts; and if you cannot say that you are a living stone, if you have not helped to build up the Church of Christ, may you repent of your sin, and may the grace of God convert you! But if you are workers for the Lord, if your hearts are right with God, I think that I shall be able to say some things that will encourage you to work on, even if you should not for a time see any immediate results from your work.

There were many who helped to build the temple: David gathering the materials; Solomon, the master mason, by whose name the temple would afterwards be called; the princes helping him in the great work; strangers, foreigners, and aliens, who dwelt throughout Israel and Judah; these all took their share, and even the Tyrians and Zidonians had a part in the work. Now, we have here many ministers of God and students, Davids and Solomons; but I pray that many, who are strangers as yet, may be enlisted in this holy service by our great Lord and King, and that some, who are farthest off from Christ, Tyrians and Zidonians, who have gone far away from God, may be enabled, by divine grace, to contribute their share to this glorious work of building a house for the living God, a house

not made of gold, and silver, and stone, and timber, but a spiritual house for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I. In considering our text, let us notice, first, that DAVID HAD ZEALOUSLY DONE HIS PART, although he might not build the temple. There are many servants of God whose names are little known, who, nevertheless, are doing a work that is essential to the building up of the Church of God. I have known many such, who have never lived to realize any great success; their names have never been written upon any great temples that have been built; but, nevertheless, they have worthily done their part, even as David did.

You see, then, first, that David had gathered the materials. Many a man collects people together, and yet he has not the fashioning of them. He is the founder of a Christian congregation; but he does not live to see many conversions. He gets together the raw materials upon which another shall work. He ploughs and he sows; but it wants another man to come and water the seed, and perhaps another to gather the harvest. Still, the sower did his work, and deserves to be remembered for what he did. David did his part of the work, in getting together the materials for the temple.

Besides which, he fashioned some of the materials. He had the stone cut from the quarry, and many of them shaped to take their places, by-and-by, in silence in the temple, when it should be reared without sound of hammer or axe. So there are teachers and preachers who help to form the characters of their scholars and hearers, by working away upon their minds and hearts. They will never build up a great church; but still they are knocking the rough edges off the stones. They are preparing and fashioning them; and by-and-by the builder will come and make good use of them.

David had prepared the way for Solomon's temple. It was by his fighting that the time of peace came, in which the temple could be erected. Though he is called a man of blood, yet it is needful that the foes of Israel should be overthrown. There could be no peace till her adversaries had been crushed; and David did that. You do not hear much about the men who prepare the way for others, Somebody else comes along, and

apparently does all the work; and his name is widely known and honoured; but God remembers the heralds, the pioneers, the men who prepare the way, the men who, by casting out devils, routing grievous errors, and working needful reforms, prepare the way for the triumphal progress of the gospel.

Moreover, David found the site for the temple. He discovered it; he purchased it; and he handed it over to Solomon. We do not always remember the men who prepare the sites for the Lord's temples. Luther is rightly remembered; but there were reformers before Luther. There were hundreds of men and women who burned for Christ, or who perished in prison, or who were put to cruel deaths for the gospel. Luther comes when the occasion has been made for him, and when a site has been cleared for him upon which to build the temple of God. But God remembers all those pre-Reformation heroes. It may be your lot, dear friend, to clear a site, and to make the occasion for others; and you may die before you see even a cornerstone of your work laid; for it will be yours when it is finished, and God will remember what you have done.

Further, it was David who received the plans from God. The Lord wrote upon his heart what he would have done. He told him, even to the weight of the candlesticks and lamps, everything that was to be arranged. Solomon, wise as he was, did not plan the temple. He had to borrow the designs from his father, who received them direct from God. Many a man is far-seeing; he gets the plan of the gospel into his heart, he sees a way in which great things can be done, and yet he is scarcely permitted to put his own hand to the work. Another will come by-and-by, and will carry out the plan that the first one received; but he must not forget the first man, who went into the secret place of the Most High, and learned in the place of thunder what God would have his people do.

David did one thing more; before he died, he gave a solemn charge to others; he charged Solomon, and the princes, and all the people, to carry out the work of building the temple. I revere the man who, in his old age, when there is weight in every syllable that he utters, concludes his life by urging others to carry on the work of Christ. It is something to gather about your last bed young men who have years of usefulness before them,

and to lay upon their consciousness and their heart the duty of preaching Christ crucified, and winning the souls of men for the Lord.

So you see that David had done his part toward the building of the temple. I should like to ask every believer here, Have you done your part? You are a child of God; God has loved you, and chosen you; you have been redeemed with precious blood. You know better than to think of working in order to save yourself; you are saved; but have you diligently done all that you can for your Lord and Master? It was well said, in the prayer-meeting before this service, that there are several thousand members of this church who could not preach, and there were some who did preach of whom the same thing might be said, for it was poor preaching, after all; and our brother said in prayer, "Lord, help us who cannot preach, to pray for the man who does!" Have you, dear friend, who cannot preach, made a point of praying for the pastor of the church to which you belong? It is a great sin on the part of church-members if they do not daily sustain their pastor by their prayers.

Then there is much else that you can do for Christ, in your family, in your business, and in the neighbourhood where you live. Could you go to bed to-night, and there close your eyes for the last time, feeling, "I have finished the work which God gave me to do. I have done all that I could for the winning of souls"? I am afraid that I address some who have a talent wrapped in a napkin, hidden away in the earth. My dear man, go home, and dig it up, before it gets altogether covered with rust, to bear witness against you. Take it up, and put it out to heavenly interest, that your Lord may have what he is entitled to receive. O Christian men and women, there must be very much unused energy in the Church of God! We have a great dynamo that is never used. Oh, that each one would do his own part, even as David did his!

We shall soon be gone; our day lasts not very long. "The night cometh when no man can work." Shall it be said of you, or of me, that we wasted our daylight; and then, when the evening shadows came, we were uneasy and unhappy, and though saved by divine grace, we died with sad expressions of regret for wasted opportunities? It is not very long that I sat by the bedside of one who was wealthy, I might say very wealthy. I

prayed with him. I had hoped to have found him rejoicing in the Lord, for I knew that he was a child of God; but he was a child of God with a little malformation about the fingers. He could never open his hand as he ought to have done. As I sat by his side, he said, "Pray God, with all your might, that I may live three months, that I may have the opportunity of using my wealth in the cause of Christ." He did not live much more than three hours after he said that. Oh, that he had woken up a little sooner to do for the Master's church and cause what he ought to have done! Then he would not have had that regret to trouble him in his last hours. He knew the value of the precious blood, and he was resting in it; and I had great joy in knowing that all his hope and all his trust were in his Lord, and he was saved; but it was with a great deal of regret and trembling. I would spare any of you who have wealth such trouble on your dying bed.

If there is a young man here, who has the ability to preach the gospel, or to be doing something for Christ, and he is doing nothing, I am sure that it will be a pain to him one of these days. When conscience is thoroughly aroused, and his heart is getting nearer to God than it has been, he will bitterly regret that he did not avail himself of every occasion to talk of Christ, and seek to bring souls to him. I should like these practical thoughts to go round these galleries, and through this area, till some men and women shall say, "We have not done our part, as David did; but by God's grace we will do so, and he shall have all the praise."

That is my first head, then, David had zealously done his part.

II. But, secondly, there is a remarkable fact in the text, **DAVID HAD DONE HIS PART IN TROUBLE**. Read it: "Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold;" and so on. In the margin of your Bibles, you will find the words, "in my poverty." It is strange that David should talk about poverty when his gifts amounted to many millions of pounds.

David thought little of what he had prepared. He calls it poverty, I think, because it is the way of the saints to count anything that they do for God to be very little. The most generous men in the world think the least of what they give to God's cause. David, with his millions that he gives, says,

"In my poverty I have prepared for the house of the Lord." As he looked at the gold and silver, he said to himself, "What is all this to God?" And the brass and the iron, that could not be reckoned, it was so much and so costly; he thought it was all nothing to Jehovah, who fills heaven and earth, whose grandeur and glory are altogether unspeakable. If you have done the most that you can for God, you will sit down, and weep that you cannot do ten times as much. You that do little for the Lord will be like a hen with one chick; you will think a great deal of it. But if you have a great number of works, and you are doing much for Christ, you will wish that you could do a hundred times as much. Your song will be,—

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"

Oh, to be multiplied a thousand-fold, that we might, anywhere and everywhere, serve Jesus with heart, and mind, and soul, and strength! So, David here considers that what he did was very little.

Yet, it was proof of his sincerity. that he should be saving all this wealth, and preparing for the house of his God in the time of trouble, was a proof of great sincerity. Some Christians want to have all sunshiny weather, and the birds must sing all day and all night to please them. If they receive a rebuke or somebody seems a little cold to them, they will do no more. I have seen many, who called themselves Christians, who were like a silly child at play, who says, when something offends him, "I won't play anymore." They run away at the first rough word that they hear. But David, in the day of his trouble, when his heart was ready to break, still went on with his great work of providing for the house of God. Some who have attended this house of prayer have been absent, and when we have enquired the reason, they have said that they had become so poor that they did not like to come. Oh, dear friends, we would like to see you, however poor you are! Why, if you are in trouble, you should come all the more; for where could you go to find comfort better than to the house of God? Never, I pray you, stay away on account of poverty. David said that he had prepared for the house of his God in the time of his trouble; and that proved his sincerity. One said to me, "Ever since I have been a Christian, everything has seemed to go wrong with me." Suppose that

everything should be taken away from you, should you not be grateful that you have an eternal treasure in heaven, and that these losses, which might have broken your heart if you have not known the Saviour, are now sent in heavenly discipline to you, and are working for your good? It shows that a man is right with God when he can walk with Christ in the mire and in the slough. God does not want you to wear silver slippers, and to walk on a well-mown, well-rolled grassy lawn, all the way to heaven.

David prepared for the house of the Lord in his trouble; and I have no doubt that it was a salve to his sorrow. To have something to do for Jesus, and to go right on with it, is one of the best ways to get over a bereavement, or any other mental depression. If you can pursue some great object, you will not feel that you are living for nothing. You will not sit down in despair; for, whatever your trouble may be, you will still have this to live for, "I want to help in building the Church of God, and I will do my part in it whatever happens to me. Come poverty or wealth, come sickness or health, come life or death, as long as there is breath in my body, I will go on with the work that God has given me to do." Do I speak to any who are in great trouble? If you are a Christian, the best advice that I can give you is this, get to work for Christ, and you will forget your trouble. If you are not a Christian, I advise you to trust the Saviour at once, for he is the only solace of spiritual sorrow.

Again, it was an incentive to service when David, in his trouble, prepared for the house of the Lord. There were many things in trouble that would tend to damp his ardour, and make him feel as if he could not hold on any longer; but he said to himself, "I must go on with this work for God. His temple must be 'exceeding magnificent', and my son Solomon must build it, so I must go on gathering the materials." So he just roused himself afresh, and went on with his work with new earnestness, whenever his trouble would otherwise have depressed him.

It must also have given an elevation to David's whole life. To have a noble purpose, and to pursue that purpose with all your might, prevents your being like "dumb driven cattle", and lifts you out of the mist and fog of the valley, and sets your feet upon the hill-top, where you can commune

with God. I would suggest to your younger friends that they should begin their Christian life with a high purpose, and that they should never forget that purpose; and if trouble should come, they should say, "Let it come; my face is set, like a flint, to do this work to which my Lord has called me, and I will pursue it with all my might." It may seem as if there were no spiritual help in such advice as this; but, believe me, there is. If God shall give you grace to go on with your life-work, he will thereby give you grace to overcome your life-trouble.

Ye would be like your Master, ask not to have a smooth path, and great success. Remember what a life of sorrow he lived. He was grief's close acquaintance. Yet although he saw but a small Church rising before his bodily eye, he knew that he was doing the work that God had given him to do, and he went on with it through agony and bloody sweat, through shame and spitting. He was not more in earnest when he rode in state through the streets of Jerusalem than he was when he hung on the cross of Calvary. He was resolved to do his work; and in trouble he did it, and he amassed treasure beyond all conception for the building of his Church. Riches of grace and wonders of glory he gathered together by his suffering and his death. If you would be like your Lord, you must be able to say with David, "Behold, in my trouble, I have prepared for the house of the Lord." God give his troubled ones to enter into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in this respect!

III. I am glad that I have come to my third point, for my strength well-nigh fails me. What I have to say here is this: **DAVID'S WORK FITS ON TO THE WORK OF ANOTHER.** That should be a great joy to some of you who do not see much coming of what you are doing. Your work is going to fit on to somebody else's work.

This is the order of God's providence for his Church. It does not happen that he gives a whole piece of work to one man; but he seems to say to him, "You go and do so much; then I will send somebody else to do the rest." How this ought to cheer some of you up, the thought that your work may be no failure, though in itself it may seem to be so, because it fits on to the work of somebody else who is coming after you, and so it will be very far from a failure! You have sometimes seen a man take a contract to

put in the foundations of a house, and to carry it up to a certain height. He has done that; he will not be the builder of that house; that will be the work of the next contractor, who carries up the walls, and puts on the roof, and so forth. Yes, but he who did the foundation-work did a great deal, and he is as much the builder of the house as the man who carries up the walls. So, if you go to a country town or village, and you preach the gospel to a few poor folk, you may never have seemed very successful; but you have been preparing the way for somebody else who is coming after you.

I am told that my venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, used often, in his pulpit, to pray for somebody, of whom he knew nothing, who would follow him in the ministry of the church, and greatly increase it. He seemed to have in his mind's eye some young man, who, in after years, would greatly enlarge the number of the flock, and he often prayed for him. He died, and passed away to heaven, about the time that I was born. Older members of the church have told me that they have read to answer to Dr. Rippon's prayers in the blessing that has been given to us these many years. If you keep your eyes open, you will see the same thing happen again. You will notice how one shall do his work, which shall be necessary to some larger work that somebody else will do after him. This is God's way, so that the second man, the Solomon coming after David, may do his work all the better because of what his father has done before him. Solomon had not to spend years in collecting the materials for the temple; he might not have got through the building if he had that task. His good old father had done all that for him; and all that he had to do was to spend the money that David had gathered, work up the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, bring in the big stones, and put them in their places, and build the house for God. I daresay that Solomon often thought gratefully of his father David, and what he had done; and you and I, if God blesses us, ought always to think with thanksgiving of the Davids who went before us. If you have success in your class, my sisters, remember that there was an excellent Christian woman who had the class before you. You come, young man, into the Sunday-school, and you think that you must be somebody very great because you have had several conversions in your class. How about the brother who had given up the class through ill-health? You took his place: who knows which of you will

have the honour at the last great day? I was about to say, Who cares? For we do not live for honour, we live to serve God; and if I can serve God best by digging out the cellar, and you can serve God best by throwing out that ornamental bay window, my brother, you go on with your bay window, and I will go on with my cellar, for what matters it what we do so long as the house is built, and God is glorified thereby? It is the way of God in providence to set one man to do part of a work which pieces on to that of another man.

But this is a terrible blow at self. Self says, "I like to begin something of my own, and I like to carry it out; I do not want any interference from other people." A friend proposed, the other day, to give you a little help in your service. You looked at him as if he had been a thief. You do not want any help; you are quite up to the mark; you are like a waggon and four horses, and a dog under the waggon as well! there is everything about you that is wanted; you need no help from anybody; you can do all things almost without the help of God! I am very sorry for you if that is your opinion. If you never get into God's service, he may say to you, "You shall never begin anything; but shall always come in as the second man;" or, "You shall never finish anything; you shall always be getting ready for somebody else." It is well to have an ambition not to build upon another man's foundation; but do not carry that idea too far. If there is a good foundation laid by another man, and you can finish the structure, be thankful that he has done his part, and rejoice that you are permitted to carry on his work. It is God's way of striking a blow at your personal pride by allowing one man's work to fit on to another's.

I believe that it is good for the work to have a change of workers. I am glad that David did not live any longer; for he could not have built the temple. David must die. He has had a good time of service. He has gathered all the materials for the temple. Solomon comes, with young blood and youthful vigour, and carries on the work. Sometimes, the best thing that some of us old folk can do is to go home, and go to heaven, and let some younger man come, and do our work. I know that there are a great many lamentations about the death of Dr. So-and-So, and Mr. So-and-So; but why? Do you not think that, after all, God can find as good men as those that he has found already? He made those good men, and

he is not short of power; he can make others just as good as they have been. I was present at a funeral, where I heard a prayer that rather shocked me. Some brother had said that God could raise up another minister equal to the one that was in the coffin; but prayer was offered by another man, who said that this preacher had been eyes to his blindness, feet to his lameness, and I do not know what beside; and then he said, "Thy poor unworthy dust does not think that thou ever canst or wilt raise up another man like him." So he had not an omnipotent God; but you and I have, and with an omnipotent God it is for the good of the work that David should go to his rest, and that Solomon should come in, and carry on the work.

Certainly, this creates unity in the Church of God. If we all had a work of our own, and were shut up to do it, we should not know one another; but now I cannot do my work without your help, my dear friends, and, in some respects, you cannot do your work without my help. We are members one of another, and one helps the other. I hope that I shall never have to do without you. God bless you for all your efficient help! In many Christian works you will have to do without me, one of these days; but that will not matter. There will be somebody who will carry on the work of the Lord; and so long as the work goes on, what matter who does it? God buries the workman, but the devil himself cannot bury the work. The work is everlasting, though the workmen die. We pass away, as star by star grows dim; but the eternal light is never-fading. God shall have the victory. His Son shall come in his glory. His Spirit shall be poured out among the people; and though it be neither this man, nor that, nor the other, God will find the man to the world's end who will carry on his cause, and give him the glory.

This leaves a place for those who come after. On thing David said to Solomon I like very much, "Thou mayest add thereto." I have quoted that sometimes when the collection has been rather small. I have said to each of our friends who were counting the money, "Thou mayest add thereto." It is not all a bad text for a collection-sermon; but it may also be used in many other ways.

Here are certain preachers of the gospel. Cannot I put my hand on some

young man's shoulder, and say to him, "Thou mayest add thereto; thou hast a good voice; thou hast an active brain; begin to speak for God; there are numbers of godly men in the gospel ministry; if thou art called of God, thou mayest add thereto"? We have a good Sunday-school, though some of you have never seen it. We have a number of loving and earnest teachers; "thou mayest add thereto." Go thou, and teach likewise; or engage in some other work for which the Lord has qualified you.

I wonder whether there is an unconverted man here this evening, or unconverted woman, whom God has ordained to bless, and to whom he will speak to-night, some stranger whom he will bring in by his almighty grace, some servant of the devil who shall to-night be made a servant of Christ. My Master has a large number of servants; "thou mayest add thereto." If thou wilt yield thyself to Christ, thou mayest come, and help God's people. We want recruits; we are always wanting them. May God lead some, who have been on the side of sin and self, to come out, and say, "Set my name down amongst God's people. By the grace of God, I am going to be on Christ's side, and help to build his temple." Come along, my brother; come along, my sister; we are glad of your help. The work is not all done yet; you are not too late to fight the Lord's battles, nor to win the crown of the victors. The Lord has a large army of the soldiers of the cross; and "thou mayest add thereto." God save thee! Christ bless thee! The Spirit inspire thee! May it be so with very many, for Christ's sake! Amen.

*This sermon is intended for reading on the first anniversary of the beloved preacher's birthday since his death. While he was with us, he always looked for special contributions for the Stockwell Orphanage at this season. He did not seek birthday presents for himself; but he desired that all friends, who wished to show their love to him, would do so by helping to maintain his fatherless family of 500 children. We trust that no one will allow this useful institution to suffer because his voice can no longer plead for it; but that, through this sermon, each reader will hear him saying, "Dear friend, the Orphanage still needs thy loving and generous assistance; thou hast often helped it by thy gifts in the past, and thou mayest add hereto; or if thou hast not given to it, others have, and thou mayest add thereto."

Contributions will be gratefully received by the Treasurer, Spurgeons' orphan Home, Stockwell Orphanage, Chapman Road, London. Collecting-cards and boxes may be obtained of the Secretary. The Annual Festival will be held on Wednesday afternoon and evening, June 22nd. All friends are invited to be present.

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The Only Atoning Priest

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. - Hebrews 10:11-14

We shall have this morning to repeat a truth which has sounded forth from this pulpit many hundreds of times; but we shall offer no apology for our repetitions, seeing that the truth to be preached is one which cannot too often be proclaimed. If you lift up your eyes at night to the stars what a wonderful variety of celestial scenery is there! The astronomer can turn his telescope first to one quarter of the heavens, and then to another, and find an endless change in the sublimities which meet his gaze. Such are the doctrines of the gospel; they are full of variety and beauty, and glory: but yet in the heavens one or two conspicuous constellations are more often regarded by the human eye than all the rest put together. The mariner looks for the Great Bear, the pointers, and the pole star; or, if he should cross the equator, he gazes on the southern cross. Though these stars have been often looked upon, it is never thought to be superfluous that practical men should still observe them. Night by night they have their watchers; for by them ten thousand sails are steered. I should suppose that in those days, now happily past, when

slavery reigned in the Southern States of America, the Negro if he desired liberty for his boy would be sure, whatever else of the stars he did not teach him, to point out to him the star of liberty. "Know well, my child, those friendly stars which point to the lone star of liberty. Follow that light till it leads you to a land. There fetters no longer clank on human limbs." Even so it seems to me that certain doctrines, and especially the doctrines of atonement and justification by faith, are like these guiding stars; and we ought frequently to point them out, make sure that our children know them, and that all who listen to us, whatever else they may be mistaken about, are clear about these, the guides of men to the haven of freedom and eternal rest. I believe if I should preach to you the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ every Sabbath-day and that twice, and nothing else, my ministry would not be unprofitable, perhaps it might be more profitable than it is; so we are coming to the same truth which we handled last Sabbath evening. Many dishes are put upon the table at intervals, but bread and salt are always placed there; and so we will have the atonement again, and again, and again; for this is the bread and salt of the gospel feast.

I purpose, this morning, to handle the text thus. First, we will read, mark, and learn it; and then, secondly, we will ask God's grace that we may inwardly digest it.

I. Come, then, first of all to THE READING, MARKING, AND LEARNING OF IT; and you will observe that in it there are three things very clearly stated. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus, our great High Priest, is set forth first by way of contrast; then its character is described; and, then, thirdly, its consequences are mentioned. Briefly upon each.

First, it is set forth by way of contrast—contrast with that ancient dispensation which was of divine origin, which conveyed much blessing to Israel, and which had the divine approval resting upon it. In that old dispensation, the first point mentioned in the text is, that there were many priests. "For every priest standeth"—implying that there were several. There were many priests at the same time—the sacrifices of the temple were too numerous to have been all of them performed by one man: all the descendants of Aaron were set apart to this work, and even

then they required the aid of the Levites in certain inferior duties. And as there were many priests at one time, so there were many in succession. As a priest died, he was succeeded by his sons. By reason of infirmity, they were not able to continue in their office even through the whole of their lifetime; there was a certain period at which they were commanded to surrender their office to younger men. By reason of mortality the priesthood was perpetually changing; one high priest died, and was succeeded by another. Now the reason for the existence of many priests was this, that no one priest had accomplished the work of expiation. The good man has gone to his fathers and offered up the last of the morning lambs—but the morning lambs must still be offered. The high priest is dead, and there shall be no more opportunity for him to enter into that which is within the veil, but there must be a new high priest appointed, for the work is not finished. There were many priests, and as one generation passed away, another inherited the mitre. Now, herein is the glory of Christ that he is but one, and to this our attention is called by the apostle; that whereas there were many priests, and the sacrifices were hereby proved to be incomplete, since others had to take up the work; here is but one priest for ever, and he has finished his work, and therefore sits down at the right hand of God.

In further contrast, we observe that as there were many priests, so there were many sacrifices for sins. The sacrifice was offered once, but sin was not put away, and therefore had to be offered again. The great day of atonement came every year, wherein sin was afresh brought to remembrance. There was a day of atonement last year, but the people are unforgiven, and there must be a day of atonement this year; and when that day is over and the priest has come forth in his holy and beautiful apparel, with the breastplate gleaming in the light of God, Israel may rejoice for awhile, but there is one thought that will sadden her; there must be an atonement day next year, for sin still remaineth upon Israel, notwithstanding all that the house of Aaron can do by all their sacrifices. Yea, and moreover, remembrance of sin was of necessity made every day. There was the lamb for the morning, the innocent victim was slaughtered and burned; but the morning sacrifice did not put away the day's sin, for as the sun began to descend in the west another victim must be brought, and so on each morning and each night, victim, victim, victim, sacrifice,

sacrifice, sacrifice, because the expiation was always incomplete. But our blessed Lord, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," was sacrificed but once, and that one sacrifice hath completed his expiatory work. In very truth his was a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than theirs.

Follow the contrast a little further, and observe the Apostle's assertion that the repeated sacrifices of the law could never take away sin. Those must have been strangely blind who thought they could. How could the blood of bulls and of goats put away sin? What conceivable connection can there be, except in symbol, between the death pangs of a beast and the sin of a man before God? The principle of substitution was by the legal sacrifices clearly set forth, but that was all; those offerings did not and could not provide the actual substitute. The principle of vicarious sacrifice they plainly unfolded, but they provided no real sin-offering. How could they? Where but in the Christ of God could a propitiation be found? Where else is there one who could in our nature make recompense to the injured law of God?

You will observe, dear brethren, that the words used in the text are these, "Can never take away sin." The word is, "Can never strip off sin." As if our sins were like filthy garments—the vestures of our disgrace—these could not be taken from us by the daily ministering of priests. There was no power in their sacrifices to remove the polluted coverings. Yet the priests were very diligent, for "every priest standeth" in the posture of activity, and they were persevering too, for "every priest standeth daily." They were obedient too, for they did not offer sacrifices according to their own devices, but, as the text saith, "the same sacrifices"—that is to say, such as were ordained of God. The priests were both diligent, constant, and obedient, and the principle of the truth was in their offerings—viz., the doctrine of substitution; yet sin still remained upon the consciences of the offerers, and none of them were made perfect.

Mark well one inference from this. If the sacrifices which were presented reverently and perpetually, according to God's own command, and were presented by men about whose priesthood there could be no manner of question—for they had received it indisputably of the Lord—if these

offerings were of no service to the taking away of sin, it is clear enough that the offerings of so-called priests in these modern times cannot have any efficacy. Here is a priesthood, certainly appointed of God, offering victims ordained by divine order, and yet their service does not put away sin. How much less, then, can it be wise to trust in doubtful priests, who present sacrifices unwarranted by the word of God. Their descent cannot be proved, their title their pretensions of one sect are ridiculed by another, they are all alike deceivers; have done with them and rest alone in Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession.

If Jerusalem has no sacrifice in all her flocks, what use can it be to look to Rome? If Aaron's seed cannot put away sin, to what end shall we look to the shavelings of Antichrist?

Following the apostle's words, we come to the character of our Lord's sacrifice, and we perceive, in reading, that his priesthood was personal, and entirely within himself. There is but one true atoning priest. The twelfth verse says, "this man." The word "man" is not in the original; it is "this," "this priest," if you will; "this man," if you please; but its vagueness may make us think that the apostle scarcely knew what to say. You see the stars and the moon in their brightness, but suddenly they are all eclipsed and lost in a superior light. What can this glory be which has paled their fires? It is the sun rising in his strength. So, while we are beholding the priesthood of Aaron with all its excellence, it suddenly ceases to shine, because of the glory which excelleth, the radiant presence of one, for whom, like heaven's manna, it is not easy to find one fully descriptive name. Shall we call him "man?" Blessed be his name; he is so, our near kinsman, the "Son of Man." Shall we call him "priest?" He is so. Blessed be his name; he is the true Melchisedec. Shall we call him "God?" Well may we do so, for he counts it not robbery to be equal with God. But this one divinely mysterious person—this unique and solitary high-priest, accomplishes what the many priests of Aaron's race could not compass. They were weak, but he is allsufficient. He has wrought out eternal redemption, and made an end of sin.

Note well, that none stand with him at the altar; none is appointed to aid him, neither before him nor after him is there one to share his office. He

is without father, without mother, without predecessor, and without successor. He stands alone and by himself, this glorious one who looked and there was no man, and therefore his own arm brought salvation; he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him. Jesus, the sole sacrificing priest of our profession, has completed what the long line of the Levitical priesthood must have left for ever incomplete.

And we are told further, by the apostle, that as there was but one priest, so there was only one sacrifice. He "offered one sacrifice for sins." He himself was the sacrifice; his body the altar, himself the priest, himself also the victim. On Calvary's tree he presented himself a substitute for human guilt, and there he bore the crushing weight of Jehovah's wrath in his own body, on the behalf of all his people. On him their sins were laid, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and there he, in their stead, suffered what was due to the righteousness of God, and made atonement to divine justice for the sins of his people. This was done, not by many offerings, but by one sacrifice, and that one alone. Jesus offered no other sacrifice: he had never made one before, nor since, nor will he present another sacrifice in the future. His sin offering is one.

The text adds further that, as there was but one sacrifice, so it was but once offered for ever, or, as puts it, "Once for all." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." There is in the Scriptures no such idea as that of Christ perpetually offering himself; it is a childish invention of superstition. We are expressly told that he offered himself "once." Under the law the lamb was offered many times, the same sacrifices were repeated; but our Lord exclaimed, "It is finished," and concluded all his sacrificing works. He "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." I do not know how your Bibles happen to be marked as to the comma in the passage; mine, now before me, reads thus:—"After he had offered one sacrifice for sin for ever sat down;" but that which I use at home is marked in the other way—"After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down." We do not quite know where the comma should be; some of the best scholars maintain that it should be joined to the preceding words, others that it belongs to the succeeding. It does not involve any point of doctrine; and it may be read whichever way you please, without

error. I think, however, the preponderating testimony is in favor of its being read, "he offered one sacrifice for sins for ever;" at any rate those words express a great and precious truth. Look back as far as you can, there was no sacrifice for sins, except the "lamb slain from before the foundation of the world;" look on as far as you will, till this present dispensation shall have completed its circle, and men shall have passed the judgment-seat, and you shall find no atonement for sin except this one—it stands alone, shining as a lone star, or a solitary rock in the midst of a raging sea. The propitiation which God has set forth was and ever must be one. The Lord Jesus offered himself once, once only, once only for ever: there is no other atoning priest, no other sacrifice, and there is no repetition of that one sacrifice.

Now we go on to notice the results of Christ's one offering, which are, in the text, described as threefold—towards himself, his enemies, and his people.

Towards himself: After he had offered one sacrifice for sins he for ever sat down at the right hand of God. Every priest, under the old dispensation, stood; but this man sat down, and the posture is very instructive. The typical priests stood because there was work to do; still must they present their sacrifices; but our Lord sits down because there is no more sacrificial work to do; atonement is complete, he has finished his task. There were no seats in the tabernacle. Observe the Levitical descriptions and you will see that there were no resting-places for the priests in the holy place. Not only were none allowed to sit, but there was nothing whatever to sit upon. According to the rabbis, the king might sit in the holy places, and, perhaps, David did sit there; if so, he was a striking type of Christ sitting as king. A priest never sat in the tabernacle, he was under a dispensation which did not afford rest, and was not intended to give it, a covenant of works which gives the soul no repose. Jesus sits in the holy of holies, and herein we see that his work is finished.

There is more teaching in the passage. He "sat down;" this shows that he took possession of the holy place. Under the law, when the priest had done his work, what did he do? He went home. Neither the temple nor the tabernacle was his home. If you had asked a priest, "Where dwellest

thou?" he would have said, "amongst the tribe of Levi yonder I have my abode." But this man, when he had finished his work, sat down in the holy place, because he was at home, not a servant only but a son, yea, and Lord of the whole house; and, therefore, he took his own seat therein by right. It is a joyful truth that he did this representatively, to show us that while the law gave no permanent possession, and could not establish the seed of Israel in possession of sacred privileges, the gospel gives us an abiding place amongst the children of God, who dwell in his house for ever.

The apostle tells us where this seat of Christ was. He says, he "sat down at the right hand of God." This indicates the highest glory possible; our poet calls it

"The highest place that heaven affords."

There was no nobler position, or Jesus should have had it. Note the remark of this same apostle in the first chapter of this epistle: "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou at my right hand?" Angels do not sit at the right hand of God; they are constantly in the place of service, and therefore they stand ready to fly on their Master's commands; but Jesus sits in the highest seat as Lord over his own house, clothed with honor and dignity, enthroned in the place of favor at the right hand of God. Sitting there he is to be viewed as clothed with everlasting power, "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "Exalted to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins;" no more the "despised and rejected, the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," no more in weakness and dishonor taken out to die; he sits as a king upon his throne, distributing royal bounties, coequal with Jehovah himself. As King of kings, Jesus Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father. So much with regard to the result of the Redeemer's passion in reference to himself.

Now, observe carefully the result of his offering with regard to his enemies. He sits there "expecting till they be made his footstool." They are crushed already; sin which is the sting of death has been removed, and the law which was the strength of sin has been satisfied. Sin being

put away by Christ's death, he has effectually broken the jawteeth of all his enemies. When Jesus Christ offered himself unto God he fulfilled that ancient promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Christ has set his foot upon the old dragon's head, and crushed out his power. Still, however, a feeble fight is kept up; feeble, I say, for so it is to Christ, though to us it seems vigorous. Sin and Satan within us, and all Christ's enemies without us, including death itself, are vainly raging against the Christ of God, for every day they are being put beneath his feet; every day as the battle rages the victory turns unto the enthroned Christ. In us I trust sin has been put beneath Christ's feet; in thousands of others it shall yet be so. Jesus upon the throne expects the growth of that victory till all his enemies shall be utterly and ignominiously beaten. "O long expected day, begin!" Father, fulfill thy Son's expectations, for thy saints expect it in him. Let the time come when every enemy shall be beneath his feet.

We will not tarry, however, on that, but close this exposition of the words of the text by noticing the effect of Christ's death upon his own people. We are informed that he hath "perfected" them. What a glorious word! Those for whom Christ has died were perfected by his death. It does not mean that he made them perfect in characters so that they are no longer sinners, but that he made those for whom he died perfectly free from the guilt of sin. When Christ took their sins upon himself, sin remained no longer upon them, for it could not be in two places at one and the same time; if it was on Christ it was not upon them; they were acquitted at the bar of God when Christ was, on their behalf, "numbered with the transgressors." When Jesus suffered the penalty due to his people's sins to the last jot and tittle, then their sins ceased to be, and the covenant was fulfilled: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more for ever." There was a clean sweep made of sin: "He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin;" and that for all his people. They want no other washing, no further purging, as far as pardon of sin and acceptance with God in the matter of justification are concerned, for they are all perfected by his sacrifice.

His people are described in the text as "them that are sanctified," and you must beware of misunderstanding that word as though it meant those

who are made perfectly holy in character. The word implies an inward work of grace, but it means a great deal more. The passage should be read "He hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified," for it is in the present in the Greek. The text is not to be made to say that those who are perfectly sanctified are perfected, that would be a common-place, self-evident truth; but the great high priest perfected for ever those who are being sanctified. Now, sanctification means, primarily, the setting apart of a people by God to be holy to himself. Election is sanctification virtually; all God's people were sanctified—set apart and made holy to the Lord—in the eternal purpose and sovereign decree or ever the earth was. Christ has by his death perfected all who were sanctified or set apart in election. This purpose of sanctification is carried out further when those set apart are called out by grace. When effectual grace separates men from the world by conversion and regeneration, then they become, in another sense, the sanctified; they are set apart even as Christ set apart himself, dedicated to God's service, and separated from sinners. As the work which began at regeneration is continued and carried on in them, they are in another aspect sanctified; they are realising in themselves that sanctification or dedication to God, which was theirs from before the foundation of the world. The text relates not only to those in heaven who are perfectly sanctified, but it relates to all who were set apart in the purposes of grace, that as far as their pardon and justification are concerned, Christ perfected them for ever when he offered up himself without spot unto God.

II. We have thus studied the interpretation of the words, reading, marking, and learning them. Now, I ask your earnest attention while we try to DIGEST THESE TRUTHS. It is in the digestion that the real nutriment shall come to our hearts.

All ye who desire eternal life lend me your ears, for this matter concerns you—observe that the whole business of this passage concerns sinners. The verse speaks about the Jewish priests who offered sacrifices for sins, and then it further speaks concerning Christ Jesus who has put away sin. O ye guilty, the gospel is meant for you. If there be any of you who are innocent and pure, and without spot, for you I have no words of consolation; but oh, ye sinners, the gospel is for you, for you the

priesthood and the substitution of Jesus, for you his death on earth, for you his reign and power in heaven. This fact ought to encourage every trembling conscience. Are any of you saying, "Ah, I shall never be saved, I am so guilty?" Believe not that lie of Satan. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." The gospel has for its special aim and intent the putting away of sin, and therefore it is suitable to your case.

Hearken then further to me. See in the text the position out of which you should labor to escape. It is the position of those who stand daily ministering and daily offering sacrifices which can never put away sin. You are seeking mercy and I know what you are doing; you are going about to establish a righteousness of your own. You thought, "I will pray very regularly,"—you have done so for months, but prayers can never put away sin. What is there in prayer itself that can have merit in it to make atonement for sin? You have read the Scriptures regularly, for which I am most glad, but this you always ought to have done, and if you now do it most commendably, in what way will that put away sin? "Ah, but I have been a regular attendant at a place of worship." It is well you should, for "faith cometh by hearing;" but I see no connection between the mere fact of your sitting in a place of worship and the putting away of sin; you know it has not eased your conscience yet, but has even increased your sense of sin. Perhaps some of you have for years been trying to save yourselves, and you have got no further; you feel as if you were further off than ever you were. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which profiteth not?" Why stand you daily at the altar offering that which can never put away sin? It would be infinitely wiser to flee to the sacrifice which can atone.

Now, follow on the text, and, oh, may it come into your very soul, for its practical teaching is that the one sole object of faith for the pardon of sin, is the man, the priest, Christ Jesus. "This man," says the Apostle, "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." If thou wouldst have peace of heart, thou must get it only from this one glorious person, the Christ of God. I tell thee solemnly, thou wilt damn thyself by thy prayers, and thy tears, and thy repentings, and thy church goings, and thy chapel goings, as easily as by blasphemy and fornication, if thou trustest in them; for if thou makest

a Savior and an idol of thy best works, they are accursed. Though thine idol be of purest gold, it is as much an abomination unto the living God as if thou hadst made it of filth. There must be no looking anywhere but to Jesus, not in any measure or degree. He who looks partly to Jesus, and partly to himself, looks not to Christ at all. If a man shall put one foot upon the land and the other on the sea—the foot that is on the land will not avail him, he must certainly fall, because his other standing place is weak. If a chain be made strong enough to bear huge weights in every portion except one link, yet as we all know its strength is not to be measured by the stronger portions, but by the weak link; and if you have one weak link in your hope, if you are resting in anything you are or hope to be, or can do or feel, that one weak link will snap and ruin you for ever.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

From top to bottom, from foundation to pinnacle, our hopes must be in the work of Jesus, and we must trust in him alone, or else we shall build in vain. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Other hope beneath the skies there is none. O soul, learn the uselessness of looking to anything but Christ; but, be thou assured of this, if thou wilt look to him, and to him alone, he will put away thy sin, nay, he has done it by the sacrifice of himself.

Furthermore, here is another thought—I would that you would drink it in as Gideon's fleece drank in the dew—it is this: the efficacy of the atonement of Christ for sin is as great to-day as ever it was. He "offered one sacrifice for sins," for what? for a thousand years? No! But the text says "for ever!"—for ever!

"The dying thief rejoiced to see,
That fountain in his day,
Anal there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood,
Shall never loose its power;

Till all the ransomed church of God,
Be saved to sin no more."

"One sacrifice for sins for ever." The devil tells you it is of no use for you to believe in Christ, there is not efficacy for you, you have sinned away your day of grace; tell him he is a liar, Christ has offered one sacrifice for sins for ever; and while a man lives beneath the covenant of mercy, where the gospel is sounded in his ears, there is efficacy in the atonement for ever. The atoning sacrifice has no limit in its merit, the salvation of some has not drained it of even the smallest degree of its power. As the sunlight, though it be seen by millions of eyes, is as bright as ever it was, so is it with Jesus. Perhaps the Sun's fires may grow dull, and become dimmed in the course of ages, but it is certain that the eternal fount of mercy, the Sun of Righteousness, will never fail. He will continue to flood his people with the golden sunlight of his forgiving grace. He has made one sacrifice for sins for ever. I will come to him then. He is able to save me—he is able to save me even though I were a sinner of seventy years of age. I will come to him, I will rest in him—in him alone. Oh, believe me, if you do this you have eternal life abiding in you.

A further thought. The text leads me to say to you that it is utterly hopeless, if you desire salvation, for you to expect Jesus Christ to do anything more than he has already done. Many are waiting for a something, and they scarce know what. Now Jesus, when he died and went to heaven, perfected for ever all his work; and if you do not believe to-day in what he has done, there will be no surer grounds for belief to-morrow. If faith be difficult to me to-day, I must not expect that I shall have any more evidence, or that there will be any more truth for me to rely upon, if I live another twenty years. God has set forth Christ for you as guilty sinners to rest on; and if that is not enough for you, what more would you have? Christ has offered himself, and died and suffered in our stead, and gone into his glory; and, if you cannot depend upon him, what more would you have him do? Shall he come and die again? You have rejected him once; you would reject him though he died twice. But that cannot be done; there is enough in his sacrifice to answer all the purposes of mercy, and if you sin wilfully by rejecting him, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery

indignation." This is the point; all the atonement that could save me in ten years time is here now; all that I can ever rely upon if I postpone all thoughts of faith, all is here already. There will be no improvement in Christ. He has perfected his work. Oh, poor troubled soul, rest thou on him now. While I put these words, as it were, into your mouths, how I wish I could put them into your hearts! How foolish you are who are looking for signs and wonders or else you will not believe. May the Spirit of God show you that Jesus is now able and willing to save you, and that all you have to do is to take what he has done, and simply trust him, and you shall be saved this morning, completely saved, perfected through his one sacrifice. There remaineth no more to be done by the Redeemer. He sits down, and he will not rise for any further sacrifice. He has finished his atonement and perfected those he means to save; and if you believe not in him, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

Yet, again, I want you, dearly beloved brethren, to gather from the text before us the true posture of every believer in Christ. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down." If I am a believer that is my posture, if you are a believer that is yours,—you are to sit down. Under the law there was no sitting down. Even at the Passover the Israelites stood with their loins girt and their staves in their hands. There was no sitting down. It is only at the gospel supper that our proper posture is that of recumbency, reclining, or sitting down, because our warfare is accomplished. They that have believed have entered into rest. Jesus hath given us rest, we are not traversing the wilderness, we are come unto mount Zion, unto the glorious assembly of the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven. Our justifying work is finished, finished by Christ. Sit down Christian, sit down and rest in thy Lord. There is much to be done as to fighting your sins, much to be done for Christ in the world, but so far as justification and forgiveness are concerned, rest is your proper place, peace in Christ Jesus your lawful portion.

Your position is also to be one of expectancy. Christ, when he sits down, expects his enemies to be made his footstool. Expect, O believer, the time when you shall be rid of all sin. Fight manfully against your inbred corruptions, struggle against sin as you see it in the outside world, and

expect every day with holy faith that you shall get the victory. As Christ sits there expecting, he hath raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in himself; and we will sit there and look down upon this erring world, and expect the time when all evil shall be beneath our feet as it is beneath his.

Meanwhile, our posture is, once again, that of those who are perfected in Christ Jesus. How I wish that we could all realize this, and live in the power of it. If I am, indeed, a believer, I have nothing whatever to do in order to put away the guilt of my sins. I have much to do by faith to overcome the power of sin in me, and to seek after holiness; but so far as the guilt of transgression is concerned, Jesus Christ's one offering hath perfected all his people, there is not a sin remaining upon them, nor a trace of sin; they are "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" before God's sight they are perfectly lovely; they are not somewhat beautiful, but they are altogether lovely in Christ; they are accepted not in part but altogether, "accepted in the Beloved." When I get upon this strain, words are quite inadequate to express the emotions of my soul. This truth might well make David dance before the ark of the Lord—to think that though black in ourselves, we are comely in Christ; though like the smokedried tents of Kedar we are foul, yet clothed in our Savior's beauties we are like the curtains of Solomon for glory. The glory of the text is that we are perfected for ever; not for to-morrow, and then suffered to fall from grace; not for the next twenty years, and then turned out of the covenant; but he hath perfected "for ever" those that are set apart. It is a work which abides like the worker himself, and while Christ sits on the throne his people cannot die; while his work remains for ever perfect, they are also for ever perfect in him.

Now, brethren, another practical point is this, that it becomes us to make the evidence of our interest in this gracious work more and more clear to others. The text says, "Hath perfected them that are sanctified," or set apart as holy unto God. We must be more and more set apart every day, we must labor after holiness; this must be our object, not in order that we may be saved, for we are saved already, but in order that by others it may be clearly seen that we are saved, and they seeing our good works may glorify our Father which is in heaven. If I have in myself no measure of

holiness, how shall I be recognized as belonging to Christ? Is it not foolish presumption to say "I am perfect in Christ," if still my soul lives in sin, and loves it? May the Lord, by his Spirit, lead us in the ways of holiness, and then, walking in the light as he is in the light, we shall have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son shall cleanse us from all sin.

Finally, brethren, it remains for us to recollect that Christ will be one of two things to every one of us here present: either we shall see him at the right hand of God and rejoice that he is lifted so high, or else we shall behold him there with horror as we writhe beneath his feet. For his people, perfected for ever, it is their heaven to think that Christ is highly exalted. Oh, would we not exalt him if we could! Is there anything in this world that we would keep back from him? Is there any suffering from which we would shrink if we could lift him high? I hope I can speak for all of God's people and say, the dearest object of our life is to honor him. Oh for high thrones for Jesus and bright crowns for Jesus!

"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death!
And be his honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!"

Let him have the highest place that heaven can yield him.

But, if we will not believe his Godhead, if we will not trust him as the Mediator, if we have no part in his sacrifice, if we oppose his gospel, if we reject his claims to our obedience, there is another position we shall have to take up, and that is, beneath his feet. Those feet will be heavy indeed! They were pierced once; but if ever those pierced feet come upon you, they will crush you to powder. Nothing is so terrible as love when once it is turned to anger. Oil is soft, but how it burns. Inflammation love into jealousy and it is cruel as the grave. Beware, ye that reject the Savior, for in the day when he cometh he will smite you with a rod of iron, and even his face, which is full of tenderness to-day, shall then be full of terror, and this shall be your cry, "Hide us ye mountains, ye rocks conceal us, from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the

Lamb." What a wonderful mixture of words, "The wrath of the Lamb." It is one of the most dreadful expressions in Scripture. The Lord grant we may never feel its terrible meaning. May his blood cleanse us. Amen.

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The Open Fountain

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. - Zechariah 13:1

We do not grudge to the seed of Israel after the flesh the first application of this very precious promise. There will be a day when those who have so long refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah shall discern the marks of his mission, and shall mourn that they have pierced him. When the tribes of Israel shall lament their sin with holy earnestness, there shall be no mourning to exceed it, they shall weep even as in the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, when the wellbeloved Josiah was slain. Discovering that their nation rejected the Son of God, when they crucified Jesus of Nazareth their deeply religious spirit shall be filled with the utmost bitterness of repentance, and each man and each woman shall cry for pardon to the Lord of mercy. Then, close upon the heels of the weeping shall come the full and complete forgiveness; the transgression of the tribes shall be put away in one day; they shall perceive that the very side which they pierced has yielded a fountain to cleanse them from their sin; joyfully shall they behold on Calvary the brazen serpent lifted up for their healing, the Paschal Lamb slain for their redemption, the sin-offering sacrificed in their stead. What a blessed day will that be when "all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." O that you and I might live to see that happy era when all the Jewish race shall behold their Messiahs; for then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be gathered in. Our history is wrapped up with theirs. "Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more

their fullness?"

"Wake, harp of Zion, wake again,
Upon thine ancient hill,
On Jordan's long deserted plain,
By Kedron's lowly rill.

The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah's praise,
And thy loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.

For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates."

Having said thus much, however, we shall now take our text as belonging to ourselves in common with Israel, for in the gospel no promise is now set about with a hedge, and reserved for any race peculiarly; there is now "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This promise is our joy at this hour. O that I might be able so to speak of it that many anxious hearts might now see its meaning and appropriate its blessedness!

In order to explain the text we shall dwell upon three notes; if these three be clearly sounded we shall understand the passage—a fountain—opened—still open.

I. A FOUNTAIN.

What is this fountain which is said to be opened, and when and how was it opened? It is a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of, for sin and for uncleanness. We observe, therefore, that the blessing here spoken of deals with the greatest evils to which mankind is subject—sin and uncleanness. We have all fallen; we have all proved our fall by our sinful practice. Sin has separated us from God and brought

upon us the divine wrath; uncleanness, which is a tendency still to sin, a defilement of our nature, prevents our returning to our heavenly Father, and entering into renewed fellowship with him. This great evil in its double form is, according to the text, distinctly recognized by God; it is not winked at, it is not treated as a trifle that may remain, and yet man may be beloved of God and be happy; no, but the evil being there, preparation is made for its removal. The text says, not that the filthiness is concealed, that the transgression is excused, but that there is a fountain opened for the effectual removal of sin and uncleanness. In the gospel God never trifles with human sin. We proclaim full, free, immediate forgiveness to the very chief of sinners, but it is not in a way which makes men think that sin is trivial in God's esteem, for there is coupled with the declaration of pardon a description of the way in which God by the sacrifice of his Son renders it possible for him to be merciful without being unjust. In the substitution of Christ Jesus we see justice and mercy peacefully embracing, and conferring double honor upon each other. I repeat the word, the uncleanness is not concealed, the sin is not winked at, but there is a fountain prepared for the purging away of the defilement, and it is opened to the house of David, for the great and mighty, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the poor, common people of every class. Hear this, ye who feel yourselves sinners, God has provided means for delivering you from your sins.

The text recalls to your notice the double nature of the evil of sin, and the character of the provision which meets the double evil. The fountain is opened for sin, that refers, no doubt, to the guilt of sin, to sin as offending God and deserving punishment. There is a fountain opened in the atonement, by which the offense rendered to God's honor and dignity is put away. What if we have sinned, yet the Lord has punished that sin in the person of his own Son, he has thus fulfilled his threatening, and proven the truth of his word. In Jesus Christ, therefore, the guilt of those for whom he was a substitute is put away consistently with the righteousness of the great Lawgiver. God is just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. But this would not be enough; there is a second mischief, namely, that our nature has become unclean and consequently estranged from God. Through our natural corruption and the effect of our past sin, we are diseased morally and spiritually, our

mind is in itself biased towards evil and averse from good. God does not pardon sin and leave the sinner as he was in other respects, but wherever forgiveness of the guilt is bestowed a renewal of the nature is wrought; the fountain opened for pardon is also opened for purification. The washing which takes away the offense before heaven removes also the love of offending. Herein is double joy, for does not every true penitent feel that mere pardon would be a poor boon to him if it allowed him to continue in sin? My God, deliver me from sin itself, for this is the great burden of my soul. Oh, could I have the past forgiven, and yet live an enemy to my God, enslaved by evil and a stranger to holiness—then were I still accursed! What if God ceases to punish wickedness, yet sin in itself is a curse; to love the wrong is the beginning of hell. Blessed be the Lord, when he opened the fountain to cleanse his sinful people, he made it "of sin the double cure," that it might at the same time cleanse us from its guilt and power. For our double need there is, according to the text, one only supply; no mention is made of two fountains, neither are there two methods for the putting away of sin. But the one method is divine, God himself has devised, ordained, and prepared it. Wouldst thou have sin forgiven thee? Wash, for there is a fountain opened. Wouldst thou have sin eradicated from thy nature, and thy heart made pure? Wash, for heaven declares that the fountain is opened for this also. Imagine not that God has proposed an ineffectual means of purgation. His arrangements are never failures. Man may through his poverty provide a feast which is so bare as to mock the hunger of those invited; his starveling hospitality may be an insult to the greatness of human necessity; but it is never so with God. For his banquet of mercy oxen and fatlings are killed, milk and wine run in rivers, fat things full of marrow are heaped up; no stint is found at Jehovah's board. When God appoints a supply for any need, we may be assured that it is a real and sufficient provision. O penitent souls, rest assured that in Jesus' sacrifice there is an effectual provision for the forgiveness of sin, and an infallible means for the purging of your nature from its tendency to sin. God in the covenant of grace provides no seeming, superficial semblance, but in very deed he satisfies the longing soul O men and women, there is provided for your sin and your uncleanness that which exactly meets your need.

According to the verse before us this provision is inexhaustible. There is a

fountain opened; not a cistern nor a reservoir, but a fountain. A fountain continues still to bubble up, and is as full after fifty years as at the first; and even so the provision and the mercy of God for the forgiveness and the justification of our souls continually flows and overflows. There is a supply so large that when thousands of the sons of Adam come they find that there is enough for their demands, and as new generations continue still to come all along the centuries, they shall find that the supply has not in any degree been diminished. For the sin of Adam and Abel the atonement was sufficient, but it shall be equally so for the last repenting sinner. David saw the cleansing flood, and washed away his crimson sins, but he left the fountain undefiled, and it is as effectual for you and for me as it was for him. For sinners in the last days the fountain is as full, as cleansing, and as free, as for sinners in the first ages of the world.

Thus I have testified to you that for the great necessity of men in this double form, there is a divinely appointed and inexhaustible supply, and it is intended for high and low, rich and poor, for the royal and the ragged, the prince and the pauper.

When was this fountain opened? When was this divine and inexhaustible supply revealed to men? The answer may be given thus. The fountain was opened for sin and for uncleanness when the Lord Jesus died. God, the everlasting Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and in fullness of time the weight of human sin was laid on him. In order to put that sin away he must die, for death was the penalty for guilt; up to the cross he went through agonies unspeakable, and at the last he yielded up his soul; and when he did so sin was put away, and the fountain for the cleansing of sin was effectually opened. When the soldier with the spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came forth blood and water, then was it proven that this was he who came not with water only, but by water and by blood, a Savior who takes away the offense of sin as touching God, and the defilement of sin in human nature.

Furthermore, the fountain may be said to be opened to each one of us when the gospel is preached to us. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened," means secondarily, that whenever the gospel of Jesus Christ is fully and faithfully preached, then the cleansing efficacy of the atonement

of Jesus which aforetime was as a sealed fountain, is opened to those who hear. And best of all, according to the connection of the text, this fountain is opened in the day when men repent of sin. Doth it not say that they shall mourn each family apart, and their wives apart, and in that day shall there be a fountain opened! The sinner does not find a Savior until he bewails his sin; when he sees his own filthiness then it is that the way to have that filthiness removed is made clear to him. God is always willing to forgive, but we are not always willing to be forgiven. The fountain is experimentally opened to each one of us when we spiritually discern it, believe in it, and are made partners of its cleansing power. Years ago a German prince who was entertained by the French Government, was taken to the galleys of Toulon, where a number of men were held as convicts on account of their crimes. The commandant decreed that in honor of the prince's visit, some prisoner whom he might choose should be set at liberty. The prince went round amongst the prisoners, and talked with them, they all knowing that he had the power to liberate some one of them. He found that according to their talk they were nearly all innocent, and had been condemned by mistake, or by flagrant injustice. He passed them all by, and spoke with one who talked in another style. He was guilty upon his own confession. "I certainly," said he, "have no reason to complain of my hard work in the galleys, for if I had my due I should have been put to death for my crimes." He went on to acknowledge with much humility the former evils of his life, and the justice of his sentence. The prince set him free, and said, "This is the only man in the whole of this place who is fit to be pardoned; he has a sense of his transgressions, he may be trusted in society." So too, the pardoning mercy of God passes by those who say each one in their souls, "I am not guilty, I have not been more sinful than other people, I see nothing very remarkable in my case, and if I were sent to hell the sentence would be too severe." Although there is a fountain for sin and uncleanness by Jesus Christ, it is not opened personally to your experience, you cannot see it, do not appreciate it, and will not participate in its benefits unless you know yourself to be a sinner; but if there be here one really guilty, one who feels his sin to be deserving the wrath of God, then this day I have authority from the Most High to say to him, there is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. You mourn your sin, you confess your guilt, you wish you could mourn it more, you feel yourself undeserving and

unworthy—then you are the man to whom the mercy of heaven is this day freely proclaimed. Jesus has come forth on purpose to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The time for the actual opening of the cleansing fountain to us is the time when the heart confesses its guilt, and desires pardon of the Most High. Dear friend, has this time come to you? I pray you as you love your soul consider your ways, acknowledge your transgressions, and rest not till the blood of atonement has made you clear from guilt. Need the subject be pressed upon you? Surely your own reason should lead you to be anxious upon a matter so vital to your soul's eternal interests. How sad it will be if there be a fountain and yet you die unwashed! If there be a Savior, and you perish for ever, what wretchedness it will be!

II. My chief business, this morning, is to sound forth the second note of my text—it is a fountain OPEN.

The means by which sin and sinfulness can be put away are at this moment accessible to the sons of men. The atonement is not a fountain hid and concealed, and closed and barred and bolted, it is a fountain open. The doctrine I have to teach is very simple and plain; there is no room here for oratory and elocution, and polished periods; it is the plainest gospel doctrine in the world, and yet I am very, very happy to have to speak it to you, for I do trust God may bless it to many, that they may find the pardon of their sin, and the removal of their uncleanness. I would sooner tell you the good news from heaven in broken accents than anything else with the tongue of an angel.

The fountain which God has provided is open at this day. Now what is meant by this? It means partly that the gospel is so preached that you can understand it; the gospel at this day is not concealed in Latin, as it was before the days of Luther, it is not wrapped up in types and shadows, as it was in the old dispensation; the gospel is preached in many places in this country as plainly as words could deliver it, so plainly that he that runs may read it. I will tell it to you again. God must punish sin, but he has laid the punishment on Christ, and whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is forgiven. Why do not men accept the Savior? Why do they not come and

trust him? for when they trust him they are saved at once. Ah! my hearers, if any of you do not wash from your uncleanness it is not because you do not know how; if our gospel be hid it is not our fault, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. God is our witness, we have never sought after excellency of speech, nor the gaudiness or elegance of language, but as of simplicity, we have set before your souls this fact that Jesus Christ is the substitute for sinners, and that you must simply trust in him and you shall be saved. At your own peril be it if you reject the gospel; but if you do so, at least bear us this witness, that we have set forth Christ visibly crucified among you, not hanging up veils of human speculation of our own spinning, or curtains embroidered with curious devices of logic and theology, or of ceremony and ritual. We have cried aloud in plain words -

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One."

We have bidden you look to Jesus, and have told you, in God's name, that as you look to the Crucified you shall find eternal life. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; more blessed still if they yield obedience thereto.

In the next place, it is meant that the provision made in Jesus is accessible to you all, and there is no barrier on account of uncircumcision or natural descent. When first Peter began to preach the gospel, if he had heard that there was a Gentile in the congregation I am afraid he would have put in a question as to whether a Gentile could be saved; it took some time to bring Peter's mind round to the belief that to the Gentiles also the gospel was to be preached. Paul seemed far more readily to imbibe that idea; but now to me, a Gentile preaching to you Gentiles, this difficulty does not arise, but how thankful we ought to be that it does not! "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Our Lord Jesus, by his death, has rent the veil, and pulled down every wall of separation, so that the same Messiah who was sent to the seed of Abraham after the flesh is sent to us also who were sinners of the Gentiles, but who become of the seed of Abraham when we believe in Christ, for Abraham was the "father of the faithful." The fountain is open then in the removal of the barrier which divided the

natural Israel from the rest of mankind.

So, too, at this day, when we read that the provision made for the removal of sin and sinfulness is open, we learn that it is personally approachable by us. Certain fanatics in our day will have it that grace comes to us through priests; there is the fountain, but you must not touch a drop of the purifying stream yourself; that venerable gentleman in white, or black, or blue, or scarlet, or violet, as the day of the month or the change of the moon may be, must stand at the fountain head and catch the water as it flows, and then after he has practiced upon it sundry manipulations you may drink from his hand, but you who are unordained must not go to the fountain for yourselves. Ah, my brethren, but we know better than to make gods of men, or saviours of sinners like ourselves. We dispense with priests, for we know that the fountain of salvation is open for us to come personally, and directly, and without any intervention. There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, but no other mediator is there. One of our colporteurs, some years ago abroad, was selling his Testaments, when the cure of a parish said to him, "Your books say a very great deal about pardon, but I do not see much in them about confession." The colporteur was about to reply, when a public notary, who was present, taking up the Testament, said to the priest, "Ah, my dear sir, what you say is very true, the New Testament does not say much about confession to priests; do you not remember that Jesus Christ saved the dying thief without the help of a priest, and that St. Stephen, when he was stoned was not shriven by a confessor, but entered glory without a priest!" "Ah," said the cur,— "but the rules of the church were very different in those days from what they are now." Full surely they were! We will go back however to the primitive times, and as the dying thief said, "Lord, remember me," so will we turn our eyes to that once crucified Savior, sitting in the highest heaven, and breathe the selfsame prayer, "Lord, remember me:" and as Stephen looked up directly into heaven, and found peace even amidst that stony shower, so on our dying bed, our glance shall be to the Christ in the open heaven; and we shall find rest in our last hours. Blessed be God, the doctrine of justification by faith is now so openly declared that priestcraft cannot hold us captives. The nations no longer need to crouch at the feet of shaveling impostors. Now that there is a fountain open, we can say, "Begone, ye priests, the whole herd

of you, to whichever church ye belong; we who have believed are truly priests every one of us, and ye are mere pretenders. We have done with you; a plague and curse to humanity have ye been too long, and the gospel ends your detestable trade.

The text yet further signifies that the fountain is not marred by any amount of sin which we have already committed. If there be a fountain opened on purpose to remove filth, that man must be insane who shall say that his need of washing is a barrier to prevent his using it. Shall I stand outside the bath and say, "I am prevented from bathing because I am filthy"? everyone detects at once my illogical talk. If the fountain is open for sin, then sin is a qualification for washing in it. If Christ be a Savior for sinners, then no man may say that on the ground of sin Jesus cannot be his Savior; rather might he say, "The more truly I am a sinner the more surely is Christ Jesus suited to me." The exceeding heinousness of my sin, though I had been guilty of adultery, of murder, of crimes innumerable, cannot be a preventative to my being washed in the fount of atonement, because on account of my sin that fountain is provided, on purpose to put it away that cleansing flood was poured forth. Yet it ever is of the nature of sin, when the soul begins to know the bitterness of it, to make us fear that sin is a disqualification for mercy, and a reason why we should not believe in Christ Jesus the great propitiation for sin. O sinner, do not believe that sin unfits thee for a Savior, but believe that the Redeemer is come on purpose to save such as thou art. Some little time ago an earnest lady seeking the good of others, met with a poor girl some twenty years of age, who had most fearfully fallen and become a gross sinner, though still so young. She talked with her frequently, and at last saw in her tokens of repentance, but the poor girl's complaint was, "I can never be restored, I am so bad, nobody would ever take notice of me." "Have you not a mother?" "No," said the girl, "she died years ago." "Have you not a father?" "Yes, but I have not heard of him for years." "Does he know where you are?" "No, I do not want he should." "Do not you think he would receive you back into his house?" "No, that I know he would not, I could not expect him to do so; if I were in his place I would not receive such a one as I am." "Have you ever written to him since you have gone astray?" "No, I have kept out of the way of everybody that knew me; I do not want anybody to know what I am." "Have you tried your father

whether he will receive you?" "No, I knew it was no good, pray do not mention it." "But," said the good sister, "who can tell? I think I will try and see if your father will receive you now that you are truly penitent for the past." "Oh, yes, I hate the sin, but my father would not receive me, it is of no use to ask him." "Well," said the visitor, "I will try;" and so she wrote a note to the father, giving him the daughter's address, telling him about her repentance, and entreating that she might be forgiven. What do you suppose was the reply? The next post brought the penitent girl a letter, on the envelope of which was written in large letters, "IMMEDIATE;" and when she opened it—well, I cannot tell you all her father said, but it just came to this, "Come and welcome, I am ready to forgive you; I have been praying night and day that you might be restored to me." Now, just what that father was to his poor lost girl, in tenderness and readiness to forgive, God is to sinners; if there be any unwillingness it is not on his part, it is all in their hearts, for the answer to every prayer for mercy is, God is ready, nay, he waiteth to be gracious, his heart yearneth over his erring ones. "How shall I give thee up?" saith he; "How shall I make thee as Adam how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." Our guilt therefore is no legitimate reason why we should not avail ourselves of the provisions of grace.

Neither is there any effectual barrier in the consideration of our inward sinfulness. If you say, "I could not be a Christian, I have such a bad disposition, I could not become holy it is impossible." This is true so far as you are concerned, but things impossible with men are possible with God. There is a fountain open for this very reason that this uncleanness of yours might be put away. Christ's blood will prove more than a match for the evil of your heart; his Spirit can renew you, make you a new creature, and from this day forward the things you hated you shall love, and the evil things you have delighted in shall become detestable to you. Is it not written, "Behold, I make all things new"?

The fountain of cleansing is not sealed by any demands in the gospel requiring one to prepare yourself for it before you come. The fountain is open, and if you are filthy, you are welcome to come to it. All that is asked

of you is that you believe in Jesus; this he gives you, it is his own work in you. You must also repent and hate the sin which you have committed; this also he works in you, causing you by his Spirit to loathe the sin which aforetime you delighted in. Had there been a sort of purgatorial preparation, had there been a kind of quarantine through which the sinner had to pass before he could be renewed and forgiven, then were not the fountain completely open; but between you, a sinner, and acceptance before God, there need not be even a step of delay; believe now, and by believing you shall obtain the perfect pardon and the renewal of your soul.

Nor is there any other real barrier to shut up the fountain from the sinner. Some will say, "Perhaps I am not elected." My friend, read the text, the fountain is open; open for all ranks, "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The doctrine of election, true as it is, does not make my text a falsehood, or close the fount of grace upon any seeking soul. Can you think of any other doctrine? Does any other truth discourage you? Whatever it is I need only quote the text in order to answer your suspicion: The fountain is open for sin and for uncleanness, who dares say it is shut? If any theologian should say so, methinks I would push him into the fountain to make way for the sinner to come. There cannot be anything in theology, nor in nature, nor in heaven, nor earth, nor hell, which can shut what God declares to be open. If thou wilt to be saved, if thou comest to Christ believing in him, there is nothing to shut up the fountain of life or prevent thee from being cleansed and healed. If there be any shutting and forbidding it is thy heart that is closed, and thy pride which forbids. No difficulties remain save only difficulties of thine own creating, there is none with God. There is a fountain opened by him for sin and for uncleanness, and thou hast enough of both, therefore come with them even as thou art. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins;" dost thou? It is an old doctrine of the Christian church—dost thou believe it? Methinks I hear thee say, "I believe in the forgiveness of everybody's sin but mine own." Brother, I believe in the forgiveness of thy sins. There was a time when it would not have troubled me to believe for thee, but it troubled me to believe for myself; now, can I believe for myself and for thee also. If thou desires forgiveness, take it; if thou desires a new heart and a right spirit, Jesus will give them to thee;

the fountain is open, and none shall dare to deny access to the anxious heart. Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Would God that some were drawn of the Holy Spirit to come to-day and partake of the mercy which is so richly provided and so freely presented.

III. We have a rich consolation in the last point. The fountain is OPEN STILL.

The text says the fountain is opened, and I do not upon the closest inspection discover that it declares that it was afterwards shut; I find no intimation that the opening was for an occasion only; on the contrary, the opening is left as a fact accomplished. What a blessing is this to every child of God here; the fountain is still open for sin and uncleanness! What a comfort it is to that young man who but lately believed. Some little time after conversion there usually comes a period of surprising discoveries. The heart has believed in Jesus and found rest, and it has deluded itself into the idea that it is now so clean delivered from sin that it will never fall into it any more; but on a sudden it is tempted, it is overtaken in a fault, and then the devil cries, "You! Why, you are not saved, you are not a believer, see where you are now." Many remind me of a little girl who I trust was converted to God she in her simplicity quoted that sweet little hymn to her teacher, and said, "Teacher, 'I laid my sins on Jesus,' and now I love him so much that I never mean to do any more sins to lay on him." That is just what we thought when we were first pardoned; we did not quite say so, but we thought so. "All the past? Yes, that is all on him; now for the love we bear his name we will never sin again." So we thought; but, alas! we soon found that we were in the body still. When sin is seen to be still within us, how sweetly does the text ring out, like a silver bell, glad tidings of great joy—there is a fountain opened! You went at first to Jesus, young believer, go again. The fountain is not shut; you have washed in it once, it is not closed nor dried up, wash again; the same Christ you wanted when you first believed is there now as ready and willing as ever. His blood is equally efficacious, go, thou surprised one, and wash again: -

"This fountain from guilt not only makes pure,
And gives, soon as felt, infallible cure;

But if guilt removed return, and remain,
Its power may be proved again and again."

It will happen as we grow older and make progress in the Christian life, that we shall discover every day some fresh degree of defilement acquired by our pilgrimage through a sinful world. Do you ever go to rest a single night without feeling that you have been in many places during the day, and that there is fresh dust upon the garment, new soil upon the feet? Ah! bethink thee every night there is a fountain opened. To-day's sins can be as easily put away as yesterday's sins; and to-day's sinfulness, which I feel unconquerable for the moment, can be conquered still. I can go to Christ again and say, "Let thy blood kill this sin of mine, and soften my heart into tenderness and holiness once more." The fountain is still open, and no man can shut it.

I know that you in business, coming into contact with the world, must sometimes encounter some very trying circumstances. When perhaps you thought all would be plain sailing you meet with terrible storms. Though minded to live in peace, you fall into a sort of wrestling match with ungodly men; you are obliged to stand up for your own, and you try to do so with moderation of temper, yet your spirit becomes ruffled; and you have to say afterwards, when undergoing self-examination, "I do not know that I did exactly what I ought to have done; besides, my quiet walk with Christ has been broken by this strife with the sons of men; woe is me that I dwell in Mesech and tabernacle in the tents of Kedar." Beloved, there is a fountain open, go again by simple faith and look to Jesus once again and you will find fresh pardon, and the grace which restores the heart to its repose in Jesus. Your inner life will be again refreshed as you wash in the life-restoring fount prepared for you.

If you are at all like me you will at times feel your inner life to be sadly declining. I am ashamed to confess it, but even when I seek to live nearest to God, I feel an evil heart of unbelief struggling within me. There may come times when you will anxiously enquire, "Can I be a child of God at all? I cannot arouse my feelings towards God, my passions will not stir; even in holy duties I lack the living power; there is the wood, but where is the fire for the burnt offering? I would fain be zealous, earnest, intense,

fervent, but I am sluggish, a very dolt in the Master's cause." At such times we are apt to say, "I must try to make myself somewhat better than this by some means, before I dare again to hope in God;" and then we go off to our own selves and our own works, and we sink in the deep mire where there is no standing. It is a happy thing if at such moments we turn again to Christ, and say, "O my Master, unworthy as I am to be thy follower, though vilest of all those whose names are written on thy roll, yet I do believe in thee still. To thy cross I will cling, I will never let go my hope, for thou hast come to save sinners even such as I am, and on thee I will continue to trust. "My dear brethren, you will find that while this restores your peace, it at the same time excites you to seek after higher degrees of holiness. It is the idea of the worldling that if sin be pardoned so easily men will live in it, but it is not so; to the spiritual mind the great love displayed in the pardon of sin is the very highest motive for overcoming every unhallowed propensity. A sense of blood-bought pardon seals the death-warrant of the most favored sin. Ever shall we find our safest mode of battling with sin to be a new resort to the cross. Happy is it for us that the blood cleanseth from all sin; that is, it continues to do so every day. I should die in despair if it were not for this truth, that there is a fountain open still.

Some of us may have a long time to live possibly, but we shall never outlive that open fountain. Others may die soon, but, dear brother, in the last moment your eye may glance at the open fountain, and if the sins of all your life should rise before you, if in grim procession your transgressions should pass before your eyes each one accusing you, you may fly to the open fountain and they will disappear; and if the old Adam should rise even at the last, and some strong corruption should seek to prevail, there is the fountain open which will purge away the corruption of the flesh, and work in you the new nature yet more mightily, and preserve you to the Lord's eternal kingdom and glory.

I desire to close this sermon, all too poverty-stricken, with this thought. See here what our work is as a church. We have not to provide an atonement for the sinners round about us, but we have to point them to the fountain which is already opened. I want every one of you church members to be always telling others of the way of salvation. "It is so

simple," you say; well, then you have no excuse if you do not tell it. Make your neighbors know the way of salvation, din it into their ears, constrain them to know it, so that if they die it shall not be for want of knowing the way of life.

I want to remind you as a church of one most important fact. Here is our preparation for the season of revival which I hope God is about to give us. The fountain open for the sinner is also open for the child of God. Let us all wash again. Have you grown cold? Come and get your spiritual life revived. Do any of you fear that you are becoming worldly and carnal? Come to Jesus, for where you first found life there you shall find it more abundantly. Come and wash again. I desire as your pastor to receive another baptism in the sacred atoning flood, and then to come and preach to you in its heavenly power. I pray God, that my dear brethren, the deacons and elders, may each one individually apart confess his sin, and apart receive the washing. And then I want every member, every Sunday-school teacher, and every worker, to prepare to serve God by receiving another of these blessed cleansings. In the old tabernacle there was a laver, and the priests washed their feet and their hands in it, which had to be filled up every now and then, because it was exhausted or foul; now we have not a brazen laver, but we have a fountain which never can be dried, and never becomes defiled. If you wash your feet in a little pool, the water is muddy directly, but if you wash in a running stream, as I have often done when climbing the Alps, or in a living fountain, you may wash, hundreds of you, and the water bears all defilement away and is just as bright as if it had never been touched by your feet. So there is here for all the church members a blessed flowing fountain; come and wash, I beseech you, even now.

I pray God backsliders may come hither, that those who have gone farther astray than in heart, and have wandered into outward actions of rebellion, may come to the fountain which is still open, and be cleansed anew. What sin it will be on our part if we neglect what God has provided! Though we have often come before, let us come again. I should like to suggest that this afternoon we each of us should spend a season alone, and pray for a renewed application of that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Master, after the last Supper, took a towel

and girded himself, and went round with a basin and washed all his disciples' feet, and when he had done it said, "And ye are clean every whit." That is what I want him to do to all the members of this my beloved church now. You cannot serve God while you are defiled; you need fresh cleansing for successful service. O may he take the towel now in his infinite condescension, and visit each one and wash you one by one. Pastors, deacons, elders, members, may we all avail ourselves of the open fountain at this hour. O that the Holy Spirit might give to each one of us that cleansing which shall make us fit for service, O that we shall be useful during the coming months in the ingathering of his poor lost ones, to his praise and glory. May God grant it, for his name's sake. Amen.

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Order And Argument In Prayer

Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. - Job 23:3-4

In Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not, "Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" nor even, "Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" but the first and uppermost cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM—who is my God! that I might come even to his seat!" God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He that hath made his refuge God," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when he feels that he has been afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run

from the master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of that very God who frowned upon him. You will observe that the desire to commune with God is intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. When Job first saw his friends at a distance, he may have entertained a hope that their kindly counsel and compassionate tenderness would blunt the edge of his grief; but they had not long spoken before he cried out in bitterness, "Miserable comforters are ye all." They put salt into his wounds, they heaped fuel upon the flame of his sorrow, they added the gall of their upbraidings to the wormwood of his griefs. In the sunshine of his smile they once had longed to sun themselves, and now they dare to cast shadows upon his reputation, most ungenerous and undeserved. Alas for a man when his wine-cup mocks him with vinegar, and his pillow pricks him with thorns! The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveller turns from his empty skin bottle and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earthborn hopes, and cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find my God!" My brethren, nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. When you have been pierced through and through with the sentence, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," then will you suck unutterable sweetness from the divine assurance, "Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where you found no honey, but many sharp stings, you will rejoice in him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb.

It is further observable that though a good man hastens to God in his trouble, and runs with all the more speed because of the unkindness of his fellow men, yet sometimes the gracious soul is left without the comfortable presence of God. This is the worst of all griefs; the text is one of Job's deep groans, far deeper than any which came from him on account of the loss of his children and his property: "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" The worst of all losses is to lose the smile of my God. He now had a foretaste of the bitterness of his Redeemer's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's presence is always with his people in one sense, so far as secretly sustaining them is concerned,

but his manifest presence they do not always enjoy. Like the spouse in the song, they seek their beloved by night upon their bed, they seek him but they find him not; and though they wake and roam through the city they may not discover him, and the question may be sadly asked again and again, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" You may be beloved of God, and yet have no consciousness of that love in your soul. You may be as dear to his heart as Jesus Christ himself, and yet for a small moment he may forsake you, and in a little wrath he may hide himself from you. But, dear friends, at such times the desire of the believing soul gathers yet greater intensity from the fact of God's light being withheld. Instead of saying with proud lip, "Well, if he leaveth me I must do without him; if I cannot have his comfortable presence I must fight on as best may be," the soul saith, "No, it is my very life; I must have my God. I perish, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and nothing but the arm of God can deliver me." The gracious soul addresseth itself with a double zeal to find out God, and sends up its groans, its entreaties, its sobs and sighs to heaven more frequently and fervently. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Distance or labour are as nothing; if the soul only knew where to go she would soon overleap the distance. She makes no stipulation about mountains or rivers, but vows that if she knew where, she would come even to his seat. My soul in her hunger would break through stone walls, or scale the battlements of heaven to reach her God, and though there were seven hells between me and him, yet would I face the flame if I might reach him, nothing daunted if I had but the prospect of at last standing in his presence and feeling the delight of his love. That seems to me to be the state of mind in which Job pronounced the words before us.

But we cannot stop upon this point, for the object of this morning's discourse beckons us onward. It appears that Job's end, in desiring the presence of God, was that he might pray to him. He had prayed, but he wanted to pray as in God's presence. He desired to plead as before one whom he knew would hear and help him. He longed to state his own case before the seat of the impartial Judge, before the very face of the all-wise God; he would appeal from the lower courts, where his friends judged unrighteous judgment, to the Court of King's Bench—the High Court of heaven—there, saith he, "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

In this latter verse Job teaches us how he meant to plead and intercede with God. He does, as it were, reveal the secrets of his closet, and unveils the art of prayer. We are here admitted into the guild of suppliants; we are shown the art and mystery of pleading; we have here taught to us the blessed handicraft and science of prayer, and if we can be bound apprentice to Job this morning, for the next hour, and can have a lesson from Job's Master, we may acquire no little skill in interceding with God.

There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer—ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments. We shall speak of those two things, and then if we have rightly learned the lesson, a blessed result will follow.

I. First, IT IS NEEDFUL THAT OUR SUIT BE ORDERED BEFORE GOD.

There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anyhow, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to reach a book down and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the book up again; others suppose that to use a book is superstitious, and that you ought rather to repeat extemporaneous sentences, sentences which come to your mind with a rush, like a herd of swine or a pack of hounds, and that when you have uttered them with some little attention to what you have said, you have prayed. Now neither of these modes of prayer were adopted by ancient saints. They appear to have thought a great deal more seriously of prayer than many do now-a-days. It seems to have been a mighty business with them, a long-practised exercise, in which some of them attained great eminence, and were thereby singularly blest. They reaped great harvests in the field of prayer, and found the mercy seat to be a mine of untold treasures.

The ancient saints were wont, with Job, to order their cause before God; that is to say, as a petitioner coming into Court does not come there without thought to state his case on the spur of the moment, but enters into the audience chamber with his suit well prepared, having moreover learned how he ought to behave himself in the presence of the great One

to whom he is appealing. It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with pre-meditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is which we desire to obtain. In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled; but in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child comes not to his father in the morning till he has washed his face. See yonder priest; he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hand, but when he rises he washes his feet at the brazen laver, he puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments; then he comes to the altar with his victim properly divided according to the law, and is careful to do according to the command, even to such a simple matter as the placing of the fat, and the liver, and the kidneys, and he taketh the blood in a bowl and poureth it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar. Now this ritual is all superseded, but the truth which it taught remains the same; our spiritual sacrifices should be offered with holy carefulness. God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one's bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes first to hand; on the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe. See how David prayed when God had blessed him—he went in before the Lord. Understand that; he did not stand outside at a distance, but he went in before the Lord and he sat down—for sitting is not a bad posture for prayer, let who will speak against it—and sitting down quietly and calmly before the Lord he then began to pray, but not until first he had thought over the divine goodness, and so attained to the spirit of prayer. Then by the assistance of the Holy Ghost did he open his mouth. Oh that we oftener sought the Lord in this style! Abraham may serve us as a pattern; he rose up early—here was his willingness; he went three days journey—here was his zeal; he left his servants at the foot of the hill—here was his privacy; he carried the wood and the fire with him—here was his preparation; and lastly, he built the altar and laid the wood in order, and then took the knife—here was the devout carefulness of his worship. David puts it, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up"; which I have frequently

explained to you to mean that he marshalled his thoughts like men of war, or that he aimed his prayers like arrows. He did not take the arrow and put it on the bowstring and shoot, and shoot, and shoot anywhere; but after he had taken out the chosen shaft, and fitted it to the string, he took deliberate aim. He looked—looked well—at the white of the target; kept his eye fixed on it, directing his prayer, and then drew his bow with all his strength and let the arrow fly; and then, when the shaft had left his hand, what does he say? "I will look up." He looked up to see where the arrow went, to see what effect it had; for he expected an answer to his prayers, and was not as many who scarcely think of their prayers after they have uttered them. David knew that he had an engagement before him which required all his mental powers; he marshalled up his faculties and went about the work in a workmanlike manner, as one who believed in it and meant to succeed. We should plough carefully and pray carefully. The better the work the more attention it deserves. To be anxious in the shop and thoughtless in the closet is little less than blasphemy, for it is an insinuation that anything will do for God, but the world must have our best.

If any ask what order should be observed in prayer, I am not about to give you a scheme such as many have drawn out, in which adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and ascription are arranged in succession. I am not persuaded that any such order is of divine authority. It is to no mere mechanical order I have been referring, for our prayers will be equally acceptable, and possibly equally proper, in any form; for there are specimens of prayers, in all shapes, in the Old and New Testament. The true spiritual order of prayer seems to me to consist in something more than mere arrangement. It is most fitting for us first to feel that we are now doing something that is real; that we are about to address ourselves to God, whom we cannot see, but who is really present; whom we can neither touch nor hear, nor by our senses can apprehend, but who, nevertheless, is as truly with us as though we were speaking to a friend of flesh and blood like ourselves. Feeling the reality of God's presence, our mind will be led by divine grace into an humble state; we shall feel like Abraham, when he said, "I have taken upon myself to speak unto God, I that am but dust and ashes." Consequently we shall not deliver ourselves of our prayer as boys repeating their lessons, as a mere

matter of rote, much less shall we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils, or as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a highwayman stopping a person on the road and demanding his purse of him; but we shall be humble yet bold petitioners, humbly importuning mercy through the Saviour's blood. We shall not have the reserve of a slave but the loving reverence of a child, yet not an impudent, impertinent child, but a teachable obedient child, honouring his Father, and therefore asking earnestly, but with deferential submission to his Father's will. When I feel that I am in the presence of God, and take my rightful position in that presence, the next thing I shall want to recognize will be that I have no right to what I am seeking, and cannot expect to obtain it except as a gift of grace, and I must recollect that God limits the channel through which he will give me mercy—he will give it to me through his dear Son. Let me put myself then under the patronage of the great Redeemer. Let me feel that now it is no longer I that speak but Christ that speaketh with me, and that while I plead, I plead his wounds, his life, his death, his blood, himself. This is truly getting into order.

The next thing is to consider what I am to ask for? It is most proper in prayer, to aim at great distinctness of supplication. There is much reason to complain of some public prayers, that those who offer them do not really ask God for anything. I must acknowledge I fear to having so prayed myself, and certainly to having heard many prayers of the kind, in which I did not feel that anything was sought for from God—a great deal of very excellent doctrinal and experimental matter uttered, but little real petitioning, and that little in a nebulous kind of state, chaotic and unformed. But it seems to me that prayer should be distinct, the asking for something definitely and distinctly because the mind has realized its distinct need of such a thing, and therefore must plead for it. It is well not to beat round the bush in prayer, but to come directly to the point. I like that prayer of Abraham's, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" There is the name and the person prayed for, and the blessing desired, all put in a few words,— "Ishmael might live before thee!" Many persons would have used a roundabout expression of this kind, "Oh that our beloved offspring might be regarded with the favour which thou bearest to those who," etc. Say "Ishmael," if you mean "Ishmael"; put it in plain words before the Lord. Some people cannot even pray for the minister without

using such circular descriptives that you might think it were the parish beadle, or somebody whom it did not do to mention too particularly. Why not be distinct, and say what we mean as well as mean what we say? Ordering our cause would bring us to greater distinctness of mind. It is not necessary, my dear brethren, in the closet to ask for every supposable good thing; it is not necessary to rehearse the catalogue of every want that you may have, have had, can have, or shall have. Ask for what you now need, and, as a rule, keep to present need; ask for your daily bread—what you want now—ask for that. Ask for it plainly, as before God, who does not regard your fine expressions, and to whom your eloquence and oratory will be less than nothing and vanity. Thou art before the Lord; let thy words be few, but let thy heart be fervent.

You have not quite completed the ordering when you have asked for what you want through Jesus Christ. There should be a looking round the blessing which you desire, to see whether it is assuredly a fitting thing to ask; for some prayers would never be offered if men did but think. A little reflection would show to us that some things which we desire were better let alone. We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like, a selfish motive, which forgets God's glory and caters only for our own case and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet still we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the divine will. I like Luther's saying, "Lord, I will have my will of thee at this time." "What!" say you, "Like such an expression as that?" I do, because of the next clause, which was, "I will have my will, for I know that my will is thy will." That is well spoken, Luther; but without the last words it would have been wicked presumption. When we are sure that what we ask for is for God's glory, then, if we have power in prayer, we may say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me": we may come to close dealings with God, and like Jacob with the angel we may even put it to the wrestle and seek to give the angel the fall sooner than be sent away without the benediction. But we must be quite clear, before we come to such terms as those, that what we are seeking is really for the Master's honour.

Put these three things together, the deep spirituality which recognises

prayer as being real conversation with the invisible God—much distinctness which is the reality of prayer, asking for what we know we want—and withal much fervency, believing the thing to be necessary, and therefore resolving to obtain it if it can be had by prayer, and above all these complete submission, leaving it still with the Master's will;—commingle all these, and you have a clear idea of what it is to order your cause before the Lord.

Still prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Ghost can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer—pray till you can pray; pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because thou canst not pray, for it is when thou thinkest thou canst not pray that thou art most praying; and sometimes when thou hast no sort of comfort in thy supplications, it is then that thy heart all broken and cast down is really wrestling and truly prevailing with the Most High.

II. The second part of prayer is FILLING THE MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS—not filling the mouth with words nor good phrases, nor pretty expressions, but filling the mouth with arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened.

Why are arguments to be used at all? is the first enquiry; the reply being, Certainly not because God is slow to give, not because we can change the divine purpose, not because God needeth to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked: the arguments to be used are for our own benefit, not for his. He requires for us to plead with him, and to bring forth our strong reasons, as Isaiah saith, because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. Again, our use of arguments teaches us the ground upon which we obtain the blessing. If a man should come with the argument of his own merit, he would never succeed; the successful argument is always founded upon grace, and hence the soul so pleading is made to understand intensely that it is by grace and by grace alone that a sinner obtaineth anything of the Lord. Besides, the use of arguments is intended to stir up our fervency. The man who uses one argument with God will get more force in using the

next, and will use the next with still greater power, and the next with more force still. The best prayers I have ever heard in our prayer meetings have been those which have been fullest of argument. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly. My brethren, there is no need for prayer at all as far as God is concerned, but what a need there is for it on our own account! If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God's mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half so useful as they now are, when they have to be sought for; for now we get a double blessing, a blessing in the obtaining, and a blessing in the seeking. The very act of prayer is a blessing. To pray is as it were to bathe one's-self in a cool purling stream, and so to escape from the heats of earth's summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle's wings above the clouds and get into the clear heaven where God dwelleth. To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God and to enrich one's-self out of an inexhaustible storehouse. To pray is to grasp heaven in one's arms, to embrace the Deity within one's soul, and to feel one's body made a temple of the Holy Ghost. Apart from the answer prayer is in itself a benediction. To pray, my brethren, is to cast off your burdens, it is to tear away your rags, it is to shake off your diseases, it is to be filled with spiritual vigour, it is to reach the highest point of Christian health. God give us to be much in the holy art of arguing with God in prayer.

The most interesting part of our subject remains; it is a very rapid summary and catalogue of a few of the arguments which have been used with great success with God. I cannot give you a full list; that would require a treatise such as Master John Owen might produce. It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah his attributes. Abraham did so when he laid hold upon God's justice. Sodom was to be pleaded for, and Abraham begins, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the

wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Here the wrestling begins. It was a powerful argument by which the patriarch grasped the Lord's left hand, and arrested it just when the thunderbolt was about to fall. But there came a reply to it. It was intimated to him that this would not spare the city, and you notice how the good man, when sorely pressed, retreated by inches; and at last, when he could no longer lay hold upon justice, grasped God's right hand of mercy, and that gave him a wondrous hold when he asked that if there were but ten righteous there the city might be spared. So you and I may take hold at any time upon the justice, the mercy, the faithfulness, the wisdom, the long-suffering, the tenderness of God, and we shall find every attribute of the Most High to be, as it were, a great battering-ram, with which we may open the gates of heaven.

Another mighty piece of ordinance in the battle of prayer is God's promise. When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to suffer Esau to destroy the mother and the children, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And thou saidst, surely I will do thee good." Oh the force of that plea! He was holding God to his word: "Thou saidst." The attribute is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is yet a mightier holdfast. "Thou saidst." Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the promise, David said at the close of his prayer, "Do as thou hast said." That is a legitimate argument with every honest man, and has he said, and shall he not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not he be true? Shall he not keep his word? Shall not every word that cometh out of his lips stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word which he had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note his honour is engaged. He signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonours his bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment; he never is before his time, but he never is behind it. You shall search this Book through, and you shall compare it with the experience of God's people, and the two tally from the first to the

last; and many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised: all hath come to pass." My brother, if you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if" in it; you may plead with a certainty. If for the mercy which you are now asking, you have God's solemnly pledged word, there will scarce be any room for the caution about submission to his will. You know his will: that will is in the promise; plead it. Do not give him rest until he fulfil it. He meant to fulfil it, or else he would not have given it. God does not give his words merely to quiet our noise, and to keep us hopeful for awhile, with the intention of putting us off at last; but when he speaks, he speaks because he means to act.

A third argument to be used is that employed by Moses, the great name of God. How mightily did he argue with God on one occasion upon this ground! "What wilt thou do for thy great name? The Egyptians will say, Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore he slew them in the wilderness." There are some occasions when the name of God is very closely tied up with the history of his people. Sometimes in reliance upon a divine promise, a believer will be led to take a certain course of action. Now, if the Lord should not be as good as his promise, not only is the believer deceived, but the wicked world looking on would say, "Aha! aha! Where is your God?" Take the case of our respected brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol. These many years he has declared that God hears prayer, and firm in that conviction, he has gone on to build house after house for the maintenance of orphans. Now, I can very well conceive that, if he were driven to a point of want of means for the maintenance of those thousand or two thousand children, he might very well use the plea, "What wilt thou do for thy great name?" And you, in some severe trouble, when you have fairly received the promise, may say, "Lord, thou hast said, 'In six troubles I will be with thee, and in seven I will not forsake thee.' I have told my friends and neighbours that I put my trust in thee, and if thou do not deliver me now, where is thy name? Arise, O God, and do this thing, lest thy honour be cast into the dust." Coupled with this, we may employ the further argument of the hard things said by the revilers. It was well done of Hezekiah, when he took Rabshakeh's letter and spread it before the Lord. Will that help him? It is full of blasphemy, will that help him? "Where are the gods of Arphad and

Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of the cities which I have overthrown? Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying that Jehovah will deliver you." Does that have any effect? Oh! yes, it was a blessed thing that Rabshakeh wrote that letter, for it provoked the Lord to help his people. Sometimes the child of God can rejoice when he sees his enemies get thoroughly out of temper and take to reviling. "Now," he says, "they have reviled the Lord himself; not me alone have they assailed, but the Most High himself. Now it is no longer the poor insignificant Hezekiah with his little band of soldiers, but it is Jehovah, the King of angels, who has come to fight against Rabshakeh. Now what wilt thou do, O boastful soldier of proud Sennacherib? Shalt not thou be utterly destroyed, since Jehovah himself has come into the fray? All the progress that is made by Popery, all the wrong things said by speculative atheists and so on, should be by Christians used as an argument with God, why he should help the gospel. Lord; see how they reproach the gospel of Jesus! Pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom! O God, they defy thee! Anti-christ thrusts itself into the place where thy Son once was honoured, and from the very pulpits where the gospel was once preached Popery is now declared. Arise, O God, wake up thy zeal, let thy sacred passions burn! Thine ancient foe again prevails. Behold the harlot of Babylon once more upon her scarlet-coloured beast rides forth in triumph! Come, Jehovah, come, Jehovah, and once again show what thy bare arm can do! This is a legitimate mode of pleading with God, for his great name's sake.

So also may we plead the sorrows of his people. This is frequently done. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" He talks of all their griefs and straitnesses in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon his suffering Zion; and ere long his plaintive cries are heard. Nothing so eloquent with the father as his child's cry; yes, there is one thing more mighty still, and that is a moan,—when the child is so sick that it is past crying, and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness. Who can resist that moan? Ah! and when God's Israel shall be brought very low so that they

can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord's time of deliverance, and he is sure to show that he loveth his people. Dear friends, whenever you also are brought into the same condition you may plead your moanings, and when you see a church brought very low you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of his people.

Brethren, it is good to plead with God the past. Ah, you experienced people of God, you know how to do this. Here is David's specimen of it: "Thou hast been my help. Leave me not, neither forsake me." He pleads God's mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, "Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not." Moses also, speaking with God, says, "Thou didst bring this people up out of Egypt." As if he would say, "Do not leave thy work unfinished; thou hast begun to build, complete it. Thou hast fought the first battle; Lord, end the campaign! Go on till thou gettest a complete victory." How often have we cried in our trouble, "Lord, thou didst deliver me in such and such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near; thou hast never forsaken me yet. I have set up my Ebenezer in thy name. If thou hadst intended to leave me why hast thou showed me such things? Hast thou brought thy servant to this place to put him to shame?" Brethren, we have to deal with an unchanging God, who will do in the future what he has done in the past, because he never turns from his purpose, and cannot be thwarted in his design; the past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from him.

We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God. "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." David in one place pleads thus: "Lord, have mercy upon mine iniquity, for it is great." That is a very singular mode of reasoning; but being interpreted it means, "Lord, why shouldest thou go about doing little things? Thou art a great God, and here is a great sinner. Here is a fitness in me for the display of thy grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of thy mercy. Let the greatness of thy love be seen in me." Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show his great power in sparing his sinful people. The power with

which God restrains himself is great indeed. O brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the throne, crouching low and crying, "O God, break me not—I am a bruised reed. Oh! tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Wilt thou hunt me? Wilt thou come out, as David said, "after a dead dog, after a flea?" Wilt thou pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Wilt thou watch me, as Job saith, as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale? Nay, but because I am so little, and because the greatness of thy mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me."

There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the prophet Elijah. On that august occasion, when he had bidden his adversaries see whether their god could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been that day in the prophet's mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." And as they cut themselves with knives, and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent exertions, and their earnest but useless cries! But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down, and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock. Hear him cry, "Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire; pour water on the victim." When they had done so, he bids them, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time; and then he says, "Do it a third time." And when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands up and cries to God, "O God, let it be known that thou only art God." Here everything was put to the test. Jehovah's own existence was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold prophet. But how well the prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood, and the stones, and even the very water that was in the trenches, for Jehovah God had answered his servant's prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto him, "Oh, by thy Deity, by thine existence, if indeed thou be God, now show thyself for the help of thy people!"

Lastly, the grand Christian argument is the sufferings, the death, the merit, the intercession of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead with God for Christ's sake. I met with this thought the other day: it was somewhat new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ's name, we usually mean, "O Lord, thy dear Son deserves this of thee; do this unto me because of what he merits." But if we knew it we might go in the city, "Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing." I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us. "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to me; go and use my name." Suppose you should give a man your cheque-book signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose; that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will give it you." If I had a good name at the bottom of the cheque, I should be sure that I should get it cashed when I went to the banker with it; so when you have got Christ's name, to whom the very justice of God hath become a debtor, and whose merits have claims with the Most High, when you have Christ's name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath. Oh, waver not and let not faith stagger! When thou pleadest the name of Christ thou pleadest that which shakes the gates of hell, and which the hosts of heaven obey, and God himself feels the sacred power of that divine plea.

Brethren, you would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ's griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord his wounds, tell the Lord of his cries, make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and his blood speak again from that frozen Calvary. Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, thou canst not take a denial: such arguments as these will speed you.

III. If the Holy Ghost shall teach us how to order our cause, and how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that **WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH PRAISES**. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer. Dear friend, thou hast thy mouth full this morning, has

thou? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse thy mouth out of that black stuff, for it will little avail thee, and it will be bitter in thy bowels one of these days. Oh, have thy mouth full of prayer, full of it, full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then come with this blessed mouthful, and you shall soon go away with whatsoever you have asked of God. Only delight thou thyself in him, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart.

It is said—I know not how truly—that the explanation of the text, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," may be found in a very singular Oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago—I remember the circumstance being reported—the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility, who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could hold, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental Courts towards great favourites. Now certainly whether that be an explanation of the text or not it is an illustration of it. God says, "Open thy mouth with arguments," and then he will fill it with mercies priceless, gems unspeakably valuable. Would not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a style? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that. Oh! let us then open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God. Our needs are great, let our askings be great, and the supply shall be great too. You are not straitened in him; you are straitened in your own bowels. The Lord give you large mouths in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments.

What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted man. God give thee to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find eternal life in him.

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Our Compassionate High Priest

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. - Hebrews 5:2

The high priest looked Godward, and therefore he had need to be holy; for he had to deal with things pertaining to God. But at the same time he looked manward; it was for men that he was ordained, that, through him, they might deal with God; and therefore he had need to be tender. It was necessary that he should be one who could have sympathy with men; else, even if he could succeed Godward, he would fail to be a link between God and man, from want of tenderness and sympathy with those whom he sought to bring nigh to Jehovah.

Hence, the high priest was taken from among men that he might be their fellow, and have a fellow-feeling with them. No angel entered into the holy place; no angel wore the white garments; no angel put on the ephod and the breastplate with the precious stones. It was a man ordained of God, who for his brothers pleaded in the presence of the Shekinah. Many of us, I trust, have a desire within our hearts to come to God; but we need a High Priest. Inasmuch as it is his right, he counts it not robbery to be equal with God; but he communes with the Father as one that was by him, as one brought up with him, who was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. But we ought also to be very grateful that we can come into touch with our High Priest on his human side, and rejoice that he is truly man. For thus saith the Lord, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty: I have exalted One chosen out of the people;" he is anointed, it is true, with the oil of gladness above his fellows, but still he and they are one, "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Those who came to the high priest of old, were not often of the rough sort. Those who wished to have fellowship with God through the high priest in the tabernacle, or in the temple, were generally the timid ones of the people. Remember how she who came when Eli was high priest was "a woman of sorrowful spirit"; and the high priest had to deal with many such. The sons and daughters of affliction were those who mostly sought the divine oracle, and desired to have communion with God; hence the

high priest needed not only to be a man, but a man of tender and gentle spirit. It was necessary that he should be one with whom those with broken hearts, and those who were groaning under a sense of sin, would like to speak. They would dread an austere man, and would, probably, in many cases, have kept away from him altogether. Now, the mercy for us is, that our great High Priest is willing to receive the sinful and the suffering, the tried and the tempted; he delights in those that are as bruised reeds and smoking flax; for thus he is able to display the sacred qualifications. He "can have compassion." It is his nature to sympathize with the aching heart; but he cannot be compassionate to those who have no suffering, and no need. The heart of compassion seeks misery, looks for sorrow, and is drawn towards despondency; for there it can exercise its gracious mission to the full.

Often, when we are trying to do good to others, we get more good ourselves. When I was here one day this week, seeing friends who came to join the church there came among the rest a very diffident tender-hearted woman, who said many sweet things to me about her Lord, though she did not think that they were any good, I know. She was afraid that I should not have patience with her and her poor talk; but she said one thing which I specially remember: "I have to-day put four things together, from which I had derived a great deal of comfort," she told me. "And what are they, my sister?" I asked. "Well," she said, " they are those four classes —'the unthankful and the evil, the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,' Jesus 'is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil', and he 'can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,' and I think that I can get in through those four descriptions. Though I am great sinner, I believe that he will be kind to me, and have compassion upon me." I stored that up; for I thought that one of these days I might want it myself; I tell it to you, for if you do not want it now, you may need it one of these days; you may yet have to think that you have been unthankful and evil, ignorant and out of the way, and it will give you comfort to remember that our Lord Jesus is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and that he "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

On this latter subject, I would speak at this time, wishing to comfort some

who are of a sorrowful spirit, and others who may yet have need of such consolation as this topic gives.

Notice in our text, first, the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned, namely, "the ignorant and them that are out of the way"; secondly, the sort of High Priest with whom sinners have to deal—One "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way"; and thirdly, the sort of infirmities in men that may be sanctified to great uses. "For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity," is said of an earthly high priest; this it was that made him fit to be a high priest; and there are certain infirmities that we might almost glory in, for they enable us to be like priests unto God, and make us helpful to his sorrowing and suffering children.

I. First, then, let us carefully observe THE SORT OF SINNERS FOR WHOM OUR HIGH PRIEST IS CONCERNED. While it is true that he is willing to receive all sorts of sinners, there are many who never come to him, nor submit to his authority. With those who proudly and rashly stand before God on their own merit, he has nothing to do; but with others of a different character he is greatly concerned.

The people who claim Christ's aim are generally those who have a very low opinion of themselves. Out of all the tribes of Israel, those that came to the high priest, to ask him to present their sacrifice to God for them, and to speak a word from God to them, were God-fearing people. No doubt hypocrites, occasionally, did come, and some of a proud spirit who trusted in their own offerings; but I should think that, all the year round, the high priest saw some of the humblest and best people in all Israel. Men and women, in sore trouble, would come to him; and these chastened spirits would be choice spirits. Men and women who were conscious of sin, and longing for pardon, would come to the high priest; men and women who had not sinned after the similitude of a public transgression, who nevertheless felt evil darkening their conscience within, would draw near to him; men and women who had lost the light of God's countenance, and who came longing to have it back again, because they could not live without it, would approach the courts of God's house. All these would be welcome visitors at the high priest's door, and

would receive his sympathy and compassion. Such are the people whom Christ our great High Priest now delights to bless. The proud and self-satisfied cannot know his love; but the poor and distressed may ever find in him comfort and joy, because of his nature, and by means of his intercession.

As with the high priest of Israel in the olden time, amongst those who come to our High Priest, are many whose fear and distress arise from ignorance. Oh, dear friends, if all the ignorant were to come, we should all come; for we are all ignorant; but there are some who fancy that it is otherwise with them. They imagine they know all things, and, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. They know not their need of the great High Priest. Their folly is proved by their light esteem of him. But among those who come to our great High Priest in heaven, there are none but those who are ignorant.

In the first place, there is a universal ignorance. Notwithstanding all that great men may say about what they evolve from their own consciousness, I think that the only thing that a man can evolve from his own consciousness is folly and sin; for there is nothing else there. If he goes on evolving, he will evolve greater folly and greater sin, that is all. But when the Lord deals with men, he makes them feel that they know very little. What do we know of sin? The larger proportion of our sins are probably unknown to us. We do them, and scarcely observe that we have committed them. And who knows the evil that lies in any one sin? We is he that can weigh his iniquities in scales, or his errors in balances? Upon that one dread subject of sin, we are all life babes; we have not begun to learn more than the alphabet of that awful knowledge. Sinful we are, but it is part of the effect of sin that we do not know the extent of our sinfulness, and we should not know it at all, if it were not for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Again, what do we know of ourselves? Does any man truly know himself? "The proper study of mankind is man," says Pope. I am not sure of that; but I am certain that the proper study of mankind is Christ; for in him we not only can learn about man, but much more besides. But how little we know of ourselves, of our natural weakness, of our evil tendencies, of our

proneness in this direction, or in that! "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

What do we know of God the unsearchable? Is he past finding out? Who can sufficiently tell of his nature, or of his wondrous attributes? Who can speak adequately of his greatness, or of his glory? Who can number up his years, or declare the whole of his lovingkindness? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" On this great subject as well as on the other topics I have mentioned, there is a universal ignorance. As compared with the light of God, we are in the dim twilight. He that seeth best only seeth men as trees walking.

But, in addition to the ignorance that is universal, there is also a comparative ignorance on the part of some; and because of this, the compassion of Christ flows forth to them. Those who are ignorant in this way, are the kind of sinners whom he has come to help as a High Priest. He puts them in a class by themselves.

There are, first, the recent converts—young people whose years are few, and who probably think that they know more than they do; but who, if they are wise, will recognize that, even by reason of the fewness of their years, their senses have not been fully exercised to discern between good and evil. You must not ask them questions about the deep things of God. They have to be satisfied with those blessed parts of Scripture where a lamb may wade; they must not meddle with those parts where leviathan has to swim. Many truths are either above them or below them, much experience is too deep for them. In the presence of many of God's ways, they are compelled to say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The Lord Jesus Christ can take little boys and girls to his bosom; and he does so, while they are as yet ignorant of many things. He loves them; he teaches them; he has compassion on them; and he says of them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God." Christ receives them in spite of their lack of knowledge, and therefore we must treat such very tenderly. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones;" for our great High Priest has compassion upon their ignorance, and he

instructs them. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children," when they trust in him who sympathizes with them, and who cares for them.

Others there are who are ignorant because of their little opportunity of getting instruction. Are there not many who are so placed that they have little chance of ever learning to read? We are thankful that there will be few left of that sort by-and-by. But there are others who, if they could read, have scarcely sufficient time allowed them to read their Bibles, and who, when they have read them, are very like the Ethiopian eunuch, in that they do not comprehend what they have read. If the question were addressed to them, "Understandst thou what thou redest?" they could truly say, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" There are many, all over our land, who are situated in places where they cannot often hear the gospel, and when they do hear it, it is so mixed up and confused, that it is small wonder they cannot make head or tail of it. Constantly do we meet with persons of that kind, whose ignorance is excusable; for they have had no teaching. They have not had opportunities of reading and searching, as most of us have had; upon these our great High Priest has compassion, and often with their slight knowledge they show more of the fruits of the Spirit than some of us produce even with our more abundant light.

Further than that, there are many that are of a very feeble mind. You can only with difficulty get a thought into their brain, and if you try to get another idea on the top of it, the second one seems to knock the first one out. They never learn much, and they are so constructed that they never will. In our pilgrim band we have a number who are like Mr. Feeblemind; we may try all that we can with him, but we shall never make a hero of him. Others are like Mr. Ready-to-halt, with his crutches; he did dance once, you will remember, when Giant Despair's head was cut off; but still he had to go on his crutches even then, and he never gave them up till he crossed the river; then he left them to anybody who wanted such things, and, I fear me, there are many who want them to-day. We have those in our company who never will be able to give a systematic statement of the doctrines of grace, though they are full of grace. They could never explain how they were saved; but they are saved. I daresay the snail could never

explain how he got into the ark, but he did get in; and these feeble ones are in Christ, though they cannot fully explain how they came to that blessed position. Some of these good people are not very apt to receive knowledge: they are not "learnable", if I may coin a word to express my meaning We cannot make them learn. They are willing to be taught, they are teachable; but they are not "learnable." Ah, well, our blessed High Priest can have compassion on the ignorant, and the feeble-minded!

Beside the universal ignorance of which we have spoken, and this comparative ignorance, there is a sinful ignorance. We have some who are ignorant, and no excuse is to be made for them; their ignorance is to be condemned; and if these words reach any who are thus guilty, I would beseech them to pray God to pardon their guilt, and cease to sin in this way any longer. I mean those who are ignorant for want of attention. They are so full of business, and have such a great many other things to think of, that they do not value the means of grace. They say that they cannot attend, but we know that where there is a will there is a way. Perhaps they go once on a Sunday and never more all the week. Now, if I had to eat one meal a week, and only one, I should want it to be a very good one; but I think that I should hardly be in a good condition for the next one the week following. It is a grand thing to get a little bit by the way, by coming on a Thursday night, or a morsel or two on a Monday, at the prayer-meeting. This stays the heart, and keeps the soul in good order.

Some will never be much above the ignorant, because they have not the ambition to learn. They do not set themselves to study the things of God. They do not sufficiently prize the revelation of God. I pray that they may be stirred up to do so. Though they have been guilty of neglectfulness and forgetfulness, they are not to be deprived of the sweetness of this text. Our Lord can have compassion on the ignorant, and on such as are out of the way. Here stands the great company to which his compassion goes out, and its name is written, "The ignorant." I think that we had better all get into this class; indeed, I am sure that we had better join it, and thus obtain our Lord's compassion. I have seen, at a railway-station, gentlemen with first-class tickets walking up and down the platform unable to find a first-class carriage, and if the train was going on they

have jumped in the third-class, so as to get to the journey's end. If there is a man here who does not think that he ought to be put down quite among the ignorant, jump in, brother, because you will get to your journey's end in this compartment, and there is no carriage, just now, for any wise person. There is nothing provided in the train that starts from this text, except that which is provided for the ignorant. The Lord hath us personally to rejoice that he can have compassion on the ignorant!

Now comes another description of the sort of sinners for whom our High Priest is concerned. There are many whose fears arise from being out of the way. The Lord "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." I remember that, when I felt myself to be a very great sinner, and verily thought I was more of a inner than anybody else, these words were very, very much blessed to me. I read them, "and on them that are out of the way"; and I knew that I was an out-of-the-way sinner. I was then, and I am afraid that I am now, somewhat like a lot out of the catalogue, an odd person who must go by himself. Very well; our High Priest can have compassion on those that are odd, on those that are out-of-the-way, on those who do not seem to be in the common run of people, and do not go with the multitude, but who must be dealt with individually, and by themselves. He can have compassion upon such.

But now let us look at the more exact meaning of the text.

To be out of the way is, in the case of all men, their natural state. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." That is where we are all by nature, and our own way is out of the way. Therefore, Christ can have compassion upon all of us who come to him; for he has learnt to deal with those who are out of the way, and such, literally, are we all.

In addition to that, men have gone out of the way by their own personal folly. We had enough original sin; but we have added to that another kind of originality in evil.

"Like sheep we went astray,
And broke the fold of God

Each wandering in a different way;
But all the downward road."

But there are some who wander most foolishly. You wonder why they sin in the particular way that they do. There seems to be no reason for it, no motive for it, no special temptation in that direction, and yet, they will do it. They wander out of the way by themselves. Have you done so, dear friend? The Lord can have compassion on those that are out of the way.

Some are out of the way because of their seduction from the way by others. False teachers have taught them, and they have taken up with the error brought before them by a stronger mind than their own. In some cases persons of evil life have had a fascination over them. It is wonderful how, in the cases of young men and young women, they frequently seem to be not themselves, but the evil embodiment of another. They are ruled and governed by the will of somebody else, and not by their own. Thus they are led out of the way. They are like sheep that "have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Ah, poor friend, it is ill that you should have been the victim of another's temptation! Do not blame your tempter; blame yourself; but, at the same time, remember that Christ has compassion upon those who have been led out of the way. As by the will of another you were beguiled from the true path, so by the love of Another shall you be won back again, even as it has been with many of us.

Many are out of the way because of their backsliding after grace has come to them. Or text comprehends backsliders who were once in the way. To such we may say, "Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Something has been an occasion of stumbling to such; and now, though sitting in the house of God, they know they are not what they once were, nor what they ought now to be, nor what they must be, nor what I hope they will be, even before I shall finish my discourse. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." Why will ye wander from the only source of good? "Take with you words and turn to the Lord." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Lord calls you in infinite tenderness; for he can have compassion upon backsliders,

and stop them from becoming apostates, bringing them back unto himself, according to his divine purpose.

Others are out of the way because of their consciousness of special sin. Is there here anyone conscious of some great sin in years gone by? Is there a crimson spot upon your hand, which you have tried to wash out, but cannot; some act of your life which you would fain undo, and remove? There it is, still there, always there. Does it fret you by night, and weary you by day, to think of the gross iniquity of yours? Ah, it has put you out of the way! Perhaps you did not grasp all the consequences of what you were doing when you did it. Be comforted by this gracious text. Hear your High Priest pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He pleads your ignorance. You "did it ignorantly in unbelief"; and while this does not excuse you, it puts you into the list of those who are both ignorant and out of the way. Come to this compassionate High Priest, and trust your case in his dear hands; they were pieced because of your sin. Trust your iniquity with him; his heart was opened and set abroad because of your transgression. Come, trust in him. He died because of your sin. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Thus I have very feebly set forth the sort of sinners for whom Christ is High Priest; those who are ignorant, and those who are out of the way. This message is for almost everybody here, except my friend over there who knows everything, and never did anything wrong. He does not want any Christ, and I will not bother him with one. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick," saith the Lord Jesus; and he further adds this word, which shuts out you who never did any harm, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." To be so very learned, and so very good in your own estimation is no recommendation to Christ, but the reverse. He comes to men who need compassion, and those he teaches to profit, and leads in the way everlasting.

II. Having seen the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned, let us in the second place, look at **THE SORT OF HIGH PRIEST WITH WHOM SINNERS HAVE TO DEAL.**

Now, if I go back to the high priest under the law, the type would be a fine fatherly man, whose very face invited confidence. I should think that all the people were glad when the high priest was very tender and compassionate. Possibly that had occasionally a high priest who was very high and very mighty; one who was very glad when the day's service was over. If sinners wanted to see him, he was not visible; and when he did talk to them, he was not very gentle. Sometimes he may have said to them, "Now you are stupid, you talk nonsense;" and when any of them were very sad, he said, "You ought to know better than to indulge this foolish nervousness of yours." I think that they were not sorry when that high priest was taken from them. But the pattern high priest was a fatherly-looking man, with love in his eyes, a smile on his face, one who had often sorrowed himself, one to whom all the people could go naturally. There are such men still alive. They are like a harbour for ships. Sometime sit brings a very heavy burden upon them, but they are happy men to have such a burden to carry. I think that some of those high priests must have seen a great deal of sin, and a great deal of mercy and divine love. When the poor people went up to the temple, one would say, "I must go in and see the high priest. I have such a burden and he will be able to help me." Another would say, "No, I shall not go in; I do not need to take up his time myself. Did not you hear him speak? What, what he said was just the very thing that I wanted. God gave him the very word that my distress required, and so I can go in peace." But here and there one would say, "Ah! I must tell him. It does me good to unburden my heart." Now that is the kind of high priest that we should all have wished for had we been living in those days; but our Lord Jesus is something incomparably better than that.

He is One who can bear with ignorance, forgetfulness, and provocation. How do I know it? Because he bore so wonderfully with the ignorance of people when he was here. It was with a very tender accent that he said to one of his disciples, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip?" He had told them many, many times the same thing over again, and yet he was not above repeating it, he had such compassion on them. Sometimes, he could not say what he would have liked to say, and yet he bore with the poor men who did not know the burden he had on his heart: he only said, "I have yet many things to say

unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." And when, after he had taught them, they still forgot, he did not chide them. I never find that he turned one of them away because of their stupidity; he did not even cast off Thomas for his unbelief. He let them still linger about his person, despite their false notions and their forgetfulness. They must often have grieved him through their ignorance, and through getting out of the way, especially when they got into the way of each desiring to be the greatest. But notwithstanding all, our Lord was never like Moses. Of him it is written that the people of Israel "provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."; but never an impatient word came from those lips into which grace was so abundantly poured. There was never such a meek, and gentle, and quiet spirit as our divine Lord and Master possessed. I need not dwell on that, for you all know what compassion he had upon the ignorant sons of men.

Again, he is One who can feel for grief, because he has felt the same. When I have explained compassion as implying meekness of disposition, I have not given you the full meaning of the expression. Not only has our Lord compassion on the ignorant by being gentle towards them, but he sympathizes with them by having a fellow-feeling with them. They got out of the way, and into the thorns; they wandered, and fell into a maze; they were lost in the dark mountains, but he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." Because of that fellow-feeling he is always very tender and pitiful; and if he finds any of his children sorrowing, he has abundant compassion upon them.

Moreover, He is One who lays himself out tenderly to help such as come to him. He did so when he was here in body, and he is the same now; all his life was given in tenderness. You never find Christ throwing bread and meat to the hungry crowd as we throw bones to the dogs. He has made them sit down on the green grass, and then he blessed the food, and gave it to his disciples, and they distributed it in a quiet, orderly way. And the Lord Jesus Christ has a very loving way now of helping his people. So tenderly does he do it, that the doing of it is almost as great a wonder as the thing that is done. He abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence, and we may each one say, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." Oh, he is a wonderful Saviour! There is none like him for

sympathizing with us, and dealing tenderly with us.

Another thing I have to say of him that never can be said of anybody else is, that he is One who never repelled a single person. Not even the most ignorant, the most out of the way, was ever turned back from him. It was always true: "This man receiveth sinners." And for ever this word is settled in heaven, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I have not time to go into this matter fully, but all who have read the life of Christ know what a gentle and tender High Priest he was towards men.

"Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well he remembers Calvary
Nor let his saints forget."

His heart is on earth, though he has ascended into the heavens. If anyone here groans after him, he will hear that groan; and if the wish does not come to a vocal sound at all, but if your heart only aches after him, he will feel that ache of your heart, and know what it means; and if you do not know how to pray, the very desire to pray he will interpret. He can have compassion on the ignorant. And if you do not know what you want, but only know that it is something that you must have or die, he will give it to you; for he will interpret your wordless desires, and what you cannot read yourself, he will read for you. But, oh, you must have him; you must have him, you cannot get to God without him! I pray that you will feel such confidence in his tenderness that you may come and take him as your own High Priest; if you do, he will be yours at the moment of acceptance. He will never refuse the seeker. He will not hide himself from his own flesh. He will never be distant and strange to any penitent sinner. If thou desirest him, it is because he desirest thee; and if thou hast a spark of wish for him, he has a furnace of desire for thee. Come, and welcome. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. God bless these words! I pray that he may do so, to very many.

III. Now, I want to speak to those of you who are the people of God. I can imagine that some of you here are troubled, perhaps ill, and that you

cannot get on as you would like in the world. You seem compassed with infirmities. I want to remind you that there may be a blessing even in your weakness; and that this may be the more clearly seen we will look, in the third place, at the SORT OF INFIRMITY WHICH MAY BE SANCTIFIED AND MADE USEFUL.

The high priest of old was compassed with infirmities, and this was part of his qualification. "Yes," says one, "but he was compassed with sinful infirmities; but our Lord Jesus had no sin." That is quite true, but please remember that this does not make Christ less tender, but more so. Anything that is sinful hardens; and inasmuch as he was without sin, he was without the hardening influence that sin would bring to bear upon a man. He was all the more tender when compassed with infirmities, because sin was excluded from the list. We will not, then, reckon sin in any form as an infirmity likely to be turned to a great use, even though the grace of God abounds over the sin; but, beloved friends, let me try and speak to some of you who wish to do good, and set forth some of the things which were sore to bear at the times, and yet have been rich in blessing since.

First think of our struggles in finding mercy. Years ago you had a hard time of it when you were seeking the Saviour. I had, and I have always been very glad of it ever since. It was a long while before I could perceive the eternal light, and cast myself on Christ. I thank God that it was so because I have had to deal with hundreds—I might say thousands—in a similar case; and if I had found Christ, as many dear friends do, very readily and very easily, I could not have guided them; but now I can sit down by the side of them and say, "What! Have you got into the dark? I have been in the dark, too. You are down in the lowest dungeon, are you? Well, I was in the lowest dungeon of all. I can show you the way to where the jug of water stands, and the bit of brown bread. I know the way, for I have been there." If you have not had a certain experience, you cannot so well help others who have; but if you were compassed with infirmity in your first coming to Christ, you may use that in helping others to come to him.

Again, our grievous temptations may be infirmities which shall be largely

used in our service. "What a blessing it would be to live without temptations!" says one. I do not believe it would be a blessing at all. I think that, being without temptation is more of a temptation than having a temptation. There is no devil that is equal to no devil, for when there seems to be none, we get so very quiet and so very easy, and think that everything is going on well, when it is not. Be glad if you have been tempted. Remember that temptation is one of the best books in the minister's library. To be tried, to be afflicted, to be downcast, to be tested—all this helps you to deal with others. You cannot be unto others a helper unless you have been compassed with infirmities. Therefore accept the temptations which trouble you so much, as a part of your salvation to make you useful to others.

Our sickness may turn out to be in the same category. Of course we would like to be always well. I think that health is the greatest blessing that God ever sends us, except sickness, which is far better. I would give anything to be perfectly healthy; but if I had to go over my time again, I could not get on without those sick beds and those bitter pains, and those weary, sleepless nights. Oh, the blessedness that comes to us through smarting, if we are ministers and helpers of others, and teachers of the people! I do not say that too much of it is to be despised, but the Lord knows how much is too much, and he will never afflict us beyond that which he will enable us to bear. But just a touch of sickness now and then may help you mightily. I have heard some brethren preach the gospel, but it had been as hard as a Brazil nut; little children could never get at the kernel. These brethren had never had any trouble or affliction; and if you have never had any, you may try to be very tender, but it will be like an elephant picking up a pin; you may try to be patient and sympathetic, but you will not be able to manage it. Glory in your infirmities, then, and in your sicknesses, for they shall be made useful in you for the comfort of God's sick people.

Our trials, too, may thus be sanctified. He that has had no troubles, and no trials, what mistakes he makes! He is like the French lady in the time of famine, who said that she had no patience with the poor people starving because of the price of bread. You can always buy a penny bun for a penny, she said; and therefore she thought there need not be any

poverty at all. She was one of the rich ones of the earth. I do not suppose that she had ever had a penny bun in her life, or a penny either. Ah, dear friends! You must, if you are ready to help others, be yourself compassed with infirmity.

Our depressions may also tend to our fruitfulness. A heart bowed down with despair is a dreadful thing. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" But if you have never had such an experience, my dear brother, you will not be worth a pin as a preacher. You cannot help others who are depressed unless you have been down in the depths yourself. You cannot lift others out of despondency and depression, unless you yourself have sometimes need to be lifted out of such experiences. You must be compassed with this infirmity, too, at times, in order to have compassion on those in a similar case.

Herein I think that every one of us should try to make use of all his weaknesses. Our whole nature as feeble men may be turned to the noblest use if it calls forth our compassion towards others. Thanks God that you are not a man of iron. We has the Iron Duke once, who did famous things, but in a different fight from ours. An iron preacher would need to have iron hearers; and then, I am afraid, that there would come a crash before long. No, no; we must have our weaknesses and infirmity consecrated to God, and laid at his feet. Let us go, in all our weakness and infirmity, and try to help others who are as ignorant and as out of the way as we once were; and, God blessing us, when we are weak, we shall be strong. When we are less than nothing, the all-sufficiency of God will be all the more manifested. Here I must stop, for our time has gone. May the Lord bless the word, both to the sinner and to the saint, for his name's sake! Amen.

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Our Expectation

He shall see his seed. - Isaiah 53:10

The first thought suggested by this text is, that Jesus is still alive; for to see anything is the act of a living person. Our Lord Jesus died. We know that he died. We are glad that there is overwhelming evidence that, not in appearance, but in fact, he died. His side was pierced; he was given up by the Roman authorities for burial; the imperial authorities were sure of his death. The soldier had made assurance doubly sure by piercing his side. His disciples buried him. They would not have left him in the cave if they had felt any doubt about his death. They went in the morning after the Sabbath to embalm him. They were all persuaded that he had really died. Blessed be the dying Christ! Here our living hopes take their foundation. If he had not died, we must have died for ever. The more assured we are of his death, the more assured we feel of the life of all who are in him.

But, my brothers, he is not dead. Some years ago, someone, wishing to mock our holy faith, brought out a handbill, which was plastered everywhere—"Can you trust in a dead man?" Our answer would have been, "No; nobody can trust in a man who is dead." But it was known by those who printed the bill that they were misrepresenting our faith. Jesus is no longer dead. He rose again the third day. We have sure and infallible proofs of it. It is an historical fact, better proved than almost any other which is commonly received as historical, that he did really rise again from the grave. He arose no more to die. He has gone out of the land of tears and death. He has gone into the region of immortality. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and he reigns there for ever. We love him that died, but we rejoice that he who died is not dead, but ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Dear children of God, do not be afraid that Christ's work will break down because he is dead. He lives to carry it on. That which he purchased for us by his death, he lives to secure for us by his life. Do not let your faith be a sort of dead faith dealing with a dead man; let it be instinct with life, with warm blood in its veins. Go to your own Christ, your living Christ; make him your familiar Friend, the Acquaintance of your solitude, the Companion of your pilgrimage. Do not think that there is a great gulf between you, a living man, and him. The shades of death do not divide you from him. He lives, he feels, he sympathizes, he looks on, he is ready

to help, he will help you even now. You have come in to the place where prayer is wont to be made, burdened and troubled, and you seek relief; let the thought that your Lord is a living Friend ease you of your burden. He is still ready to be your strong Helper, and to do for you what he did for needy ones in the days of his sojourn here below. I want even you, who do not know him, to remember that he lives, that you may seek him to-night—that ere another sun shall rise you may find him, and, finding him, may yourselves be found, and saved. Do not try to live without the living, loving Friend of sinners. Seek his healing hand; then beg for his company; get it; keep it; and you shall find that it makes life below like heaven above. When you live with the living Christ, you will live indeed. In him is light, and the light is the life of men.

And now to the text itself, with brevity. I have to observe upon it, first, that Christ's death produced a posterity. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." Evidently the death of Christ was fruitful of a seed for him. Secondly, that posterity remains. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not look to-day on emptiness: he is not bereaved of his household, but still he sees his seed. And, thirdly and lastly, that posterity is under his immediate eye at all times, for "He shall see his seed."

I. Well, first of all, THE DEATH OF CHRIST AS PRODUCED A POSTERITY. We do not read here that the Lord Christ has followers. That would be true; but the text prefers to say he has a seed. We read just now that the Lord Jesus has disciples. That would be distinctly true; but the text does not so read. It says, "He shall see his seed." Why his seed? Why, because everyone, who is a true follower or disciple of Christ, has been born by a new birth from him into the position of disciple. There is no knowing Christ except through the new birth. We are naturally sold under sin, and we cannot discern the spiritual and real Christ until we have a spirit created within us by the new birth, of which he said, "Ye must be born again." This is the gate of entrance into discipleship. None can be written in the roll of followers of Christ unless they are also written in the register of the family of God—"this and that man was born there." Other men can get disciples for themselves by the means that are usual for such ends; but all the disciples of Christ are produced by miracle. They are all disciplined by being newly-created. Jesus, as he looks upon

them all, can say, "Behold, I make all things new." They all come into the world, of which he is King, by being born into it. There is no other way into the first world but by birth: and there is no other way into the second world, wherein dwelleth righteousness, but by birth, and that birth is strictly connected with the pangs of the Saviour's passion, "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." See, then, the reason why we have here the remarkable expression—"his seed."

Learn from this that all who truly follow Christ, and are saved by him, have his life in them. The parent's life is in the child. From the parent that life has been received. It is Christ's life that is in every true believer—"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." We have our natural life, and this makes us men: we have our spiritual life, and this makes us Christians. We take life from our parents, this links us with the first Adam: we have taken life from Christ, and this joins us to the second Adam. Do not mistake me; that same life which abides in Christ, at the right hand of God, is that everlasting life which he has bestowed upon all those who put their trust in him. That water springing up into everlasting life he gave us. He made it to be in us a well of water springing up. The first drops of that living spring, the whole outcome of the spring, and the spring itself, came from him.

Let me put it to you, beloved hearers. Do you know anything about this new birth? Do you know anything about this divine life? There are multitudes of religious people, very religious people; but they are as dead as door-nails. Multitudes of religious persons are like waxworks, well-proportioned, and you might mistake them by candle-light for life; but in the light of God you would soon discover that there is a mighty difference, for the best that human skill can do is a poor imitation of real life. You, dear hearer, dressed in the garments of family religion, and adorned with the jewels of moral virtue, may be nothing beyond "a child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child." God's living children may not seem to be quite so handsome, nor so charmingly arrayed as you are, and in their own esteem they may not be worthy to consort with you; but there is a solemn difference between the living child and the dead child, however you may try to conceal it. Righteous men know themselves to be

sinner: sinners believe themselves to be righteous men. There is more truth in the fear of the first than there can be in the faith of the second; for the faith of the second is founded on a falsehood. Beloved, we become, I say again, the followers of Christ by being made partakers of his life, and unless his life be in us, we may say what we will about Christ, and profess what we like about following him; but we are not in the secret. We are out of the spiritual world altogether—that world of which he is the Head, the Creator, the Lord. You see why the word "seed" is used. We come to him by birth: we are partakers of his life.

Furthermore, believers in our Lord are said to be his seed because they are like him. I wish that I could say this with less need to qualify it; but the man who really believes in Jesus, and in whom the divine life is strong and powerful, is like to Jesus, and especially like to Jesus in this—that, as the Christ consecrated himself wholly to God's service and glory, so has this believer done; and as the Christ founded his successes on being dead and buried, surrendering honor, and comfort, and life itself, for his work, so should the true believer be willing to give up anything and everything, that he may achieve his life-purpose, and bring glory to God. "As he is, so are we in this world"—that is, we are bent upon the glory of God; filled with love to men, and anxious for their salvation, that God may be glorified thereby. You know best, brothers and sisters, whether this is true of you; but if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his. If we are not like Christ, it is not possible that we are his seed, for the seed is like the parent. Surely, children are like their father—not all to the same degree; but still there is the evidence of their sonship in their likeness to him from whom they came. Our Lord's true people are like him, or they could not be styled "his seed." Alas, the old nature blots and blurs the resemblance! The stamp of the first Adam is not altogether removed; but it ought to grow fainter and fainter, while the lines of the divine portrait should grow stronger and clearer. Is this the experience of our life in Christ? I pray that it may be so. It should cause us great searching of heart if there is not in us an increasing likeness to our Lord.

There is this to be said also for those who are called his seed—that they prosecute the same ends, and expect to receive the same reward. We are towards Christ, his seed, and thus we are heirs to all that he has—heirs to

his business on earth, heirs to his estate in heaven. We are to be witnesses to the truth as Jesus was, and to go about doing good as he did, and to seek and save the lost after his example. This we must inherit, as a son follows his father's business. All that Christ has belongs to his seed. As a man hands down to his posterity his possessions, Christ Jesus has made over to his people all that he is, and all that he has, and all that he ever will be, that they may be with him, and behold his glory, and shine with him as the stars for ever and ever. We are his seed in this respect—that he has taken us into his family, and given us the family patrimony, and made us partakers of all things in himself.

Now, beloved, this is all through his death. We are made his seed through his death. Why through his death principally? Why, because it was by reason of his death for us that the Father could come and deal with us, and the Spirit could breathe upon us, and new-create us. There was no dealing with us by a just God until the atoning Sacrifice had rolled away the stone that blocked the way, namely, the necessity that sin should be punished. Christ having died for us, we came into another relation to justice, and it became possible for us to be regenerated, and brought into the household of God. Beloved, I think that you know, in your own experience, that it was his death that really operated most upon you in the matter of your conversion. I hear a great talk about the example of Christ having great effect upon ungodly men; but I do not believe it, and certainly have never seen it. It has great effect upon men when they are born again, and are saved from the wrath to come, and are full of gratitude on this account; but before that happens, we have known men admire the conduct of Christ, and even write books about the beauty of his character, while, at the same time, they have denied his Godhead. Thus they have rejected him in his essential character, and there has been no effect produced upon their conduct by their cold admiration of his life. But when a man comes to see that he is pardoned and saved through the death of Jesus, he is moved to gratitude, and then to love. "We love him because he first loved us." That love which he displayed in his death has touched the mainspring of our being, and moved us with a passion to which we were strangers before; and, because of this, we hate the sins that once were sweet, and turn with all our hearts to the obedience that once was so unpleasant. There is more effect in faith in the blood of

Christ to change the human character than in every other consideration. The cross once seen, sin is crucified: the passion of the Master once apprehended as being endured for us, we then feel that we are not our own, but are bought with a price. This perception of redeeming love, in the death of our Lord Jesus, makes all the difference: this prepares us for a higher and a better life than we have ever known before. It is his death that does it.

And now, beloved, if by his death we have become his seed (and I think I speak at this time to many who can truly say they hope that it is so with them), then let us consider the fact for a minute. We are his seed. They speak of the seed royal. What shall I say of the seed of Christ? Believer, you may be a poor person, living in an obscure lane, but you are of the imperial house. You are ignorant and unlettered, it may be, and your name will never shine in the roll of science, but he who is the divine Wisdom owns you as one of his seed. It may be that you are sick: even now your head is aching, your heart is faint; you feel that by-and-by you will die. Ah, well! but you are of his seed who died, and rose, and is gone into glory. You are of the seed of him "who only hath immortality." You may put away your crowns, ye kings and emperors—earth, yellow earth, hammered, and decorated, with other sparkling bits of soil—you may put them all away, as altogether outdone in value! We have crowns infinitely more precious, and we belong to a royal house transcendently more glorious than any of yours.

But then it follows, if we are thus of a seed, that we ought to be united, and love each other more and more. Christian people, you ought to have a clannish feeling! Oh," says one, "you mean that the Baptists ought to get together!" I do not mean anything of the kind. I mean that the seed of Christ should be of one heart; and we ought to recognize that, wherever the life and love of Jesus are to be found, there our love goes out. It is very delightful, at Christmas time, or perhaps at some other time in the year, for all the family to meet; and though your name may be "Smith" or "Brown," yet you feel there is some importance in your name, when all your clan have met together. It may be a name that is very common, or very obscure; but, somehow, you feel quite great on that day when all the members of the family have joined to keep united holiday. Your love to

one another gathers warmth, as the glowing coals are drawn together. So may it be in your heart towards all those that belong to Christ! You are of the blood royal of heaven. You are neither a Guelph nor a Hohenzollern, but you are a Christian; and that is a greater name than all. He has a seed—even he whom, unseen, we this night adore. My inmost soul glories in the Head of my clan—in him of the pierced hands, and the nailed feet, who wears for his princely star the lance-mark in his side! Oh, how blessedly bright is he! How transcendently glorious are the nail-prints! We adore him in the infinite majesty of his unutterable love. We are of his seed, and so we are near akin to him. Do not think that I am too familiar. I go not beyond the limit which this word allows me, nay, I have scarcely come up to the edge of it. We are truly of the seed of Jesus, even as the Jews are of the seed of Israel—not born after the flesh, for he had none born to him in that way; but born after the Spirit, wherein his seed is as the stars of heaven. We rejoice with exultation as we read the text, "He shall see his seed."

Thus much on our first point.

II. Now, my second point is, THAT POSTERITY OF HIS REMAINS. Our Lord always has a seed. That seems to me to be clear from the indefiniteness of the text. It does not say that he shall see his seed for so long, and then no longer; but it stands as a prophecy fulfilled, always fulfilling, and always to be fulfilled:—"He shall see his seed." Christ will always have a seed to see. His church, then, will never die out while the world standeth; and throughout eternity that seed must still exist in the endless state; for world without end our Lord Jesus shall see his seed.

I notice that the word is in the plural—"He shall see his seeds," as though some were truly his seed, and yet for a time, at least, differed from the rest. Our Lord said of those not yet converted, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring;" and again, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Christ will see generation after generation of those redeemed by his blood who shall be born into his family, and shall call him blessed. Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom he will make princes in all the earth. The Septuagint reads it, "He shall see a long-lived seed."

Though I do not think that the version is correct, it shows that still it was thought and believed that the Messiah would have a perpetual seed. Certainly it is so. Beloved, if it had been possible to destroy the church of God on earth, it would have been destroyed long ago. The malice of hell has done all that it could do to destroy the seed of Christ—the seed that sprang from his death. Standing in the Colosseum at Rome, I could not, as I looked around on the ruins of that vast house of sin, but praise God that the church of God existed, though the Colosseum is in ruins. Anyone standing there, when the thousands upon thousands gloated their eyes with the sufferings of Christians, would have said, "Christianity will die out; but the Colosseum, so firmly built will stand to the end of time;" but lo, the Colosseum is a ruin, and the church of God more firm, more strong, more glorious than ever! Only read the story of the persecutions under Nero, and under Diocletian, in the olden times, and you will wonder that Christianity survived the cruel blows. Every form of torture which devils could invent was inflicted upon Christian men and women. Not here and there, but everywhere, they were hunted down and persecuted. It makes one thrill with horror as he reads of women tossed on the horns of bulls, or set in red-hot iron chairs; and men smeared with honey to be stung to death by wasps, or dragged at the heels of wild horses, or exposed to savage beasts in the amphitheatre. But I will say no more about it. The gallant vessel of the church ploughed the red waves of a crimson sea, her prow scarlet with gore, but the ship itself was the better for its washing, and sailed all the more gallantly because of boisterous winds. As to our own country, read the story of persecutions here. You will have enough if you only read Foxe's "Book of Martyrs." I wish that every house had in it a large-typed copy of the "Book of Martyrs." Well do I recollect, as a child, how man hours, how many days, I spent looking at the pictures in an old-fashioned "Book of Martyrs," and wondering how the men of God suffered, as they did, so bravely. I recollect how I used to turn to that boy of Brentford, who was first beaten with rods, and afterwards tied to the stake, cheerfully to burn for Christ's sake. I am reminded, by the effect which it had upon my mind, of what was said of a certain ancient church in this city of London, which was greatly persecuted. Many, many years ago, a number of persons were noticed to be going towards Smithfield, early one morning, and somebody said, "Whither are you going?" "We are going to Smithfield."

"What for?" "To see our pastor burnt." "Well, but what, in the name of goodness, do you want to see him burnt for? What can be the good of it?" They answered, "We go to see him burn that we may learn the way." Oh, but that was grand! "To learn the way!" Then the rank and file of the followers of Jesus learned the way to suffer and die as the leaders of the church set the example. Yet the church in England was not destroyed by persecution, but it became more mighty than ever because of the opposition of its foes.

Since then there have been laborious attempts to destroy the church of Christ by error. One hundred years ago or so, throughout the most of our Dissenting churches, a sort of Unitarianism was triumphant. The essential doctrines of the gospel were omitted, the pith of it was taken away, the marrow was torn out of its bones. The Church of England was asleep, too; and everywhere it seemed as if there was a kind of orthodox heterodoxy that did not believe anything in particular, and did not hold that there was a doctrine worth anybody's living for or dying for, but that all religious teaching should be like a nose of wax, that you might shape whichever way you liked. It looked as if the living church of God would be extinguished altogether; but it was not so, for God did but stamp his foot, and, from all parts of the country, men like Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, came to the front, and hundreds of others, mighty men of valor, proclaimed the gospel with unusual power, and away went the bats and the owls back to their proper dwelling-place. The same mischievous experiment is being tried now, and there will be the same result; for the living Christ is still to the front. The King is not off the ground yet: the battle will be won by his armies. Jehovah has declared his decree, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Our Lord shall see his seed on the conquering hand yet.

Worldliness has gone a long way to destroy the church of God. I judge it to be the worst cankerworm that assails us. Persons come into the church with a profession which they never carry out. Have we not all around us persons who say that they are Christians, and are not, but do lie. And many who, we hope, are Christians, are but very poverty-stricken specimens of the race, with little love, little zeal (indeed, they are afraid to be too zealous), little searching of the Word, little prayer, little

consecration, little communion with God. They are enough to kill all hope of better things. The Lord have mercy upon his poor church when she comes to be neither cold nor hot, so that he is ready to spue her out of his mouth! Yet, still the lukewarm can be heated: the cause is not dead. "He shall see his seed." Take it as a standing miracle that there are any godly people on the face of the earth; for there would not be one were it not for the exertion of miraculous power. Christianity is not a natural growth: it is constantly a divine creation. Christian life needs to have daily the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The church must perpetually receive fresh light and life from above, or else it would die; but still stands the promise, "He shall see his seed." While sun and moon endure, there shall be a people who follow the Lamb; and even though they be so few that Elias might say, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life to take it away," God will reserve to himself thousands that have not bowed the knee to Baal.

III. And now I am to wind up with this third thought:—THIS POSTERITY IS ALWAYS UNDER THE IMMEDIATE EYE OF CHRIST. "He shall see his seed." Oh, I like this, "He shall see his seed"! He sees them when they are first born anew. I keep looking out from this pulpit for that small portion of them that may be born in this place; and there are many watchful brethren and sisters here, who try to speak to all that come into the place in whom there are movings of the Spirit. If there is an anxious soul, they seek to find him out. We cannot see them all; but HE shall see his seed. Sometimes it is a question whether they are his seed or not—a very great question with themselves, but none with him: he sees his seed. Some are seeking; they have hardly found; they are longing; they have scarcely realized the way of faith. Ah, well! he sees your first desires, your humble breathings, your lowly hopes, your trembling approaches. He sees you. There is not a child of his, born in any out-of-the-way place, but what he perceives him at once. The first living cry, the first living tear, he observes. "He shall see his seed." What a mercy to have such a Watcher! We poor earthly pastors are of small use; but this great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, with an eye that never misses a single new-born lamb of grace—what a mercy to have such a Shepherd to look after the whole flock!" He shall see his seed."

Yes, and ever afterward, wherever his seed may wander, he still sees

them. Some of you, perhaps, have lived long in England, but you are contemplating going far away—to Australia or America. You wonder whether you will meet with any friend who will help you spiritually. Do not fear. "He shall see his seed." "Rivers unknown to song, are not unknown to God." And if you should have to dwell quite alone in the bush, and have no Christian acquaintance, still go direct to the Son of God, for "He shall see his seed." The eye of Christ is never off from the eye of faith. If you look to him, rest you well assured that he looks to you.

The beauty of it is, that this look of Christ, whereby he sees his seed, is one of intense delight. I cannot preach upon that most precious topic, but I wish you to think it over: it is a divine pleasure to the Lord Jesus to look at you: it is promised him as a reward for his death. Mother, you know yourself what a pleasure it has been for you to look at your daughter, and to see her grow up. You would not like to tell her all you have thought of her: you have looked at her with intense delight. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ looks at you in just the same way. Love is blind, they say. Jesus is not blind; but he does see in his people much more than they ever will see in themselves. He sees their hopes, their desires, their aspirations; and he often takes the will for the deed, and marks that for a beauty which now may be half-developed, and therefore not all we could wish it to be. It is, at present, the caricature of a virtue; but it is well meant, and will come right, and the Lord sees it as it will be, and he rejoices in it. Oh, what blessed eyes those are of his that can spy out beauties which only he can see! Since he has created them, and put them there himself, he sees them. He shall see his seed." He suffered so much for our redemption, that he must love us. We cost him so much, that he must delight in us.

"The Son with joy looks down, and sees
The purchase of his agonies."

"He shall see his seed."

Brethren, our Saviour will always behold his redeemed ones. He will see all his seed to the last. When they come to the river which divides them from the celestial country, "he shall see his seed." It may possibly be gloomy with some of you; but it is not often dark at death-time. Many of

the Lord's children have a fine candle to go to bed with. Even if they go to bed in the dark, they fall asleep the sooner; but in either case, their Lord will see them if they cannot see him. When you can see nothing, and the brain begins to reel, and thought and memory flee, he sees his seed.

But what a seed he will have to see in the morning! I am not yet an old man, as some suppose from the many years of my ministry, but I am often looking forward to that blessed morning, when all the sacred seed shall meet around the throne. I believe the Christ will come in to see all his beloved purchased ones; and he will search to see whether we are all there. Then shall the sheep pass again under the hand of him that telleth them, and he will count them, for he knows whom he bought with his blood, and he will see that they are there in full tale. I think that I hear the reading of the register, the muster-roll. Will you be there to answer to your name? Dear friends, all the Lord's seed will be there—all that were born into his house with a new birth. They shall answer, "Ay, ay, ay, we are here; we are here!" Oh, but the joy we shall have in being there—the delight in beholding his face; yet, if all our joys are put together, they will not equal the joy that he will have when he finds them all there for whom he shed his blood—all whom the Father gave him—all who gave themselves to him—all who were born as his seed—not one lost! "Of all whom thou hast given me, I have lost none." Oh, the joy, the delight, of our Well-beloved in that day! Then shall he see his seed!

And I believe that it will be a part of his heaven for him to look upon his redeemed. He is the Bridegroom, they make up the bride; and the bridegroom's joy is not in seeing his bride for once on the wedding-day, but he takes delight in her as long as they both live. A true husband and a true spouse are always lovers: they are always linked together by strong ties of affection; and it is so with that model husband, the Lord Christ, and his perfect church above. He loves his people no less, and he could not love them any more, than when he died for them, and so for ever "he shall see his seed."

Thus have I talked with you in a very poor and feeble way, as far as my speech is concerned: but the doctrine is not feeble, the gospel is not poor. O you that are the seed of Christ, go out and magnify him by your lives!

Be worthy of your high calling. Show the nobility of your pedigree by the magnanimity of your lives. And, you that are not among his seed, see where you are! What can you do? All that you can do will bring you no further: you must be born again; and this is the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God works the new birth in his own way, but he works according to the gospel. What is the gospel? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." I give you the gospel without mutilating it, just as I get it in the gospel by Mark, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Obey the precept, and the promise is yours. God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus, and so to have eternal life! The moment you believe in Jesus Christ you are born again. May he, by his Holy Spirit, seal the message with his blessing to everyone in this house, for his own name's sake! Amen.

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Our Glorious Transforming

But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. - Ephesians 2:13

I do not want you to feel at this time as if you were listening to a sermon, or to any sort of set discourse, but rather I should like, if it were possible, that you should feel as if you were alone with the Saviour, and were engaged in calm and quiet meditation; and I will try to be the prompter, standing at the elbow of your contemplation, suggesting one thought and then another; and I pray, dear brethren and sisters in, Christ, as many of you as are truly in him, that you may be able so to meditate as to be profited, and to say at the close, "My meditation on him was sweet. I will be glad in his name." There are three very simple things in the text. The first is what we were. Some time ago "we were far off." But secondly, what we are—we are "made nigh" And then there is the how, the means of this

great change. It is "in Christ Jesus," and it is added, "by the blood of Christ." First, then, let us with humility consider, as believers:—

I. WHAT WE WERE.

There was a day when we passed from death unto life. All of us who are children of God have undergone a great and mysterious change; we have been new created, we have been born again. If any of you have not experienced this great change, I can only pray that you may, but you will not be likely to take much interest in the theme of meditation this evening. As many of you as have experienced this great change are now asked to recollect what you were. You were far off, first, in the respect that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The Jew was brought nigh. The Jewish people were favoured of God with light, while the rest of the world remained in darkness. "To them he gave" the oracles; with them he made a covenant; but as for the rest of the nations, they were left unclean and far off. They could not come near to God. This was our condition. We were Gentiles. We had no participation in the covenant that God had made with Abraham; we had no share in the sacrifices of Aaron or his successors. We could not come in by the way of circumcision. We were not born after the flesh, and we had no right to that fleshly covenant, however great its privileges. We are brought nigh now. All that the Jew ever had we have. We have all his privileges, and more. He had but the shadow, we have the substance. He had but the type: we have the reality. But aforetime we had neither shadow nor substance; we were afar off, and had no participation in them.

And, beloved, when we think of our distance from God, there are three or four ways in which we may illustrate it. We were far off from God, for a vast cloudland of ignorance hung between our souls and him. We were lost as in a tangled wood in which there was no pathway. We were like some bird drifted out to sea that should be bereft of the instinct which guides it on its course, driven to and fro by every wind, and tossed like a wave by every tempest. We knew not God, neither did we care to know. We were in the dark with regard to him and his character; and when we did make guesses concerning God, they were very wide of the truth, and did not help to bring us at all near. He has taught us better now; he has

taught us to call him Father, and to know that he is love. Since we have known God, or, rather, have been known of God, we have come nigh, but once our ignorance kept us very far off. Worse than that, there was between us and God a vast range of the mountains of sin. We can measure the Alps, the Andes have been sealed, but the mountains of sin no man has ever measured yet. They are very high. They pierce the clouds. Can you think of the mountains of your sin, beloved? Reckon them all up since your birth—sins of childhood, and youth, and manhood, and riper years; your sins against the gospel, and against the law; sins with the body, and sins with the mind; sins of every shape and form—ah! what a mountain range they make! And you were on one side of that mountain, and God was on the other. A holy God could not wink at sin, and you, an unholy being, could not have fellowship with the thrice Holy God. What a distance!—an impassable mountain sundered you from your God. It has all gone now. The mountains have sunk into the sea, our transgressions have all gone, but, oh! what hills they were once, and what mountains they were but a little while ago! In addition to these mountains, there was, on the other side nearest to God, a great gulf of divine wrath. God was angry, justly angry, with us. He could not have been God if sin had not made him angry. He that plays with sin is very far from knowing anything of the character of the Most High. There was a deep gulf. Ah! even the lost in hell know not how deep it is. They have been sinking: but this abyss hath no bottom. God's love is infinite. Who knoweth the power of shine anger, O Most High? It is all filled now, as far as we are concerned. Christ has bridged the chasm. He has taken us to the other side of it; he ho brought us nigh; but what a gulf it was! Look down and shudder. Have you ever stood on a glacier and looked down a crevasse, and taken a great stone and thrown it down, and waited till at last you heard the sound as it reached the bottom? Have not you shuddered at the thought of falling down that steep? But there you stood but a little while ago, an heir of wrath, even as others. So the Apostle puts it, "even as others." Oh! how far off you were!

Nor was this all, for there was another division between you and God. When, dear friends, we were brought to feel our state, and to have some longings after the Most High, had the mountains of sin been moved and the chasm of wrath been filled, yet there remained another distance of

our own making. There was a sea of fear rolling between us and God. We dare not come to him. He told us he would forgive, but we could not think it true. He said that the blood would cleanse us—the precious blood of the atoning sacrifice—but we thought our stains too crimson to be removed. We dared not believe in the infinite compassion of our Father. We ran from him; we could not trust him. Do you not remember those times when to believe seemed an impossibility, and salvation by faith appeared to be as difficult a thing as salvation by the works of the law? That sea has gone away now. We have been ferried o'er its streams. We have no fear of God now in the form of trembling, slavish fear; we are brought nigh and say, "Abba Father," with an untrembling tongue. You see then something of the distance there was between us and God, but I will illustrate it in another way. Think of God a moment. Your thoughts cannot reach him: he is infinitely pure; the heavens are not clean in his sight; and he charges his angels with folly. That is one side of the picture. Now look at yourself, a worm that has rebelled against its Creator, loathsome with sin, through and through defiled. When I see a beggar and a prince stand together I see a distance, but ah! it is but an inch, a span, compared with the infinite leagues of distance in character and nature between God and the fallen man. Who but Christ could have lifted up from so low an estate to so high a condition—from fellowship with devils unto communion with Jehovah himself? The distance was inconceivable. We were lost in wonder at the greatness of the love that made it all to vanish. We were afar off.

Now I have stated that very simply. Think it over a minute. And what do you feel as the result of your thought? Why, humility rises. Suppose you are a very experienced Christian, and a very intelligent reader of the Bible; suppose that for many years you have been able to maintain a consistent character. Ah! my dear brother, my dear sister, you have nothing whereof glory when you recollect what you were, and what you would have been still if it had not been for sovereign grace. You, perhaps, have forgotten a little that you were just what the Bible says. You have been so contemplating your present privileges that you have for a while failed to remember that it is only by the grace of God that you are what you are. Let these considerations bring you back to your true condition. And now with lowly reverence at the cross-foot bow down your soul and say, "My Lord, between me and the greatest reprobate there is no

difference but what thy grace has made; between me and lost souls in hell there is no difference except what shine infinite compassion has deigned to make. I humbly bless thee, and adore thee, and love thee, because thou hast brought me nigh."

And now we shall continue our contemplation, but take the second point. We have a bitter pill in this first one, but the next consideration kills it, takes the bitterness away, and sweetens it. It is:

II. WHAT WE ARE—WHAT WE ARE

"We are made nigh through the blood of Christ." You will please to observe that the Apostle does not say, "We hope we are"; he speaks positively, as every believer should. Nor does he say, "We shall be." There are privileges reserved for the future, but here he is speaking of a present blessing, which may be now the object of distinct definite knowledge, which ought to be, indeed, a matter of present experimental enjoyment. We are brought nigh. What means he by this? Does not he mean, first, what I have already said, that as we were far off, being Gentiles, and not of the favoured commonwealth of Israel, we are now brought nigh, that is to say, we have all the privileges of the once favoured race. Are they the seed of Abraham? So, are we. for he was the Father of the faithful, and we, having believed, have become his spiritual children. Had they an altar? We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. Had they any high priest? We have an high priest we have one who has entered into the heavenly. Had they a sacrifice and paschal supper? We have Christ Jesus, who, by his one offering, hath for ever put away our sin, and who is to-day the spiritual meat on which we feed. All that they had we have, only we have it in a fuller and clearer sense. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and they have come to us. But we are brought a great deal nearer than the Jew—than most of the Jews were, for you know, brethren, the most devout Jew could not offer sacrifice to God; I mean, as a rule. Prophets were exceptions. They could not offer sacrifices themselves; they could bring the victim, but there were some special persons who must act as priests. The priest came nigh to God on the behalf of the people. Listen, O ye children of God, who were once afar off! It is the song of heaven. Let it be

your song on earth—"Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hath made us priests and kings." We are all priests if we love the Saviour. Every believer is a priest. It is for him to bring his sacrifice of prayer, and thanksgiving, and come in, even into the holy place in the presence of the Most High. And I might say more, for no priest went into the most holy place of all, save one, the high priest, and he once in the year, not without blood and not without smoke and of incense, ventured into the most holy place. Be we, brethren, see the veil taken right away, and we come up to the mercy-seat without the trembling which the high priest felt of old, for we see the blood of Jesus on the mercy-seat and the veil rent, and we come, boldly to the throne of heavenly grace to obtain grace to help in time of need. Oh! how near we are; nearer than the ordinary Jew; nearer than the priest; as near as the high priest himself, for in the person of Christ we are where he is, that is, at the throne of God. Let me say, dear brethren, that we are near to God today, for all that divides us from God is gone. The moment a sinner believes, all that mountain of sin ceases to be. Can you see those hills—those towering Andes? Who shall climb them? But lo! I see one come who has the soar of one that has died upon a cross. I see him hold up his pierced hand, and one drop of blood falls on the hills, and they smoke; they dissolve like the fat of rams; they burn to vapour, and they are gone. There is not so much as a vestige of them left. Oh! glory be to God, there is no sin in God's book against the believer; there is no record remaining; he hath taken it away and nailed it to his cross, and triumphed in the deed. As the Egyptians were all drowned in the sea, and Israel said, "The depths have covered them; there was not one of them left," so may every believer say, "All sin is gone, and we are pure, accepted in the Beloved, justified through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ." Oh! how glorious this nearness is when all distance is gone!

And now, brethren, we are near to God, for we are his friends. He is our mighty friend, and we love him in return. Better than that, we are his children. A friend might be forgotten, but a child—a father's bowels yearn towards him. We are his children. He has chosen us that we may approach unto him, that we may dwell in his courts and abide, and go no more out for ever." The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." And this is our privilege. And yet even more than that.

Can anybody here imagine how near Jesus Christ is to God, So near are we, for that is truth which the little verse sings:—

"So near—so very near to God,
More near I cannot be;
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he."

If we are, indeed, in Christ, we are one with him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and he has said, "Where I am, there shall also my servants be," and he has declared that we shall receive the glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. What nearness is this!

Now I have stated that truth, I want you now to feed on it for a minute, and draw the natural conclusions, and feel the fit emotion. Beloved, if you are brought so near to God, what manner of lives ought you to lead? Common subjects ought never to speak traitorous word, but a member of the Privy Council, one who is admitted to the Court, should certainly be loyal through and through. Oh! how we ought to love God, who has made us nigh!—a people near unto him. How ought heavenly things and holy things to engross our attention! How joyously we ought to live too, for with such high favours as these it would be ungrateful to be unhappy! We are near to God, brethren. Then God sees us in all things—our heavenly Father knows what we have need of; he is always watching over us for good. We are near to him—let us pray as if we were near God. There are some prayers that are dreadful from the distance there is evidently in the mind of the offerer. Too generally liturgies are addresses to a God too far off to be reached, but the humble familiarity which boldly comes trembling with fear, but rejoicing with faith, into the presence of God—this becomes those who are made nigh. When a man is near a neighbour whom he trusts he tells him his griefs, he asks his help. Deal thus with God; live on him, live for him, live in him. Be never distant from a God who has made you nigh unto himself. Our life ought to be a heavenly one, seeing that we are brought nigh to God—the God of heaven. Brethren, how assured every one of us may be of our safety if we are, indeed, believers in Christ, for if we are made nigh by love and friendship to our

God, he cannot leave us. If, when we were enemies, he brought us nigh, will he not keep us now he has made us friends? He loved us so as to bring us up from the depths of sin, when we had no thoughts, nor desires towards good, and now he has taught us to love him and to long for him, will he forsake us? Impossible! What confidence this doctrine gives!

And once more, dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord has brought us nigh, what hope we ought to have for those who are farthest off from God to-day! Never be you amongst that pharisaical crew who imagine that fallen women or degraded men cannot be uplifted again. Ye were sometimes far off, but he has made you nigh. The distance was so great in your case that surely he who met that can also meet the distance in another case. Have hope for any who can be got under the sound of the gospel, and labour on until the more hopeless, the most hopeless, are brought there. Oh! let us gird up our loins for Christian work! believing that if God has saved us, there remain no impossibles. The chief of sinners was saved years ago. Paul said so. He had no mock modesty. I believe he said the truth The chief of sinners has gone through the gate into heaven, and there is room for the second worst to get through—there is room for thee, friend, as there is room for me. The God that brought me nigh has taught me to know that no man is beyond the reach of his grace. But I must leave that with you, hoping that it will flavour all your thoughts to-night. Once more. The last thing we are to consider is:—

III. HOW THE GREAT CHANGE WAS WROUGHT.

We were put into Christ, and then through the blood we were made nigh. The doctrine of the Atonement is no novelty in this house. We have preached it often, nay, we preach it constantly, and let this mouth be dumb when it prefers any other theme to that old, old story of the passion, the substitution, and consequent redemption by blood. Beloved, it is the blood of Jesus that has done everything for us. Our debts Christ has paid; therefore, those debts have ceased to be. The punishment of our sin Christ has borne and, therefore, no punishment is due to us; substitution has met a case that is never to be met by any other means. The just has suffered for the unjust to bring us to God. We deserved the sword, but it has fallen upon him who deserved it not, who voluntarily

placed himself in our room instead, that he might give compensation to justice and full liberty to mercy. It is by the blood that we are brought nigh then. Christ has suffered in our stead, and we are, therefore, forgiven. But think about that blood a minute. It means suffering; it means a life surrendered with agony. Suffering—we talk about it; ah! but when you feel it, then you think more of the Saviour. When the bones ache, when the body is racked, when sleep goes from the eyelids, when the mind is depressed, when the head turns; ah! then we say, "My Saviour, I see a little of the price that redeemed me from going down into the pit." The mental and physical suffering of Christ are both worthy of our consideration, but depend upon it his soul's sufferings were the soul of his sufferings; and when we are under deep depression, brought near even unto death with sorrow, then again we guess how the Saviour bought us. The early Church was noted in its preaching for preaching facts. I am afraid now that we are too noted for forgetting facts and preaching doctrine. Let us have doctrine by all means, but, after all the fact is the great thing. When Paul gave a summary of the gospel which he triad preached, he said, "This is the gospel that I have preached—that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried, rose again." There in Gethsemane, where bloody sweat bedews the soil; there on the pavement, where the lash tears again and again into those blessed shoulders till the purple streams gush down, and the ploughers make their furrows, and the blood fills them; there when they hurl him on his back to the ground, and fasten his hands to the wood with rough iron; there when they lift him up and dislocate his bones, when they fix the cross into the earth; there when they sit and watch him, and insult his prayers, and mock his thirst, while he hangs naked to his shame in the midst of a ribald crew; there where God himself forsakes him, where Jehovah turns his face away from him, where the sufferer shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—there it is that we were brought nigh, even we that were far off. Adore your Saviour, my brethren—bow before him. He is not here. for he is risen; but your hearts can rise, and you can bow at his feet. Oh! kiss those wounds of his; ask that by faith you may put your finger into the print of his nails, and your hand into his side. "Be not faithless, but believing," and let all your sacred powers of mind assist your imagination and faith to realise now the price with which the Saviour brought you from a bondage intolerable. God grant you grace to

feel something of this.

I have laid the truth before you. Now sit down and quietly turn it over in your mind. And what will strike you? Why, surely first the heinousness of sin. Was there nothing that could wash out sin but blood, and was there no blood that could wash it out but the blood of the Son of God? O sin! O sin! what a black, what a damning thing thou art! Only the blood of an incarnate God can wash out the smallest stain of sin. My heart, I charge thee to hate it; my eyes, look not on it; my ears, listen not to its siren charm; my feet, run not in its paths; my hands, refuse to handle it; my soul, loathe, loathe that which murdered Christ, and thrust a spear through the tenderest heart that ever beat.

Next to that, do you not feel emotions of intense gratitude that, if such a price was needed, such a price was found? God had but one son, dearer to him than Isaac was to Abraham, and though there was none to command him to do it, as there was in Abraham's case, yet voluntarily the gracious Father led his son up to the cross. and it pleased the Father to bruise, him; he put him to grief; he gave him up for us. Which shall I most admire—the love of the Father, or the love of the Son? Blessed be God, we are not asked to make distinctions, for they are one. "I and my Father are one," and in that sacred act of the sacrifice for the sins of men the Father and the Son are both to be worshipped with equal love. You see, then, the heinousness of sin in some degree, for its needing for its pardon the love of Jesus, and the love of God that gave the Saviour's blood.

But, dear friends, ere I sit down, let me remark that we learn from our text and from the whole contemplation. what it is that would bring us nearer experimentally than we are to-night. How did I get nigh first? Through the blood. Do I want to get near to God to-night? Have I been wandering? Is my heart cold? Have I got into a backsliding state? Do I want to come close now to my blessed Father, and again to look up to him, and say, "Abba," and rejoice in that filial spirit? There is no way for me to come nearer except the blood. Let me think of it then, and let me see' its infinite value; it is sufficient, let me hear its everlasting, ever-prevalent plea, and oh! then I shall feel my soul drawn; for that which draws us nearer to God, and will draw us right up to heaven, is none

other than the crimson cord Of the Saviour's endless, boundless, dying, but ever-living love.

And this teaches me, and teaches you, too, and here I have done, what it is we ought to preach and teach if we would bring the, far-off ones in—if we would bring near to God those that now wander from him. Philosophy, bah! You will philosophize men into hell, but never into heaven. Ceremonies you can amuse children, and you can degrade men into idiots with them, but you can do nothing else. The gospel, and the essence of that gospel, which is the blood of Jesus Christ—it is this which is an omnipotent leverage to uplift the filth, debauchery, and poverty of this city into life, into light, and into holiness. There is no battering-ram that will ever shake the gates of hell except that which every time it strikes sounds this word, "Jesus, Jesus, the Crucified." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If it will save us, it will save others; only let us spread the good news, let us tell the good tidings. Every one of us ought to preach the gospel somehow. You that speak in common conversation forget not to speak of him. Scatter such tracts as are most full of Christ—they are the best; others will be of little use. Write letters concerning him. Remember his name is like ointment, full of sweetness, but to get the perfume you must pour it forth. Oh! that we could make fragrant all this neighbourhood with the savour of that dear name! Oh! that wherever we dwell every one of us might so think of Christ in our hearts that we could not help speaking of him with our lips! Living, may we rejoice in him; dying, may we triumph in him. May our last whisper on earth be what our first song shall be in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood." Oh! I pray God to make this season of communion very sweet to you, and I think it will be if you have the key of our meditation to-night, and can unlock the door—if you know how far off you were, and see how near you are by the precious blood.

Oh! there are some far-off ones here to-night, however, to whom I must say just this word. Far-off one, God can make you nigh; you can be made nigh to-night. Whoever you may be, he is able still to save, but the blood must make you nigh—the blood of Jesus. Trust him. To believe is to live, and to believe means only and simply to trust, to depend upon. That is

faith. Have confidence in Christ's sacrifice, and you are saved. God grant you may be enabled to do it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Our Lord's Prayer For His People's Sanctification

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. - John 17:17

Our Lord Jesus prayed much for his people while he was here on earth. He made Peter the special subject of his intercession when he knew that he was in extraordinary danger. The midnight wrestlings of the Son of man were for his people. In the sacred record, however, much more space is taken up by our Lord's intercessions as he nears the end of his labors. After the closing supper, his public preaching work being ended, and nothing remaining to be done but to die, he gave himself wholly unto prayer. He was not again to instruct the multitude, nor to heal the sick, and in the interval which remained, before he should lay down his life, he girded himself for special intercession. He poured out his soul in life before he poured it out unto death.

In this wonderful prayer, our Lord, as our great High Priest, appears to enter upon that perpetual office of intercession which he is now exercising at the right hand of the Father. Our Lord ever seemed, in the eagerness of his love, to be anticipating his work. Before he was set apart for his life-work, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, he must needs be about his Father's business; before he finally suffered at the hands of cruel men, he had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened till it was accomplished; before he actually died, he was covered with a bloody sweat, and was exceeding sorrowful even unto death; and in this case, before he in person entered within the veil, he made intercession for us. He never tarries when the good of his people calls for him. His love hath wings as well as feet: it is true of him evermore, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." O beloved, what a friend we have in Jesus! so willing, so speedy to do for us all that we need. Oh that we could imitate him in this, and be quick of understanding to perceive our line of service, and eager of heart to enter upon it.

This chapter, which ought to be universally known as the Lord's Prayer, may be called the holy of holies of the word of God. Here we are admitted to that secret place where the Son of God speaks with the Father in closest fellowship of love. Here we look into the heart of Jesus, as he sets out in order his desires and requests before his Father on our behalf. Here inspiration lifts her veil, and we behold truth face to face. Our text lies somewhere near the middle of the prayer; it is the heart of it. Our Lord's desire for the sanctification of his people pervades the whole prayer; but it is gathered up, declared, and intensified in the one sentence that I have read to you: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." How invaluable must the blessing of sanctification be when our Lord, in the highest reach of his intercession, cries: "Sanctify them!" In sight of his passion, on the night before his death, our Savior lifts his eyes to the great Father, and cries in his most plaintive tones, "Father, sanctify them." The place whereon we stand is holy ground, and the subject whereof we speak demands our solemn thought. Come, Holy Spirit, and teach us the full meaning of this prayer for holiness!

First, I call your attention to *what it is the Savior asks*—"sanctify them;" and then, *for whom he asks it*—it is for those whom his Father had given him. Thirdly, we shall note *of whom he asks it*: he asks this sanctification of God the Father himself, for he alone it is who can sanctify his people. Lastly, we will enquire *how is this blessing to be wrought?*—"Sanctify them through thy truth;" and our Lord adds an explanatory sentence, which was a confession of his own faith towards the word of the Lord, and an instruction to our faith in the same matter. "Thy word is truth."

I. At the beginning, then, consider WHAT HE ASKED. What is this inestimable blessing which our Savior so earnestly requests at the Father's hand? He first prays, "Holy Father, keep them;" and again, "Keep them from the evil;" but this negative blessing of preservation from evil is not enough: he seeks for them positive holiness, and therefore he cries, "sanctify them." The word is one of considerable range of meaning: I am not able to follow it through all its shades, but one or two must suffice.

It means, first, *dedicate them to thy service*; for such must be the meaning of the word further down, when we read, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." In the Lord's case it cannot mean purification from sin, because our Savior was undefiled; his nature was unblemished by sin, and his actions were unspotted. No eye of man, nor glance of fiend, could discover fault in him, and the search of God only resulted in the declaration that in him God was well pleased. Our Lord's sanctification was his consecration to the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, his absorption in the will of the Father. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." In this sense our interceding Lord asks that all his people may by the Father be ordained and consecrated unto holy service. The prayer means, "Father, consecrate them to thine own self; let them be temples for thine indwelling, instruments for thy use." Under Jewish law the tribe of Levi was chosen out of the twelve, and ordained to the service of the Lord, instead of the firstborn, of whom the Lord had said, "All the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself." (Numbers 8:17.) Out of the tribe of Levi one family was taken and dedicated to the priesthood. Aaron and his sons are said to have been sanctified. (Leviticus 8:30.) A certain tent was sanctified to the service of God, and hence it became a sanctuary; and the vessels that were therein, whether they were greater, like the altar, and the holy table, and the ark of the covenant, or whether they were of less degree, like the bowls and the snuff-dishes of the candlestick, were all dedicated or sanctified. (Numbers 7:1.) None of these things could be used for any other purpose than the service of Jehovah. In his courts there was a holy fire, a holy bread, and a holy oil. The holy anointing oil, for instance, was reserved for sacred uses. "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured;" and again, "Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people." These sanctified things were reserved for holy purposes, and any other use of them was strictly forbidden. Bullocks and lambs and sheep and turtle-doves, and so forth, were given by devout offerers, brought to the holy place, and dedicated unto God; henceforth they belonged to God, and must be presented at his altar. This is one part of the meaning of our Lord's prayer. He would have each of us consecrated unto the Lord, designated and ordained for divine purposes. We are not the world's, else might we be ambitious; we are not Satan's, else might we be covetous; we

are not our own, else might we be selfish. We are bought with a price, and hence we are his by whom the price is paid. We belong to Jesus, and he presents us to his Father, and begs him to accept us and sanctify us to his own purposes. Do we not most heartily concur in this dedication? Do we not cry, "Father, sanctify us to thy service?" I am sure we do if we have realized our redeemed condition.

Beloved brethren, if the sprinkling of the blood, of which we spake last Sabbath-day, has really taken effect upon us, we belong, from this time forth, unto him that died for us, and rose again. We regard ourselves as God's men, the liveried servants of the great King—that livery the robe of righteousness. We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; and henceforth we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. If any should ask, "To whom belongest thou?" we answer, "I belong to Christ." If any enquire, "What is thine occupation?" we reply with Jonah, "I fear God." We are not now at our own disposal, neither can we hire ourselves out to inferior objects, mercenary aims, or selfish ambitions; for we are engaged by solemn contract to the service of our God. We have lifted up our hand unto the Lord, and we cannot draw back. Neither do we wish to withdraw from the delightful compact and covenant; we desire to keep it even unto the end. We seek no liberty to sin, nor license for self; rather do we cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Sanctify us, O Lord. Let us know, and let all the world know, that we are thine, because we belong to Christ."

In addition to this, those who belonged to God, and were dedicated to his service, were *set apart and separated from others*. There was a special service for the setting-apart of priests; certain rites were performed at the sanctifying of dedicated places and vessels. You remember with what solemn service the Tabernacle was set up, and with what pomp of devotion the Temple itself was set apart for the divine service. The Sabbath-day, which the Lord hath sanctified, is set apart from the rest of time. To man it is a *dies non*, because it is the Lord's-day. The Lord would have those who are dedicated to him to be separated from the rest of mankind. For this purpose he brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and Israel out of Egypt. "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be

reckoned among the nations." The Lord saith of his chosen, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Before long this secret purpose is followed by the open call: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." The church of Christ is to be a chaste virgin, wholly set apart for the Lord Christ: his own words concerning his people are these, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

By the election of grace from before the foundation of the world this distinction commences, and the names are written in heaven. Thereupon follows a redemption peculiar and special, as it is written; "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." This redemption is followed by effectual calling wherein men are made to come forth from the old world into the kingdom of Christ. This is attended with regeneration, in which they receive a new life, and so become as much distinguished from their fellow-men as the living are from the dead. This separating work is further carried on in what is commonly known as sanctification, whereby the man of God is removed farther and farther from all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and is changed from glory unto glory, into an ever-growing likeness of his Lord, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled separate from sinners."

Those who are sanctified in this sense have ceased to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; they have ceased to run with the multitude to do evil; they are not conformed to this present evil world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. The more assuredly this is true of them the better. There are some, in these apostate days, who think that the church cannot do better than to come down to the world to learn her ways, follow her maxims, and acquire her "culture." In fact, the notion is that the world is to be conquered by our conforming to it. This is as contrary to Scripture as the light is to the darkness. The more distinct the line between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not, the better all round. It will be a black day when the sun itself is turned into darkness. When the salt has lost its savor, and no longer opposes putrefaction, the world will rot with a vengeance. That text is still true,

"Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." The seed of the woman knows no terms with the serpent brood but continual war. Our Lord saith that in this matter he came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." If the church seeks to cultivate the friendship of the world, she has this message from the Holy Ghost by the pen of the apostle James: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." He charges all who would please the world with the black and filthy crime of spiritual adultery. The heart which ought to be given to Christ and purity must not wander forth wantonly to woo the defiled and polluted things of this present evil world. Separation from the world is Christ's prayer for us.

Put these two things together, dedication to God and separation unto him, and you are nearing the meaning of the prayer. But, mark you, it is not all separation that is meant; for, as I told you in the reading there are some who "separate themselves," and yet are sensual, not having the Spirit. Separation for separation's sake savours rather of Babel than of Jerusalem. It is one thing to separate from the world, and another thing to be separate from the church. Where we believe that there is living faith in Jesus, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we are not called to division, but to unity. For actual and manifest sin we must separate ourselves from offender—; but we err if we carry on this separation where it is not authorized by the word of God. The Corinthians and Galatians were far from being perfect in life, and they had made many mistakes in doctrine, yea, even upon vital points; but inasmuch as they were truly in Christ, Paul did not command any to come out of those churches, and to be separate therefrom; but he exhorted them to prove each man his own work, and he labored to bring them all back to the one and only gospel, and to a clearer knowledge of it. We are to be faithful to truth; but we are not to be of a contentious spirit, separating ourselves from those who are living members of the one and indivisible body of Christ. To promote the unity of the church, by creating new divisions, is not wise. Cultivate at once the love of the truth and the love of the brethren. The body of Christ will not be perfected by being rent. Truth should be the companion of

love. If we heartily love even those who are in some measure in error, but who possess the life of God in their souls, we shall be the more likely to set them right. Separation from the world is a solemn duty, indeed it is the hard point, the crux and burden of our religion. It is not easy to be filled with love to men and yet for God's sake, and even for their own sake, to be separated from them. The Lord teach us this.

At the same time, this word "sanctification" means what is commonly understood by it, namely, *the making of the people of God holy*. "Sanctify them," that is, work in them a pure and holy character. "Lord, make thy people holy," should be our daily prayer. I want you to notice that this word here used in the Greek is not that which is rendered "Purify;" but it has another shade of meaning. Had it meant "purify," it would hardly have been used in reference to our Lord as it is in the next verse.

It has a higher meaning than that. O brethren, if you are called Christians, there must be no room for doubt as to the fact that you are purged from the common sins and ordinary transgressions of mankind, else are you manifestly liars unto God, and deceivers of your own souls. They that are not moral, they that are not honest, they that are not kind, they that are not truthful, are far from the kingdom. How can these be the children of God who are not even decent children of men? Thus we judge, and rightly judge, that the life of God cannot be in that man's soul who abides wilfully in any known sin, and takes pleasure therein. No; purification is not all. We will take it for granted that you who profess to be Christians have escaped from the foul pollution of lust and falsehood; if you have not done so, humble yourselves before God, and be ashamed; for you need the very beginnings of grace. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." But sanctification is something more than mere morality and respectability; it is not only deliverance from the common sins of men, but also from the hardness, deadness, and carnality of nature: it is deliverance from that which is of the flesh at its very best, and admittance into that which is spiritual and divine. That which is carnal cometh not into communion with the spiritual kingdom or Christ: we need that the spiritual nature should rise above that which is merely natural. This is our prayer—Lord, spiritualize us; elevate us; make us to dwell in communion with God; make us to know him whom flesh and

blood cannot reveal or discern. May the Spirit of the living God have full sovereignty over us and perfect in us the will of the Lord, for this is to be sanctified.

Sanctification is a higher word than purification; for it includes that word and vastly more: it is not sufficient to be negatively clean; we need to be adorned with all the virtues. If ye be merely moral, how does your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? If ye pay your lawful debts, give alms to the poor, and observe the rites of your religion, what do ye more than others whom ye yourselves reckon to be in error?

Children of God should exhibit the love of God, they should be filled with zeal for his glory, they should live generous, unselfish lives, they should walk with God, and commune with the Most High. Ours should be a purpose and an aim far higher than the best of the unregenerate can understand. We ought to reach unto a life and a kingdom of which the mass of mankind know nothing, and care less. Now, I am afraid that this spiritual sense of the prayer is one that is often forgotten. Oh that God's Holy Spirit might make us to know it by experimentally feeling it in ourselves! May "Holiness to the Lord" be written across the brow of our consecrated humanity!

Beloved, this prayer of our Lord is most necessary, for without sanctification how can we be saved, since it is written, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord?" How can we be saved from sin if sin has still dominion over us? If we are not living holy, godly, spiritual lives, how can we say that we are redeemed from the power of evil?

Without sanctification we shall be unfit for service. Our Lord Jesus contemplated the sending of each one of us into the world even as the Father sent him into the world; but how can he give a mission to unsanctified men and women? Must not the vessels of the Lord be clean?

Without sanctification we cannot enjoy the innermost sweets of our holy faith. The unsanctified are full of doubts and fears; and what wonder? The unsanctified often say of the outward exercise of religion, "What a weariness it is!" and no wonder, for they know not the internal joys of it,

having never learned to delight themselves in God. If they walk not in the light of the Lord's countenance, how can they know the heaven below which comes of true godliness? Oh, it is a prayer that needs to be prayed for me, for you, for this church, and for the whole church of God! "Father, sanctify them through thy truth."

II. Now I want you to notice, in the second place, FOR WHOM THIS PRAYER WAS OFFERED. It was not offered for the world outside. It would not be a suitable prayer for those who are dead in sin. Our Lord referred to the company of men and women who were already saved, of whom he said that they had kept God's Word: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." They were therefore sanctified already in the sense of being consecrated and set apart for holy purposes; and they were also sanctified in a measure already in the sense of being made holy in character; for the immediate disciples of our Lord, with all their errors and deficiencies, were holy men. It was for the apostles that Jesus thus prayed; so that we may be sure that the most eminent saints need still to have this prayer offered for them: "Sanctify them through thy truth." Though, my sisters, you may be Deborahs, worthy to be called mothers in Israel, yet you need to be made more holy. Though, my brethren, you may be true fathers in God, of whom the Scripture saith truly that we have "not many," yet you still need that Jesus should pray for you: "Sanctify them through thy truth."

These chosen ones were sanctified, but only to a degree. Justification is perfect the moment it is received, but sanctification is a matter of growth. He that is justified, is justified once for all by the perfect work of Jesus, but he that is sanctified by Christ Jesus must grow up in all things into him who is the Head. To make us holy is a life work, and for it we should seek the divine operation every hour; for "he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." We would rise to the utmost pitch of holy living, and never content ourselves with present attainments. Those who are most pure and honorable have yet their shortcomings and errors to mourn over. When the Lord turns the light strong upon us, we soon see the spots upon our raiment; it is indeed when we walk in the light as God is in the light that we see most our need of the cleansing blood of Jesus. If we have done well, to God be the glory of it; but we might have done

better. If we have loved much, to God's grace be the praise; but we ought to have loved more. If we have believed, and believed steadfastly, we ought to have believed to a far higher degree in our Almighty Friend. We are still below our capacities; there is a something yet beyond us. O ye sanctified ones, it is for you that Jesus prays that the Father may still sanctify you.

I want you to notice more particularly that these believers for whom our Lord prayed were to be the preachers and teachers of their own and succeeding generations. These were the handful of seed-corn out of which would grow the church of the future, whose harvest would gladden all lands. To prepare them to be sent out as Christ's missionaries they must be sanctified. How shall a holy God send out unholy messengers? An unsanctified minister is an unsent minister. An unholy missionary is a pest to the tribe he visits; an unholy teacher in a school is an injury rather than a blessing to the class he conducts. Only in proportion as you are sanctified unto God can you hope for the power of the Holy Spirit to rest on you, and to work with you, so as to bring others to the Savior's feet. How much may each of us have been hampered and hindered by want of holiness! God will not use unclean instruments; nay, he will not even have his holy vessels borne by unclean hands. "To the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" A whole host may be defeated because of one Achan in the camp; and this is our constant fear. Holiness is an essential qualification to a man's fitness for being used of the Lord God for the extension of his kingdom; hence our Lord's prayer for his apostles and other workers: "Holy Father, sanctify them."

Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ was about to pray "that they all might be one;" and for this desirable result holiness is needed. Why are we not one? Sin is the great dividing element. The perfectly holy would be perfectly united. The more saintly men are, the more they love their Lord and one another; and thus they come into closer union with each other. Our errors and our sins are roots of bitterness which spring up and trouble us, and many are defiled. Our infirmities of judgment are aggravated by our imperfections of character, and our walking at a distance from our God; and these breed coldness and lukewarmness, out of which grow disunion and division, sects and heresies. If we were all

abiding in Christ to the full, we should abide in union with each other and with God, and our Lord's great prayer for the unity of his church would be fulfilled.

Moreover, our Lord finished his most comprehensive prayer by a petition that we might all be with him—with him where he is, that we may behold his glory. Full sanctification is essential to this. Shall the unsanctified dwell with Christ in heaven? Shall unholy eyes behold his glory? It cannot be. How can we participate in the splendor and triumphs of the exalted head if we are not members of his body? and how can a holy head have impure and dishonest members? No, brethren, we must be holy, for Christ is holy. Uprightness of walk and cleanness of heart are absolutely requisite for the purposes of Christian life, whether here or hereafter. Those who live in sin are the servants of sin; only those who are renewed by the Holy Ghost unto truth, and holiness, and love, can hope to be partakers of holy joys and heavenly bliss.

III. I am compelled by shortness of time to be brief upon each point; but I must dwell for a little upon the third subject of consideration, which is this—TO WHOM THIS PRAYER IS DIRECTED. "Sanctify them through thy truth." No one can sanctify a soul but Almighty God, the great Father of spirits. He who made us must also make us holy, or we shall never attain that character. Our dear Savior calls the great God "*Holy* Father" in this prayer, and it is the part of the holy God to create holiness; while a holy *Father* can only be the Father of holy children, for like begets like. To you that believe in Jesus he gives power to become the sons of God, and a part of that power lies in becoming holy according to the manner and character of our Father who is in heaven. As we are holy, so do we bear the image of that Lord from heaven who, as the second man, is the firstborn to whom the many brethren are conformed. The holy Father in heaven will own those as his children upon earth who are holy. The very nature of God should encourage us in our prayers for holiness; for he will not be slow to work in us to will and to do according to his perfect will.

Beloved, this sanctification is a work of God from its earliest stage. We go astray of ourselves, but we never return to the great Shepherd apart from his divine drawings. Regeneration, in which sanctification begins, is

wholly the work of the Spirit of God. Our first discovery of wrong, and our first pang of penitence, are the work of divine grace. Every thought of holiness, and every desire after purity, must come from the Lord alone, for we are by nature wedded to iniquity. So also the ultimate conquest of sin in us, and the making us perfectly like to our Lord, must be entirely the work of the Lord God, who makes all things new, since we have no power to carry on so great a work of ourselves. This is a creation; can we create? This is a resurrection; can we raise the dead? Our degenerate nature can rot into a still direr putrefaction, but it can never return to purity or sweeten itself into perfection; this is of God and God alone. Sanctification is as much the work of God as the making of the heavens and the earth. Who is sufficient for these things? We go not even a step in sanctification in our own strength; whatever we think we advance of ourselves is but a fictitious progress which will lead to bitter disappointment. Real sanctification is entirely from first to last the work of the Spirit of the blessed God, whom the Father hath sent forth that he might sanctify his chosen ones. See, then, what a great thing sanctification is, and how necessary it is that our Lord should pray unto his Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth."

The truth alone will not sanctify a man. We may maintain an orthodox creed, and it is highly important that we should do so, but if it does not touch our heart and influence our character, what is the value of our orthodoxy? It is not the doctrine which of itself sanctifies, but the Father sanctifies by means of the doctrine. The truth is the element in which we are made to live in order to holiness. Falsehood leads to sin, truth leads to holiness; but there is a lying spirit, and there is also the Spirit of truth, and by these the error and the truth are used as means to an end. Truth must be applied with spiritual power to the mind, the conscience, and the heart, or else a man may receive the truth, and yet hold it in unrighteousness. I believe this to be the crowning work of God in man, that his people should be perfectly delivered from evil. He elected them that they might be a peculiar people, zealous for good works; he ransomed them that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself; he effectually calls them to a high and holy vocation, even to virtue and true holiness.

Every work of the Spirit of God upon the new nature aims at the purification, the consecration, the perfecting of those whom God in love has taken to be his own. Yea, more; all the events of Providence around us work towards that one end: for this our joys and our sorrows, for this our pains of body and griefs of heart, for this our losses and our crosses—all these are sacred medicines by which we are cured of the disease of nature, and prepared for the enjoyment of perfect spiritual health. All that befalls us on our road to heaven is meant to fit us for our journey's end. Our way through the wilderness is meant to try us, and to prove us, that our evils may be discovered, repented of, and overcome, and that thus we may be without fault before the throne at the last. We are being educated for the skies, meetened for the assembly of the perfect. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we are struggling up towards it; and we know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. We are rising: by hard wrestling, and long watching, and patient waiting, we are rising into holiness. These tribulations thresh our wheat and get the chaff away, these afflictions consume our dross and tin to make the gold more pure. All things work together for good to them that love God; and the net result of them all will be the presenting of the chosen unto God, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Thus I have reminded you that the prayer for sanctification is offered to the divine Father, and this leads us to look out of ourselves and wholly, to our God. Do not set about the work of sanctification yourselves, as if you could perform it alone. Do not imagine that holiness will necessarily follow because you listen to an earnest preacher, or unite in sacred worship. My brethren, God himself must work within you; the Holy Ghost must inhabit you; and this can only come to you by faith in the Lord Jesus. Believe in him for your sanctification, even as you have believed for your pardon and justification. He alone can bestow sanctification upon you; for this is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV. This is a great subject, and I have but short time; so I have, in the last place, to notice with much brevity HOW SANCTIFICATION IS TO BE WROUGHT IN BELIEVERS, "Sanctify them *through thy truth*: thy word is truth. "Beloved, observe how God has joined holiness and truth

together. There has been a tendency of late to divide truth of doctrine from truth of precept. Men say that Christianity is a life and not a creed: this is a part truth, and very near akin to a lie. Christianity is a life which grows out of truth. Jesus Christ is the way and the truth as well as the life, and he is not properly received except he is accepted in that threefold character.

No holy life will be produced in us by the belief of falsehood. Sanctification in visible character comes out of edification in the inner faith of the heart, or otherwise it is a mere shell. Good works are the fruit of true faith, and true faith is a sincere belief of the truth. Every truth leads towards holiness; every error of doctrine, directly or indirectly, leads to sin. A twist of the understanding will inevitably bring a contortion of the life sooner or later. The straight line of truth drawn on the heart will produce a direct course of gracious walking in the life. Do not imagine that you can live on spiritual carrion and yet be in fine moral health, or that you can drink down poisonous error and yet lift up a face without spot before God. Even God himself only sanctifies us by the truth. Only that teaching will sanctify you which is taken from God's word, that teaching which is not true, nor the truth of God, cannot sanctify you. Error may puff you up, it may even make you think that you are sanctified; but there is a very serious difference between boasting of sanctification and being sanctified, and a very grave difference between setting up to be superior to others and being really accepted before God. Believe me, God works sanctification in us by the truth, and by nothing else.

But what is the truth? There is the point. Is the truth that which I imagine to be revealed to me by some private communication? Am I to fancy that I enjoy some special revelation, and am I to order my life by voices, dreams, and impressions? Brethren, fall not into this common delusion. God's word to us is in Holy Scripture. All the truth that sanctifies men is in God's Word. Do not listen to those who cry, "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" I am plucked by the sleeve almost every day by crazy persons and pretenders who have revelations. One man tells me that God has sent a message to me by him; and I reply, "No, sir, the Lord knows where I dwell, and he is so near to me that he would not need to send to me by

you." Another man announces in God's name a dogma which, on the face of it, is a lie against the Holy Ghost. He says the Spirit of God told him so-and-so; but we know that the Holy Ghost never contradicts himself. If your imaginary revelation is not according to this Word, it has no weight with us; and if it is according to this Word, it is no new thing. Brethren, this Bible is enough if the Lord does but use it, and quicken it by his Spirit in our hearts. Truth is neither your opinion, nor mine; your message, nor mine. Jesus says, "Thy word is truth." That which sanctifies men is not only truth, but it is the particular truth which is revealed in God's Word—"Thy word is truth." What a blessing it is that all the truth that is necessary to sanctify us is revealed in the Word of God, so that we have not to expend our energies upon discovering truth, but may, to our far greater profit, use revealed truth for its divine ends and purposes! There will be no more revelations; no more are needed. The canon is fixed and complete, and he that adds to it shall have added to him the plagues that are written in this Book. What need of more when here is enough for every practical purpose? "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

This being so, the truth which it is needful for us to receive is evidently fixed. You cannot change Holy Scripture. You may arrive more and more accurately at the original text; but for all practical purposes the text we have is correct enough, and our old Authorized Version is a sound one. Scripture itself cannot be broken; we cannot take from it nor add to it. The Lord has never re-written nor revised his Word, nor will he ever do so. *Our* teachings are full of errors, but the Spirit mistaketh not. We have the "Retractions": of Augustine, but there are no retracts with prophets and apostles. The faith has been delivered once for all to the saints, and it standeth fast for ever. "Thy word is truth." The Scripture alone is absolute truth, essential truth, decisive truth, authoritative truth, undiluted truth, eternal, everlasting truth. Truth given us in the word of God is that which is to sanctify all believers to the end of time: God will use it to that end.

Learn, then, my brothers, how earnestly you ought to search the Scriptures! See, my sisters, how studiously you should read this Book of God! If this is the truth, and the truth with which God sanctifies us, let us

learn it, hold it, and stand fast in it. To him that gave us the Book let us pledge ourselves never to depart from his testimonies. To us, at any rate, God's word is truth. "But they argue differently in the schools!" Let them argue. "But oratory with its flowery speech speaketh otherwise!" Let it speak: words are but air and tongues but clay. O God, "thy word is truth." "But philosophers have contradicted it!" Let them contradict it. Who are they? God's word is truth: we will go no farther while the world stands. But then let us be equally firm in our conviction that we do not know the truth aright unless it makes us holy. We do not hold truth in a true way unless it leads us to a true life. If you use the back of a knife it will not cut: truth hath its handle and its blade; see that you use it properly. You can make pure water kill a man; you must use every good thing aright or it will not be good. The truth, when fully used, will daily destroy sin, nourish grace, suggest noble desires, and urge to holy acts. O sirs, I do pray that we may by our lives adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Some do not so. I say this to our shame and to my own hourly sorrow.

The one point of failure to be most deeply regretted would be a failure in the holiness of our church members. If you yourselves act as others do, what witness do you bear? If your families are not graciously ordered; if your business is not conducted upon principles of the strictest integrity; if your speech is questionable as to purity or truthfulness; if your lives are open to serious rebuke—how can God accept you or send a blessing on the Church to which you belong? It is all falsehood and deceit to talk about your being the people of God when even men of the world shame you. Your faith in the Lord Jesus must operate upon your lives to make you faithful and true, it must check you here, and excite you there; it must keep you back from this, and drive you on to that; it must constantly operate upon thought and speech and act, or else you know nothing of its saving power. How can I speak more distinctly and emphatically? Do not come to me with your experiences, and your convictions, and your professions, unless you sanctify the name of God in your lives. O brethren, we had better quit our professions if we do not live up to them. In the name of him who breathed this prayer just before his face was encrimsoned with the bloody sweat, let us cry mightily unto the Father, "Sanctify us through thy truth, thy Word is truth." As a people, we have

stuck unto the Word of the Lord, but are we practically obeying it? We have determined as a congregation to keep the old ways; and I, for one, as the minister, am solemnly bound to the old faith. Oh that we might commend it by our holiness! Nothing is truth to me but this one Book, this infallibly inspired writing of the Spirit of God. It is incumbent upon us to show the hallowed influence of this Book. The vows of God are on us, that by our godly lives we should show forth his praises who has brought us out of darkness into his marvellous light. This Bible is our treasure. We prize each leaf of it. Let us bind it in the best fashion, in the best morocco of a clear, intelligent faith; then let us put a golden clasp upon it, and gild its edges by a life of love, and truth, and purity, and zeal. Thus shall we commend the volume to those who have never looked within its pages. Brethren, the sacred roll, with its seven seals, must not be held in hands defiled and polluted; but with clean hands and pure heart we must hold it forth and publish it among men. God help us so to do for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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Our Lord's Solemn Enquiry

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? - Matthew 27:46

If any one of us, lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ had been anywhere near the cross when he uttered those words, I am sure our hearts would have burst with anguish, and one thing is certain—we should have heard the tones of that dying cry as long as ever we lived. There is no doubt that at certain times they would come to us again, ringing shrill and clear through the thick darkness. We should remember just how they were

uttered, and the emphasis where it was placed, and I have no doubt we should turn that text over, and over, and over in our minds. But there is one thing, I think, we should never have done if we had heard it—therefore, I am not going to do it—we should never preach from it. It would have been too painful a recollection for us ever to have used it as a text. No; we should have said, "It is enough to hear it." Fully understand it, who can? And to expound it, since some measure of understanding might be necessary to the exposition—that surely were a futile attempt. We should have laid that by; we should have put those words away as too sacred, too solemn, except for silent reflection and quiet, reverent adoration. I felt when I read these words again, as I have often read them, that they seemed to say to me, "You cannot preach from us," and, on the other hand, felt as Moses did when he put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the burning bush, because the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Beloved, there is another reason why we should not venture to preach from this text, namely, that it is probably an expression out of the lowest depths of our Saviour's sufferings. With him into the seas of grief we can descend some part of the way; but when he comes where all God's waves and billows go over him, we cannot go there. We may, indeed, drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism, but never to the full extent; and, therefore, where our fellowship with Christ cannot conduct us to the full, though it may in a measure—we shall not venture; not beyond where our fellowship with him would lead us aright, lest we blunder by speculation, and "darken counsel by words without knowledge." Moreover, it comes forcibly upon my mind that though every word here is emphatic, we should be pretty sure to put the emphasis somewhere or other too little. I do not suppose we should be likely to put it anywhere too much. It has been well said that every word in this memorable cry deserves to have an emphasis laid upon it. If you read it, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I marvel not that my disciples should, but why hast thou gone, my Father, God? Why couldst thou leave me?" there is a wondrous meaning there. Then take it thus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I know why thou hast smitten me; I can understand why thou dost chasten me; but why hast thou forsaken me? Wilt thou allow me no ray of love from the brightness of thine eyes—no sense of thy presence whatsoever?" This was the wormwood and the gall of all the Saviour's bitter cup. Then God forsook

him in his direst need. Or if you take it thus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" there comes another meaning. "Me, thy well beloved, thine eternal well beloved, shine innocent, thy harmless, thine afflicted Son—why hast thou forsaken me? "Then, indeed, it is a marvel of marvels not that God should forsake his saints, or appear to do so, or that he should forsake sinners utterly, but that he should forsake his only Son. Then, again, we might with great propriety throw the whole force of the verse upon the particle of interrogation, "Why." "My God, my God, why, ah! why hast thou forsaken me? What is thy reason? What thy motive? What compels thee to this, thou Lord of love? The sun is eclipsed, but why is the Son of thy love eclipsed? Thou hast taken away the lives of men for sin, but why takest thou away thy love, which is my life, from me who hath no sin? Why and wherefore actest thou thus?"

Now, as I have said, every word requires more emphasis than I can throw into it, and some part of the text would be quite sure to be left and not dealt with as it should be; therefore, we will not think of preaching upon it, but instead thereof we will sit down and commune with it.

You must know that the words of our text are not only the language of Christ, but they are the language of David. You who are acquainted with the Psalms know that the 22nd Psalm begins with just these words, so that David said what Jesus said; and I gather from this that many a child of God has had to say precisely what the Lord Jesus, the first-born of the family, uttered upon the cross. Now as God's children are brought into the same circumstances as Christ, and Christ is considered the exemplar, my object to-night will be simply this—not to expound the words, but to say to believers who come into a similar plight, Do as Jesus did. If you come into his condition, lift up your hearts to God, that you may act as he did in that condition. So we shall make the Saviour now not a study for our learning, but an example for reproduction. The first out of these points in which, I think, we should imitate him is this:—

I. UNDER DESERTION OF SOUL, THE LORD JESUS STILL TURNS TO GOD.

At that time when he uttered these words, God had left him to his

enemies. No angel appeared to interpose and destroy the power of Roman or Jew. He seemed utterly given up. The people might mock at him, and they might put him to what pain they pleased j at the same time a sense of God's love to him as man was taken from him. The comfortable presence of God, which had all his life long sustained him, began to withdraw from him in the garden, and appeared to be quite gone when he was just in the article of death upon the cross; and meanwhile the waves of God's wrath on account of sin began to break over his spirit, and he was in the condition of a soul deserted by God. Now sometimes believers come into the same condition, not to the same extent, but in a measure. Yesterday they were full of joy, for the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, but to-day that sense of love is gone; they droop; they feel heavy. Now the temptation will be at such times for them to sit down and look into their own hearts; and if they do, they will grow more wretched every moment, until they will come well nigh to despair; for there is no comfort to be found within, when there is no light from above. Our signs and tokens within are like sundials. We can tell what is o'clock by the sundial when the sun shines, but if it does not what is the use of the sundial? And so marks of evidence may help us when God's love is shed abroad in the soul, but when that is done, marks of evidence stand us in very little stead. Now observe our Lord. He is deserted of God, but instead of looking in, and saying, "My soul, why art thou this? Why art thou that? Why art thou cast down? Why dost thou mourn?" he looks straight away from that dried-up well that is within, to those eternal waters that never can be stayed, and which are always full of refreshment. He cries, "My God." He knows which way to look, and I say to every Christian here, it is a temptation of the devil, when you are desponding, and when you are not enjoying your religion as you did, to begin peering and searching about in the dunghill of your own corruptions, and stirring over all that you are feeling, and all you ought to feel, and all you do not feel, and all that. Instead of that look from within, look above, look to your God again, for the light will come there.

And you will notice that our Lord did not at this time look to any of his friends. In the beginning of his sufferings he appeared to seek consolation from his disciples, but he found them sleeping for sorrow; therefore, on this occasion he did not look to them in any measure. He

had lost the light or God's countenance, but he does not look down in the darkness and say, "John, dear faithful John, art thou there? Hast thou not a word for him whose bosom was a pillow for thy head? Mother Mary, art thou there? Canst thou not say one soft word to thy dying son to let him know there is still a heart that does not forget him?" No, beloved; our Lord did not look to the creature. Man as he was, and we must regard him as such in uttering this cry, yet he does not look to friend or brother, helper or human arm. But though God be angry, as it were, yet he crieth, "My God." Oh! it is the only cry that befits a believer's lips. Even if God seems to forsake thee, keep on crying to him. Do not begin to look in a pet and a jealous humour to creatures, but still look to thy God. Depend upon it, he will come to thee sooner or later. He cannot fail thee. He must help thee. Like a child if its mother strike it, still if it be in pain it cries for its mother; it knows her love; it knows its deep need of her, and that she alone can supply its need. Oh! beloved, do the same. Is there one in this house who has lately lost his comforts, and Satan has said, "Don't pray"? Beloved, pray more than ever you did. If the devil says, "Why, God is angry; what is the use of praying to him?" he might have said the same to Christ—"Why dost thou pray to one who forsaketh thee?" But Christ did pray "My God" still, though he says, "Why dost thou forsake me?" Perhaps Satan tells you not to read the Bible again. It has not comforted you of late; the promises have not come to your soul. Dear brother, read and read more; read double as much as ever you did. Do not think that, because there is no light coming to you, the wisest way is to get away from the light. No; stay where the light is. And perhaps he even says to you, "Don't attend the house of God again; don't go to the communion table. Why, surely you won't wish to commune with God when he hides his face from you." I say the words of wisdom, for I speak according to the example of Christ; come still to your God in private and in public worship, and come still, dear brother, to the table of fellowship with Jesus, saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, for I have nowhere else to trust; and though he hide his face from me, yet will I cry after him, and my cry shall not be "My friends," but "My God"; and my eye shall not look to my soul, my friends, or my feelings, but I will look to my God. and even to him alone. That is the first lesson, not an easy one to learn, mark you—easier to hear than you will find it to practice. but "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." The second lesson is this—observe that:—

II. THOUGH UNDER A SENSE OF DESERTION, OUR MASTER DOES NOT RELAX HIS HOLD OF HIS GOD.

Observe it, "My God"—it is one hand he grips him with; "My God"—it is the other hand he grasps him with. Both united in the cry, "My God." He believes that God is still his God. He uses the possessive particle twice, "My God, my God."

Now it is easy to believe that God is ours when he smiles upon us, and when we have the sweet fellowship of his love in our hearts; but the point for faith to attend to, is to hold to God when he gives the hard words, when his providence frowns upon thee, and when even his Spirit seems to be withdrawn from thee. Oh! let go every thing, but let not go thy God. If the ship be tossed and ready to sink, and the tempest rages exceedingly, cast out the ingots, let the gold go, throw out the wheat, as Paul's companions did. Let even necessaries go, but oh! still hold to thy God; give not up thy God; say still, notwithstanding all, "In the teeth of all my feelings, doubts, and suspicions, I hold him yet; he is my God; I will not let him go."

You know that in the text our Lord calls God in the original his "strong one"—"Eli, Eli"—"my strong one, my mighty one." So let the Christian, when God turns away the brightness of his presence, still believe that all his strength lies in God, and that, moreover, God's power is on his side. Though it seemed to crush him, yet faith says, "It is a power that will not crush me. If he smite me, what will I do? I will lay hold upon his arm, and he will put strength in me. I will deal with God as Jacob did with the angel. If he wrestle with me, I will borrow strength from him, and I will wrestle still with him until I get the blessing from him." Beloved, we must neither let go God, nor let go our sense of his power to save us. We must hold to our possession of him, and hold to the belief that he is worth possessing, that he is God allsufficient, and that he is our God still.

Now I would like to put this personally to any tried child of God here. Are you going to let go your God because you have lost his smile? Then I ask you, Did you base your faith upon his smile? for if you did, you mistook

the true ground of faith. The ground of a believer's confidence is not God's smile, but God's promise. It is not his temporary sunshine of his love, but his deep eternal love itself, as it reveals itself in the covenant and in the promises. Now the present smile of God may go, but God's promise does not go; and if you believe upon God's promise, that is just as true when God frowns as when he smiles. If you are resting upon the covenant, that covenant is as true in the dark as in the light. It stands as good when your soul is without a single gleam of consolation as when your heart is flooded with sacred bliss. Oh! Come then to this. The promise is as good as ever. Christ is the same as ever; his blood is as great a plea as ever; and the oath of God is as immutable as ever. We must get away from all building upon our apprehensions of God's love. It is the love itself we must build on—not on our enjoyment of his presence, but on his faithfulness and on his truth. Therefore, be not cast down, but still call him, "My God."

Moreover, I may put it to you, if, because God frowns, you give him up, what else do you mean to do? Why, is not it better to trust in an angry God than not to trust in God at all? Suppose thou leavest off the walk of faith, what wilt thou do? The carnal man never knew what faith was, and, therefore, gets on pretty fairly in his own blind, dead way; but you have been quickened and made alive, enlightened, and if you give up your faith, what is to become of you? Oh! hold to him then.

"For if shine eye oi faith be dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool bow the knee
And Israel's God thy strength shall be."

Don't give him up.

Moreover, if faith give up her God because he frowns, what sort of a faith was it? Canst thou not believe in a frowning God? What, hast thou a friend who did the other day but give thee a rough word, and thou saidst, "At one time I could die for that man," and because he gives you one rough word, are you going to give him up? Is this thy kindness to thy friends Is this thy confidence in thy God? But how Job played the man!

Did he turn against his God when he took away his comforts from him? No; he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." And do you not know how he put it best of all when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"? Yes, if thy faith be only a fair-weather faith, if thou canst only walk with God when he sandals thee in silver, and smooths the path beneath thy feet, what faith is this? Where didst thou get it from? But the faith that can foot it with the Lord through Nebuchadnezzar's furnace of fire, and that can go walking with him through the valley of the shadow of death—this is the faith to be had and sought after, and God grant it to us, for that was the faith that was in the heart of Christ when forsaken of God. He yet says, "My God."

We have learnt two lessons. Now we have learnt them—(we have gone over them, but have we learnt them?)—may we practice them, and turn to God in ill times, and not relinquish our hold. The third lesson is this:—

III. ALTHOUGH OUR LORD UTTERED THIS DEEP AND BITTER CRY OF PAIN, YET LEARN FROM HIS SILENCE.

He never uttered a single syllable of murmuring, or brought any accusation against his God. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There! look at those words. Can you see any blots in them? I cannot. They are crystallised sorrow. but there is no defilement of sin. It was just (I was about to say) what an angel could have said, if he could have suffered; it is what the Son of God did say, who was purer than angels, when he was suffering. Listen to Job, and we must not condemn Job, for we should not have been half so good as he, I daresay; but he does let his spirit utter itself sometimes in bitterness. He curses the day of his birth and so on; but the Lord Jesus does not do that. There is not a syllable about "cursed be the day in which I was born in Bethlehem, and in which I came amongst such a rebellious race as this"—nor not a word, not a word. And even the best of men when in sorrow have at least wished that things were not just so. David, when he had lost Absalom, wished that he had died, instead of Absalom. But Christ does not appear to want things altered. He does not say, "Lord, this is a mistake. Would God I had died by the hands of Herod when he sought my life, or had perished when they

tried to throw me down the hill of Capernaum." No; nothing of the kind. There is grief, but there is no complaining; there is sorrow, but there is no rebellion. Now this is the point, beloved, I want to bring to you. If you should suffer extremely, and it should ever come to that terrible pinch that even God's love and the enjoyment of it appears to be gone, put your finger to your lip and keep it there. "I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Believe that he is a good God still. Know that assuredly he is working for thy good, even now, and let not a syllable escape thee by way of murmuring, or if it does, repent of it and recall it. Thou hast a right to speak to God, but not to murmur against him, and if thou wouldst be like thy Lord, thou wouldst say just this, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" But thou wilt say no more, and there wilt thou leave him, and if there oome no answer to thy question thou wilt be content to be without an answer.

Now again, I say, this is a lesson I can teach, but I do not know if I can practice it, and I do not know that you can. Only, again, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," and he will enable us when we come to "lama sabachthani" to come so far, but not to go farther—to stop there with our Lord. The fourth lesson which, I think, we should learn is this:—

IV. OUR LORD, WHEN HE DOES CRY, CRIES WITH THE INQUIRING VOICE OF A LOVING CHILD.

"My God, why, ah! why hast thou forsaken me?" He asks a question not in curiosity, but in love. Loving, sorrowful complaints he brings. "Why, my God? Why? Why?" Now this is a lesson to us, because we ought to endeavour to find out why it is that God hides himself from us. No Christian ought to be content to live without full assurance of faith. No believer ought to be satisfied to live a moment without knowing to a certainty that Christ is his, and if he does not know it, and assurance is gone, what ought he to do? Why, he should never be content until he has gone to God with the question, "Why have I not this assurance? Why have I not thy presence? Why is it that I cannot live once I did in the light of thy countenance" And, beloved, the answer to this question in our case will sometimes be, "I have forsaken thee, my child, because thou hast forsaken me. Thou hast grown cold of heart by slow degrees; grey hairs

have come upon thee, and thou didst not know; and I have made thee know it to make thee see thy backsliding, and sorrowfully repent of it." Sometimes the answer will be, "My child, I have forsaken thee because thou hast set up an idol in thy heart. Thou lovest thy child too much, thy gold too much, thy trade too much; and I cannot come into thy soul unless I am thy Lord, thy love, thy bridegroom, and thy all." Oh! we shall be glad to know these answers, because the moment we know them our heart will say:-

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

Sometimes the Lord's answer will be, "My child, I have gone from thee for a little to try thee, to see if thou lovest me." A true lover will love on under frowns. It is only the superficial professor that wants sweetmeats every day, and only loves his God for what he gets out of him; but the genuine believer loves him when he smites him, when he bruises him with the bruises of a cruel one. Why, then we will say, "O God, if this is why thou dost forsake us, we will love thee still, and prove to thee that thy grace has made our souls to hunger and thirst for thee." Depend upon it, the best way to get away from trouble, or to get great help under it, is to run close in to God. In one of Quarles's poems he has the picture of a man striking another with a great nail. Now the further off the other is, the heavier it strikes him. So the man whom God is smiting runs close in, and he cannot be hurt at all. O my God, my God, when away from thee affliction stuns me, but I will close with thee, and then even my affliction I will take to be a cause of glory, and glory in tribulations also, so that thy blast shall not sorely wound my spirit.

Well, I leave this point with the very same remark I made before. To cry to God with the enquiry of a child is the fourth lesson of the text. Oh! learn it well. Do practice it when You are in trouble much. If you are in such a condition at this time, practice it now, and in the pew say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Now

the fifth observation is one to be treasured up:—

V. THAT OUR LORD, THOUGH HE WAS FORSAKEN OF GOD, STILL PURSUED HIS FATHER'S WORK—the work he came to do. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But, mark you, he does not leave the cross; he does not unloose the nails as he might have done with a will; he did not leap down amidst the assembled mockers, and scorn them in return, and chase them far away. but he kept on bleeding, suffering, even until he could say, "It is finished," and he did not give up the ghost till it was finished. Now, beloved, I find it, and I daresay you do, a very easy and pleasant thing to go on serving God when I have got a full sense of his love, and Christ shining in my face, when every text brings joy to my heart, and when I see souls converted, and know that God is going with the Word to bless it. That is very easy, but to keep on serving God when you get nothing for it but blow—when there is no success, and when your own heart is in deep darkness of spirit—I know the temptation. Perhaps you are under it. Because you have not the joy you once had, you say, "I must give up preaching; I must give up that Sunday School. If I have not the light of God's countenance, how can I do it? I must give it up." Beloved, you must do no such thing. Suppose there were a loyal subject in a nation, and he had done something or other which grieved the king, and the king on a certain day turned his face from him, do you think that loyal subject would go away and neglect his duty because the king frowned? No; methinks he would say to himself, "I do not know why the king seemed to deal hardly with me. He is a good king, and I know he is good, if he does not see any good in me, and I will work for him more than ever. I will prove to him that my loyalty does not depend upon his smiles. I am his loyal subject, and will stand to him still." What would you say to your child if you had to chasten him for doing wrong, if he were to go away and say, "I shall not attend to the errand that father has sent me upon, and I shall do no more in the house that father has commanded me to do, because father has beaten me this morning"? Ah! what a disobedient child! If the scourging had its fit effect upon him, he would say, "I will wrong thee no more, father, lest thou smite me again." So let it be with us.

Besides, should not our gratitude compel us to go on working for God?

Has not he saved us from hell? Then we may say, with the old heathen, "Strike, so long as thou forgivest." Yes, if God forgives, he may strike if he will. Suppose a judge should forgive a malefactor condemned to die, but he should say to him, "Though you are not to be executed as you deserve, yet, for all that, you must be put in prison for some years," he would say, "Ah! my Lord, I will take this lesser ohastisement, so long as my life is saved." And oh! if our God has saved us from going down to the pit by putting his own Son to death on our behalf, we will love him for that, if we never have anything more. If, between here and heaven, we should have to say, like the elder brother, "Thou never gayest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." we will love him still; and if he never does anything to us between here and glory, but lay us on a sick bed, and torture us there, yet still we will praise and bless him, for he has saved us from going down to the pit; therefore, we will love him as long as we live. Oh! if you think of God as you ought to do, you will not be at ups and downs with him, but you will serve him with all your heart, and soul, and might, whether you are enjoying the light of his countenance or not. Now to close. Our Lord is an example for us in one other matter. He is to us our type of what shall happen to us, for whereas he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?":—

VI. HE HAS RECEIVED A GLORIOUS ANSWER.

And so shall every man that, in the same spirit in the hour of darkness, asks the same question. Our Lord died. No answer had he got to the question, but the question went on ringing through earth, and heaven, and hell. Three days he slept in the grave, and after a while he went Into heaven, and my imagination, I think, may be allowed if I say that as he entered there the echo of his words, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" just died away, and then the Father gave him the practical answer to the question; for there, all along the golden streets, stood white-robed bands, all of them singing their redeemer's praise, all of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb; and this was a part of the answer to his question. God had forsaken Christ that these chosen spirits might live through him; they were the reward for the travail of his soul; they were the answer to his question; and ever since then, between heaven and earth, there has been constant commerce. If your eyes were opened that

you could see, you would perceive in the sky not falling stars, shooting downwards, but stars rising upward from England, many every hour from America, from all countries where the gospel is believed, and from heathen lands where the truth is preached and God is owned, for you would see every now and then down on earth a dying bed, but upwards through the skies, mounting among the stars, another spirit shot upward to complete the constellations of the glorified. And as these bright ones, all redeemed by his sufferings, enter heaven, they bring to Christ fresh answers to that question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" And if stooping from his throne in glory the Prince of life takes view of the sons of men who are lingering here, even in this present assembly, he will see to-night a vast number of us met together around this table, I hope the most, if not all, of us redeemed by his blood and rejoicing in his salvation; and the Father points down to-night to this Tabernacle, and to thousands of similar scenes where believers cluster around the table of fellowship with their Lord, and he seems to say to the Saviour, "There is my answer to thy question, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'"

Now, beloved, we shall have an answer to our question something like that. When we get to heaven, perhaps not until then, God will tell us why he forsook us. When I tossed upon my bed three months ago in weary pain that robbed me of my night's rest, and my day's rest too, I asked why it was I was there, but I have realized since the reason, for God helped me afterwards so to preach that many souls were ingathered. Often you will find that God deserts you that he may be with you after a nobler sort—hides the light, that afterwards the light of seven suns at once may break in upon your spirit, and there you shall learn that it was for his glory that he left you, for his glory that he tried your faith. Only mind you stand to that. Still cry to him, and still call him God, and never complain, hut ask him why, and pursue his work still under all difficulties; so being like Christ on earth, you shall be like Christ above, as to the answer.

I cannot sit down without saying just this word. God will never forsake his people for ever. But as many of you as are not his people, if you have not believed in him, he will forsake you for ever, and for ever, and for ever; and if you ask, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" you will get, your answer in the echo of your words, "Thou hast forsaken me." "How shall ye

escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"But if your ears refuse
The language of his grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race;
The Lord in vengeance drest
Shall lift his hand and swear,
'You that despised my promised rest
Shall have no portion there.'"

God grant it may never be so with you, for Christ's sake. Amen

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Our Manifesto

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man - Galatians 1:11

To me it is a pitiful sight to see Paul defending himself as an apostle; and doing this, not against the gainsaying world, but against cold-hearted members of the church. They said that he was not truly an apostle, for he had not seen the Lord; and they uttered a great many other things derogatory to him. To maintain his claim to the apostleship, he was driven to commence his epistles with "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," though his work was a self-evident proof of his call. If, after God has blessed us to the conversion of many, some of these should raise a question as to our call to the ministry, we may count it a fiery trial; but we shall not conclude that a strange thing has happened to us. There is much more room to question our call to the ministry than to cast a doubt upon Paul's apostleship. This indignity, if it be put upon us, we can cheerfully bear for our Master's sake. We need not wonder, dear brethren, if our

ministry should be the subject of attack, because this has been the lot of those who have gone before us; and we should lack one great seal of our acceptance with God if we did not receive the unconscious homage of enmity which is always paid to the faithful by the ungodly world. When the devil is not troubled by us, he does not trouble us. If his kingdom is not shaken, he will not care about us or our work, but will let us enjoy inglorious ease. Be comforted by the experience of the apostle of the Gentiles: he is peculiarly our apostle, and we may regard his experience as a type of what we may expect while we labor among the Gentiles of our own day.

The treatment which has been given to eminent men while they have lived has been prophetic of the treatment of their reputations after death. This evil world is unchangeable in antagonism to true principles, whether their advocates be dead or living. They said more than eighteen hundred years ago: "Paul, what of him?" They say so still. It is not unusual to hear dubious persons profess to differ from the apostle, and they even dare to say, "There, I do not agree with Paul." I remember the first time that I heard this expression I looked at the individual with astonishment. I was amazed that such a pigmy as he should say this of the great apostle. Altogether apart from Paul's inspiration, it seemed like a cheese-mite differing from a cherub, or a handful of chaff discussing the verdict of the fire. The individual was so utterly beneath observation that I could not but marvel that his conceit should have been so outspokenly shameless. Notwithstanding this objection, even when supported by learned critics, we still agree with the inspired servant of God. It is our firm conviction that, to differ from Paul's epistles is to differ from the Holy Ghost, and to differ from the Lord Jesus Christ, whose mind Paul has fully expressed. It is remarkable that Paul's writings should be so assailed: but this warns us that when we have gone to our reward, our names will not be free from aspersion, nor our teaching from opposition. The noblest of the departed are still slandered. Be not careful as to human judgment of yourself in death or in life; for what does it matter? Your real character no man can injure but yourself; and if you are enabled to keep your garments clean, all else is not worth a thought.

To come more closely to our text. We do not claim to be able to use Paul's

words exactly in the full sense which he could throw into them; but there is a sense in which, I trust, we can each one say, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." We may not only say this, but we ought to be able to say it with thorough truthfulness. The form of expression goes as far as Paul was wont to go towards an oath when he says, "I certify you, brethren." He means, I assure you, most certainly—I would have you to be certain of it—"that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." On this point he would have all the brethren certified past all doubt.

From the context we are sure that he meant, first of all, that his gospel was not received by him from men. His reception of it in his own mind was not after men. And next, he meant, that the gospel itself was not invented by men. If I can hammer out these two statements, we will then draw practical conclusions therefrom.

I. First, TO US THE GOSPEL IS NOT AFTER MEN AS TO THE NODE BY WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED IT. In a certain sense we received it from men as to the outward part of the reception, for we were called by the grace of God through parental influence, or through a Sabbath-school teacher, or by the ministry of the Word, or by the reading of a godly book, or by other agency. But in Paul's case none of these things were used. He was distinctly called by the Lord Jesus Christ himself speaking to him from heaven, and revealing himself in his own light. It was necessary that Paul should not be indebted to Peter, or James, or John, even in the way in which many of us are indebted to instrumentality; so that he might truly say, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Yet we also can say this in another sense. We also have received the gospel in a way beyond the power of man to convey it to us: men brought it to our ear, but the Lord himself applied it to our heart. The best of the saints could not have brought it home to our hearts, so as to regenerate, convert, and sanctify us by it. There was a distinct act of God the Holy Ghost by which the instrumentality was made effectual, and the truth was rendered operative upon our souls.

So I note that not one among us has received the gospel by birth-right. We may be the children of holy parents, but we are not therefore the

children of God. To us it is clear that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing more. Only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Yet we hear of persons whose children do not need conversion. They are spoken of as being free from natural corruption, and born children of God, having a grace within which only needs to be developed. I am sorry to say that my father did not find me such a child. He found out early in my life that I was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and that folly was bound up in my heart. Friends and teachers soon perceived in me a natural depravity; and assuredly I have found it in myself: the sad discovery needed no very minute research, for the effect of the evil stared me in the face in my character. This tradition as to our being born with a holy nature is gaining foothold in the professing church, though contrary to Scripture, and even to the confessions of faith which are still avowedly maintained. Certain preachers hardly dare formulate it as a doctrine; but it is with them a kind of chaotic belief that there may be productions of the flesh which are very superior, and will serve well enough without the new birth of the Spirit. This tacit belief will lead up to birth-right membership; and that is fatal to any Christian community, wherever it comes to be the rule. Without conversion, in certain fellowships, the young people drift into the church as a matter of course, and the church becomes only a part of the world, with the Christian name affixed to it. May we never in our churches sink into that condition! That religion which is a mere family appendage is of little worth. The true seed are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We have not received our faith by tradition from our parents; and yet some of us, if true faith could be so received, would certainly have thus received it, for if we are not Hebrews of the Hebrews, yet according to our family-tree we are Puritans of the Puritans, descended throughout many generations of believers. Of this we make small account before God, though we are not ashamed of it before men. We have no father in our spiritual life but the Lord himself, and we have not received that life, or the gospel, by any carnal parentage, but of the Lord alone.

Brethren, we have not received the gospel, nor do we now receive it, because of the teaching of any man, or set of men. Do you receive anything because Calvin taught it? If so, you had need look to your foundations. Do you believe a doctrine because John Wesley preached it?

If so, you have reason to mind what you are at. God's way, by which we are to receive the truth, is to receive it by the Holy Ghost. It is helpful to me to know what such and such a minister believed. The judgment of a holy, godly, clear-sighted, gifted divine is not to be despised: it deserves to have due weight with us. He is as likely to be right as we are; and we should differ from a grace-taught man with some hesitancy. But it is a very different thing to say, "I believe it on this good man's authority." In our raw state as young Christians, it may not be injurious to receive truth from pastors and parents, and so on; but if we are to become men in Christ Jesus, and teachers of others, we must quit the childish habit of dependence on others, and search for ourselves. We may now leave the egg, and get rid of the pieces of shell as quickly as may be. It is our duty to search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so; and more, it is our wisdom to cry for grace to appropriate each truth, and let it dwell in our inmost nature. It is time that we should be able to say, "This truth is now as personally my own as if I had never heard it from lip of man. I receive it because it has been written on my own heart by the Lord himself. Its coming to me is not after men."

There is an opinion current in certain circles that you must not receive anything unless it is taught you of men: the word "men" being swallowed up and hidden away, but being there, after all, under the term "the church." The church is set up as the great authority. If she has sanctioned it, you dare not question it; if she decrees, it is yours to obey. But this is to receive a gospel "after man" with a vengeance. And the process involved is a strange one. You must trace a dogma as coming through a continuous visible church, and this will lead you through the Cloaca Maxima of old Rome. Though truth be manifestly clear and pure, and prove itself to be the water of life to you, yet you must not accept it; but you must betake yourself to the muddied stream which can be traced through the foul channel of a continuous church, which for ages has apostatized. My dear brethren, a doctrine's being believed by what may in courtesy be called "the church" is no voucher for it: the most of us would almost regard it as being a question to be raised whether teaching can be true which has been vouched for by those great worldly corporations which have usurped the name of churches of Christ. Several sects claim apostolical succession, and if any possess it, the Baptists are the most likely, since they practice

the ordinances as they were delivered; but we do not even care to trace our pedigree through the long line of martyrs, and of men abhorred by ecclesiastics. If we could do this without a break, the result would be of no value in our eyes; for the rag of apostolical succession" is not worth warehouse-room. Those who contend for the fiction may monopolize it if they will. We do not receive the revelation of God because it has been received by a succession of fathers, monks, abbots, and bishops. We are right glad when we perceive that certain of them saw the truth of God, and taught it; but that fact does not make it truth to us. We would each one say, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." We never think of quoting the community of men called "the church" as the ultimate authority with conscience. "We have not so learned Christ."

Furthermore, I hope I shall speak for all of you here when I say that we have received the truth personally by the revelation of it to our own souls by the Spirit of the Lord. Albeit that in so large a company as this I fear there may be a Judas, and the Lord, is it I?" may well be passed round with holy self-suspicion; yet we can all say, unless fearfully deceived, that we have received the truth which we preach by the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. Let us turn to our diaries, though the dates are now far away in the long-ago. We remember when the light broke in, and revealed our lost estate, and thus began the ground-work of our teaching. Ah, friends! the darker doctrines which make up the foil of the priceless jewels of the gospel, do you not remember when you received them with power? That I was guilty, I believed, for I was so taught; but then and there I knew in my soul that it was so. Oh, how I knew it! Guilty before God, "condemned already," and lying under the present curse of a broken law, I was sore dismayed. I had heard the law of God preached, and I had trembled as I heard it; but now I felt an inward conviction of personal guilt of the most piercing character. I saw myself a sinner; and what a sight is that! Fearfulness took hold upon me, and shame and dread. Then I saw how true was the doctrine of the sinfulness of sin; and what a punishment it must involve. That doctrine I no longer received of men.

The precious doctrine of peace through the precious blood of Jesus, we also know by inward personal teaching. We used to hear and sing of the

great Sacrifice, and of the love of him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree; but now we stood at the cross-foot: for ourselves we beheld that dear face, and gazed into the eyes so full of pity, and saw the hands and feet that were fastened to the wood for our sakes. Oh, when we saw the Lord Jesus, as our Surety, smarting for our offense, then we received the truth of redemption and atonement in a way that was "not after man"!

Yes, those gracious men who have gone to heaven did preach the gospel to us fully and earnestly, and they labored to make known Christ to us; but to reveal the Son of God in us was beyond their power. They could as easily have created a world as have made these truths vital to us. We say, therefore, each one from his inmost soul, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man;" so far as the way by which we have come to know and feel it within our own souls.

Since our first days we have experienced a gradual opening up of the gospel to our understanding, but in all that process, our real progress has been of God, and not of men. Brethren, you read commentators—that is to say, if your own comments are worth hearing; you read the books of godly men—that is to say, if you yourselves ever say anything worth reading; yet your spiritual learning, if it be true and real, is of the Lord's imparting. Do we learn anything, in the most emphatic sense of learning, unless we are taught of the Lord? Is it not essential that God the Spirit should lay home the truth which has been spoken to you even by the ablest instructor? You have continued to be students ever since you left College; but your Tutor has been the Holy Spirit. By no other method can our spirits learn the truth of God but by the teaching of the Spirit of God. We can receive the shell and the outer form of theology, but the real Word of the Lord itself comes by the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth.

How sweetly the Spirit has taught us in meditation! Have you not often been surprised and overcome with delight as Holy Scripture has opened up, as if the gates of the golden city had been set back for you to enter? I am sure that you did not then gather your knowledge from men, because it was all fresh to you as you sat alone with no book before you but the Bible, and yourself receptive, scarcely thinking out matters, but drinking

them in as the Lord brought them to you. A few minutes' silent openness of soul before the Lord has brought us in more treasure of truth than hours of learned research. The truth is something like those stalactite caverns and grottoes of which we have heard, which you must enter and see for yourself if you would really know their wonders. If you should venture there without light or guide, you would run great risks; but with blazing flambeaux, and an instructed leader, your entrance is full of interest. See! your guide has taken you through a narrow winding passage, where you have to creep, or go on bended knees! At last he has brought you out into a magnificent hall; and when the torches are held aloft, the far-off roof sparkles and flashes back the light as from countless jewels of every hue! You now behold nature's architecture; and cathedrals are henceforth toys to you. As you stand in that vast pillared and jewelled palace, you feel how much you owe to your guide, and to his flaming torch. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, and sheds light on the eternal and the mysterious. This he does in certain cases very personally. Then he fills us with complete forgetfulness of all our immediate surroundings, and we commune only with the truth. I can well understand how philosophers, while working out an absorbing problem, have seemed lost, and oblivious of all the world besides. Have you never felt a holy absorption in the truth while the Spirit has filled you with its glorious vision? It has been so with many of the saints while taught of God. They are not likely to give up to popular clamor what they have thus received.

How often has the Lord taught his servants his own truth in the school of tribulation! We speak well of meditation: it is as silver; but tribulation is as much fine gold. Tribulation not only worketh patience; but patience brings experience, and in experience there is a deep and intimate knowledge of the things of God which cometh by no other means. Do you know what it is to be in such pain that you could not bear one turn more of the screw, and have you, then, in faintness fallen back upon your pillow, and felt that even then you could not be more happy unless you were caught up to the third heaven? Then has it been verified to some of us that we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us. While lying in passive peace, it may be you have seen a Scripture come forth like a star between the cloud-rifts of a tempest, and it has shone with such

lustre as only the Lord God could have given to it. Depression of spirit and torture of body have been forgotten, while the bright promise has made your soul full of light. There is a place in the far-back desert which you can never forget. There grows a bush. A very unpromising object is a bush; but it is sacred to you; for there the Lord revealed himself to you, and the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. You will never unlearn the lesson of the burning bush. Do we know any truth till the Holy Spirit burns it into us, and engraves it on our soul as with an iron pen, and with the point of a diamond? There are ways of learning for which we are very grateful; but the surest way of learning divine truth is by having the word engrafted so as to take living hold upon the soul. Then we do not believe it only: we give our life to it: it lives in us, and at the same time we live upon it. Such truth throbs in every pulse; for it lives in us, and colors our being. The devil insinuates questions; but we are not accountable for what he pleases to do, and we care the less, because he now whispers into a deaf ear. When once the soul itself has received the truth, and it has come to permeate the entire being, we are not accessible to those doubts which I aforesaid pierced us like poisoned arrows.

I may add, concerning many of the truths of God, and the whole gospel system, that we have learned the truth thereof in the field of sacrifice and service with our Lord, so that to us it is not after man. If you do not believe in human depravity, accept a pastorate in this wicked London, and if you are true to your commission, you will doubt no more! If you do not believe in the necessity of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, take a charge over the cultured and polished congregation, that will hear all your rhetoric, and will remain as worldly and as frivolous as it was before. If you do not believe in the power of the atoning blood, never go and see believers die, for you will find that they trust in nothing else. A dying Christ is the last resort of the believer.

When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my strength and stay.

If you do not believe in the election of grace, live where multitudes of men come under your notice, and persons most unlikely are called out from among them in surprising ways, and it will grow upon you. Here comes

on who says, I have neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor friend who ever enters a place of worship. How came you to believe? I heard a word in the street, sir, quite by accident, that brought me to tremble before God. Here is the election of grace. Here comes another, dark in mind, troubled in soul, and she is a member of a family all of them members of your church, all happy and rejoicing in the Lord; and yet this poor creature cannot lay hold upon Christ by faith. To your great joy, you set before her Christ in all his fullness of grace, and she becomes the brightest of the whole circle; for they never knew the darkness as she did, and they can never rejoice in the light as she delights in it. To find a greatly-loving saint you must find one who has had much forgiven. The woman that was a sinner is the only one that will wash Christ's feet. There is raw material in a Publican which you seldom find in a Pharisee. A Pharisee may polish up into an ordinary Christian; but somehow there is a charming touch about the pardoned sinner which is lacking in the other. There is an election of grace, and you cannot help noticing, as you go about, how certain believers enter into the inner circle, while others linger in the outer courts. The Lord is sovereign in his gifts, and doeth as he wills; and we are called to bow before his scepter within the church as well as at its portal. The longer I live the more sure I am that salvation is all of the grace, and that the Lord gives that grace according to his own will and purpose.

Once more, some of us have received the gospel because of the wonderful unction that has gone with it at times to our souls. I hope that none of us will ever fall into the snare of following the guidance of impressions made upon us by texts which happen to come prominently before our minds. You have judgements, and you must not lay them aside to be guided by accidental impressions. But for all that, and at the back of all that, there is not a man here that has led an eventful, useful life but must confess that certain of those acts of his life, upon which his whole history has hinged, are connected with influences upon his mind which were produced, as he believes, by super-natural agency. A passage of Holy Writ, which we have read a hundred times before, took us captive, and became the master of every thought. We steered by it as men trust the pole-star, and we found that our voyage was made easy thereby. Certain texts are, to our memory, sweet as wafers made with honey; for we know what they once did for us,

and the recollection is refreshing. We have been revived from a fainting fit, nerved for a desperate effort, or fired for a sacrifice, by a Scripture which became no longer a word in a book, but the very voice of God to our soul—even that voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty. Have you not noticed how a turn of a word in a text has made it seem all the more fitted for you? It looked a very small point; but it was essential to its effect, just as a small notch in a key may be the exact form which makes it fit the lock. How much may hang on what seems, to the unspiritual, to be nothing more than a slight verbal distinction, or an unimportant turn of expression! A thought of primary importance may turn upon the singular of plural of a word. If it be the Greek word itself, the importance cannot be overestimated; but in an English word, in the translation, there may be well-nigh equal force, according as the word is true to the original. The many, who can only read our marvellous English Bible, come to prize its words because the Lord has blessed them to their souls. A simple Welsh friend believed that our Lord must have been a Welshman, because, said he, he always speaks to me in Welsh. To me it has often seemed as if the Well-beloved of my soul had been born in my native village, had gone to my school, and had passed through all my personal experiences; for he knows me better than I know myself. Although I know he was of Bethlehem, and Judaea, yet he seems like one of London, or of Surrey. Nay more; I see in him more than manhood could have made him; I discern in him a nature more than that of man; for he enters the inmost recesses of my soul, he reads me like an open page, he comforts me as one brought up with me, he dives into my deepest griefs, and attends me in my highest joys. I have secrets in my heart which only he knows. Would God his secret were with me as mine is with him up to the measure of my capacity! It is because of that wonderful power which the Lord Jesus has over us through his sacred Word that we receive that Word from him, and receive it as not of man.

What is unction, my brethren? I fear that no one can help me by a definition. Who can define it? But yet we know where it is, and we certainly feel where it is not. When that unction perfumes the Word, it is its own interpreter, it is its own apologist, it is its own confirmation and proof, to the regenerate mind. Then the Word of God deals with us as no word of man ever did or could. We have not received it, therefore, of men.

Constantly receiving the divine Word as we do, it comes to us with an energy ever fresh and forcible. It comes to us especially with a sanctifying power, which is the very best proof of its coming from the thrice-holy God. Philosophers words may teach us what holiness is, but God's Word makes us holy. We hear our brethren exhort us to aspire to high degrees of grace, but God's Word lifts us up to them. The Word is not merely an instrument of good, but the Holy Spirit makes it an active energy within the soul to purge the heart from the sin, so that it can be said, Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you. When thus cleansed, you know that the Word is true. You are sure of it, and you no longer need even the most powerful book of evidences. You have the witness in yourself, the evidence of things not seen, the seal of eternal verity.

I have taken all this time upon how we receive the gospel, and therefore I must perforce be brief upon a further point.

II. TO US THE TRUTH ITSELF IS NOT AFTER MEN. I desire to assert this plainly. If any man thinks that the gospel is only one of many religions, let him candidly compare the Scripture of God with other pretended revelations. Have you ever done so? I have made it a College exercise with our brethren. I have said—We will read a chapter of the Koran. This is the Mahometan's holy book. A man must have a strange mind who should mistake that rubbish for the utterances of inspiration. If he is at all familiar with the Old and New Testaments, when he hears an extract from the Koran, he feels that he has met with a foreign author: the God who gave us the Pentateuch could have had no hand in many portions of the Koran. One of the most modern pretenders to inspiration is the Book of Mormon. I could not blame you should you laugh outright while I read aloud a page from that farrago. Perhaps you know the Protevangelion, and other apocryphal New Testament books. It would be an insult to the judgement of the least in the kingdom of heaven to suppose that he could mistake the language of these forgeries for the language of the Holy Ghost. I have had several pretended revelations submitted to me by their several authors; for we have more of the prophetic clan about than most people know of; but no one of them has ever left on my mind the slightest suspicion of his sharing the inspiration

of John, or Paul. There is no mistaking the inspired Books if you have any spiritual discernment. Once let the divine light dawn in the soul, and you perceive a colouring and a fashion in the product of inspiration which are not possible to mere men. Would one who doubts this write us a fifth Gospel? Would anyone among our poets attempt to write a new Psalm, which could be mistaken for a Psalm of David? I do not see why he could not, but I am sure he cannot. You can give us new psalmody, for it is an instinct of the Christian life to sing the praises of God; but you cannot match the glory of divinely-inspired song. Therefore we receive the Scripture, and consequently the gospel as not after man.

You say, perhaps, You are comparing books, and forgetting that your theme is the gospel. But this is only in appearance. I do not care to waste your time by asking you to compare the gospels of men. There is not another gospel that I know of that is worth the comparison for a single minute. Oh, but, they say, there is a gospel that is much wider than yours. Yes, I know that it is much wider than mine; but to what does it lead? They say that what is nicknamed Calvinism has a very narrow door. There is a word in Scripture about a strait gate and a narrow way; and therefore I am not alarmed by the accusation. But then there are rich pastures when you enter within, and this renders it worth while to enter in by the strait gate. Certain other systems have very wide doors; but they lead you into small privileges, and those of a precarious tenure. I hear certain invitations which might run as follows:—Come ye disconsolate; but if you come, you will be disconsolate still, for there will be no eternal made sure to you, and you must preserve your own souls, or perish after all. But I shall not enter into any comparisons, for they are odious in this case.

The gospel, our gospel, is beyond the strain and reach of human thought. When men have exercised themselves to the very highest in original conceptions, they have never yet thought out the true gospel. If it is such a common-place thing as the critics would have us believe, why did it arise in the minds of the Egyptians or Chinese? Great minds often run in the same grooves as those of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul? I think it is a fair thing to say that, if it is such a common-place form of teaching, it might have arisen among the Persians or Hindoos; or, surely, we might have found something like it among the great teachers of Greece. Did any of

these think out the doctrine of free and sovereign grace? Did they guess at the Incarnation and Sacrifice of the Son of God? No, even with the aid of our inspired Book, no Mahometan, to my knowledge, has taught a system of grace in which God is glorified as to his justice, his love, and his sovereignty. That sect has grasped a certain sort of predestination which it has defaced into blind faith; but even with that to help them, and the unity of the Godhead as a powerful light to aid them, they have never thought out a plan of salvation so just to God and so pacifying to the troubled conscience as the method of redemption by the substitution of our Lord Jesus.

I will give you another proof, which, to my mind, is conclusive that our gospel is not after men; and it is this—that it is immutable, and nothing that man produces can be so called. If man makes a gospel—and he is very fond of doing it, like children making toys—what does he do? He is very pleased with it for a few moments, and then he pulls it to pieces, and makes it up in another way; and this continually. The religions of modern thought are as changeable as the mists on the mountains. See how often science has altered its very basis! Science is notorious for being most scientific in destruction of all the science that has gone before it. I have sometimes indulged myself, in leisure moments, in reading ancient natural history, and nothing can be more comic. Yet this is by no means and abstruse science. In twenty years time, some of us may probably find great amusement in the serious scientific teaching of the present hour, even as we do now in the systems of the last century. It may happen that, in a little time, the doctrine of evolution will be the standing jest of schoolboys. The like is true of the modern divinity which bows its knee in blind idolatry of so-called science. Now we say, and do so with all our heart, that the gospel which we preached forty years ago we will still preach in forty years time if we are alive. And, what is more, that the gospel which was taught of our Lord and his apostles is the only gospel now on the face of the earth. Ecclesiastics have altered the gospel, and if it had not been of God it would have been stifled by falsehood long ago; but because the Lord has made it, it abideth for ever. Everything human is before long moon-struck, so that it shifts with every phase of the lunar orb; but the Word of the Lord is not after men, for it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

It cannot be after men, again, because it is so opposed to human pride. Other systems flatter men, but this speaks the truth. Hear the dreamers of to-day cry up the dignity of human nature! How sublime is man! But point me to a single syllable in which the Word of God sets itself to the extolling of man. On the contrary, it lays him in the very dust, and reveals his condemnation. Where is boasting then? It is excluded: the door is shut in its face. The self-glorification of human nature is foreign to Scripture, which has for its grand object the glory of God. God is everything in the gospel which I preach, and I believe that he is all in all in your ministry also. There is a gospel in which the work and the glory are divided between God and man, and salvation is not altogether of grace; but in our gospel salvation is if the Lord. Man never could nor would have invented and devised a gospel which would lay him low, and secure to the Lord God all the honor and praise. This seems to me to be clear beyond all question; and hence our gospel is not after men.

Again, it is not after men, because it does not give sin any quarter. I have heard that an Englishman has professed himself a Mahometan because he is charmed by the polygamy which the Arabian prophet allows his followers. No doubt the prospect of four wives would win converts who would not be attracted by spiritual considerations. If you preach a gospel which makes allowances for human nature, and treats sin as if it were a mistake rather than a crime, you will find willing hearers. If you can provide absolution at small cost, and can ease conscience by a little self-denial, it will not be wonderful if your religion becomes fashionable. But our gospel declares that the wages of sin is death, and that we can only have eternal life as the gift of God; and that this gift always brings with it sorrow for sin, a hatred towards it, and an avoidance of it. Our gospel tells a man that he must be born again, and that without the new birth he will be lost eternally, while with it he will obtain everlasting salvation. Our gospel offers no excuse or cloak for sin, but condemns it utterly. It presents no pardon except through the great Atonement, and it will give that man no security who tries to harbour any sin in his bosom. Christ died for sin; and we must die to sin, or die eternally. If we preach the gospel faithfully, we must preach the law. You cannot fully preach salvation by Christ without setting Sinai at the back of the picture, and

Calvary in the front. Men must be made to feel the evil of sin before they will prize the great Sacrifice which is the head and front of our gospel. This is not to the taste of this or any other age; and therefore I am sure man did not invent it.

We know that gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of men, because our gospel is so suitable for the poor and illiterate. The poor, according to the usual fashion of men, are overlooked. Parliament has enclosed all the commons, so that a poor man cannot keep a goose; I doubt not that, if it were likely to be effectual, we should soon hear of a Bill for distributing freeholds of the stars among certain sky-lords. It is evident that a fine property in the celestial regions is, at the present time, unregistered in any of our courts. Well, they may sooner enclose and assign the sun, moon, and stars than the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This is the poor man's common. The poor have the gospel preached to them. Yet there are not a few nowadays who despise a gospel which the common people can hear and understand; and we may be sure that a plain gospel never came from them, for their taste does not lie in that direction. They want something abstruse, or, as they say, thoughtful. Do we not hear this sort of remark, We are an intellectual people, and need a cultured ministry. Those evangelistic preachers are all very well for popular assemblies, but we have always been select and require that preaching which is abreast of the times? Yes, yes, and their man will be one who will not preach the gospel unless it be in a clouded manner; for if he does not declare the gospel of Jesus, the poor will be sure to intrude themselves, and shock my lords and ladies. Brethren, our gospel does not know anything about high and low, rich and poor, black and white, cultured and uncultured. If it makes any difference, it prefers the poor and down-trodden. The great Founder of it says, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. We praise God that he has chosen the base things, and things that are despised. I hear it boasted of a man's ministry, although it gradually diminishes the congregation, that it is doing a great work among thoughtful young men. I confess that I am not a believer in the existence of these thoughtful young men: those who mistake themselves for such I have generally found to be rather conceited than thoughtful. Young men are all very well, and so are young women, and old women

also; but I am sent to preach the gospel to every creature, and I cannot limit myself to thoughtful young men. I certify to you that the gospel which I have preached is not after men, for it knows nothing of selection and exclusiveness, but it values the soul of a sweep or a dustman at the same price as that of the Lord Mayor, or her Majesty.

Lastly, we are sure that the gospel we have preached is not after men, because men do not take to it. It is opposed even to this day. If anything is hated bitterly, it is the out-and-out gospel of the grace of God, especially if that hateful word, sovereignty is mentioned with it. Dare to say, He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion, and furious critics will revile you without stint. The modern religionist not only hates the doctrine of sovereign grace, but he raves and rages at the mention of it. He would sooner hear you blaspheme than preach election by the Father, atonement by the Son, or regeneration by the Spirit. If you want to see a man worked up till the Satanic is clearly uppermost, let some of the new divines hear you preach a free-grace sermon. A gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men; but it needs a divine operation upon the heart and mind to make a man willing to receive into his utmost soul this distasteful gospel of the grace of God.

My dear Brethren, do not try to make it tasteful to carnal minds. Hide not the offense of the cross, lest you make it of none effect. The angles and corners of the gospel are its strength: to pare them off is to deprive it of power. Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it. Why, even among the sects, you must have noticed that their distinguishing points are the horns of their power; and when these are practically omitted, the sect is effete. Learn, then, that if you take Christ out of Christianity, Christianity is dead. If you remove grace out of the gospel, the gospel is gone. If the people do not like the doctrine of grace, give them all the more of it. Whenever its enemies rail at a certain kind of gun, a wise military power will provide more of such artillery. A great general, going in before his king, stumbled over his own sword. I see, said the king, your sword in is the way. The warrior answered, Your majesty's enemies have often felt the same. That our gospel offends the King's enemies is no regret to us.

Dear friends, if it be so that we have not received the gospel from man, but from God, let us continue to receive truth by the divinely-appointed channel of faith. Are you sure that you ever will to the full understand the truth of God? With most of us the understanding is like a narrow postern gate to the city of Mansoul, and the great things of God cannot be so cut down as to be brought in by that entrance. The door is not wide enough. But our city has a great gate called faith, through which even the infinite and eternal may be admitted. Give over the hopeless effort of dragging into the mind by efforts of reason that which can so readily dwell in you by the Holy Ghost through faith. We that speak against rationalism are ourselves apt to reason too much; and there is nothing so unreasonable as to hope to receive the things of God by reasoning them out. Let us believe them upon the divine testimony; and when they try us, and even when they seem to grate upon the sensibilities of humanity let us receive them none the less for that. We are not to be judges of what God's truth ought to be; we are to accept it as the Lord reveals it.

Next, let us, each one, expect opposition if he receives the truth from the Lord, and especially opposition from one person who is both near and dear to him—namely, himself. There is a certain old man who is yet alive, and he is no lover of the truth; but, on the contrary, he is a partisan of falsehood. I heard a gracious policeman say that, when he stood in Trafalgar Square, and fellows of the baser sort kicked him and the other police, he felt a bone of the old man stirring within him. Ah, we have felt that bone too often! The carnal nature opposes the truth, for it is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be. Let us pray the Lord to conquer our pride, that the truth may dominate us, despite our evil hearts. As to the outside world opposing, we are not at all alarmed by that fact, for it is exactly what we were taught to expect. We are now unmoved by opposition. The captain of a ship minds not if a little spray breaks over him.

Remember that, if you did not receive the truth except through the power of the Spirit of God, you cannot expect others to do so. They will not believe your report unless the arm of the Lord be revealed to them. But then, if faith be the Holy Ghost's work, we need not fear that men can

destroy it. Those who attempt to change our belief may well be a little dubious as to their success in the task they have undertaken. If faith be a divine work within our souls, we may defy all sophistries, flatteries, temptations, and threats. We shall be divinely obstinate: those who would pervert us will have to give us up. Possibly they will call us bigots, or hard-shells, or even idiots; but this also signifies little if our names are written in heaven.

Let us also conclude from our subject that if these things come to us from God, we can safely rest our all upon them. If they came to us of men, they would probably fail us at a crisis. Did you ever trust men, and not rue the day ere the sun was down? Did you ever rely on an arm of flesh without discovering that the best of men are men at the best? But if these things come of God, they are eternal and all sufficient. We can both live and die upon the everlasting gospel. Let us deal more and more with God, and with him only. If we have obtained light from him, there is more of blessing to be had. Let us go to that same Teacher, that we may learn more of the deep things of God. Let us bravely believe in the success of the gospel which we have received. We believe in it: let us believe for it. We will not despair though the whole visible church should apostatize. When invaders had surrounded Rome, and all the country lay at their mercy, a piece of land was to be sold, and a Roman bought it at a fair value. The enemy was there, but he would be dislodged. The enemy might destroy the Roman State. Let him try it! Be you of the same mind. The God of Jacob is our Refuge, and none can stand against his eternal power and Godhead. The everlasting gospel is our banner, and with Jehovah to maintain it, our standard never shall be lowered. In the power of the Holy Ghost truth is invincible. Come on, ye hosts of hell and armies of the aliens! Let craft and criticism, rationalism and priestcraft do their best! The Word of the Lord endureth for ever—even that Word which by the gospel is preached unto men.

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Our Miseries, Messengers Of Mercy

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. - Hosea 6:1-2

Tender fathers seek first to will their children by gentle means. The Lord, in his long-suffering, dealt very kindly with his erring Israel, sending them favor after favor, and blessing after blessing, saying by his acts, "I have given them their corn, and their wine, and their oil, they will surely turn unto me and say, 'Our Father, thou shalt be the guide of our youth.' But the more he multiplied his bounties, the more they multiplied their iniquities, and they burned sacrifice unto the gods of Edom, and of Moab, even to those that were no gods, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have given unto thee thy corn, and thy wine, and thy oil;" so they spent the mercies of God in sacrifice upon their idols, and committed transgressions with the false gods of the heathen, consuming upon their lusts the very mercies which God had sent to bring them to repentance. When at last God saw that this measure did not move them, because their sin was written as with an iron pen, and graven upon the very horns of their altars, then he tried harsher means; he hewed them by the prophets; they rose early and they prophesied until the going down of the sun, giving line upon line, precept upon precept, threatening them with the anger and vengeance of God. At last that vengeance came; he carried them away captive, and they went into a land that they knew not, among a cruel people, whose speech they could not understand. Again he delivered them out of the hand of their enemy; and yet, again, because of their sin, he sold them to Assyria, and afterwards to Babylon, that at last, after they had been rent and torn, they might say within themselves, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." Now, my brethren, the people of Israel are but a picture of ourselves; especially are they representatives of a certain class, some of whom are now present. God has tried you with mercy upon mercy; kept you long in health, till you scarce ever had a day's sickness; given you all that you could wish, till your cup was brimming and flowing over; but you used his mercies for your own self-

indulgence, and the bodily strength which was given you to be a blessing you have made a curse. Streams of mercy never ceasing God has vouchsafed to you, but your only return has been stream of sin, broad, and black, and deep. And now to-day he has been changing his ways with you. I am speaking to some whom God has of late heavily afflicted; seeing gentler means would not do, he has turned your wine into wormwood, and your honey into gall; he has made you sick in body and dispirited in mind; your earthly goods are melting like snow before the summer's sun; your children die before your very eyes, and the desire of your heart is taken away with a stroke. God has made all his waves and his billows go over you; the law has sounded its trumpet in your ear and brought your sin to remembrance; conscience has started up in alarm from its long sleep and cries like a mighty man that waketh up from his slumber and finds the camp besieged. You are troubled and sore broken; your heart is melted like wax in the midst of your bowels, so that while you are sitting in the house of God to-day you are complaining.—"I am the man that has seen affliction;" and perhaps worse than that you are groaning, "His wrath lieth hard upon me, I cannot look up." It is to you I am about to speak this morning. I single you out from the crowd, and yet I trust while I address you there may be also some words of comfort or of instruction for the rest of the congregation. Oh! may you, my hearer, you upon whom I fix my eye this morning, you whose case is the case of Israel in Hosea, may you say, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." I desire to come straight up to you who are in this condition and put my hand inside yours, holding you fast while I strive in God's name to reason with you, beseeching God the Holy Spirit to reason better than I can, sweetly moving your soul, till you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father."

Three things I must do this morning; first, I must deal a blow, at the old Tempter, who has got the first hand at you; secondly, I will come to reason comfortably with you; and then, thirdly, I must lovingly persuade you, saying—"Come, let us return unto the Lord."

I. First then, I must DEAL A BLOW AT THE OLD TEMPTER, WHO HAS GOT BEFORE ME AND HAS BEGUN TO DECEIVE YOU.

I cannot tell what is the precise temptation that Satan has been using with you, but I think it is very likely to be one of four.

The first one has been this—"Oh," saith he, "see how troubled you are, nothing prospers with you; what pains of body you suffer, and how depressed you are in spirit. God is a tyrant to you, he treats you cruelly; hate him, set your teeth together and curse him; say no, if he treats me thus he is not a God that I can love, I will abhor him from my very soul." I have uttered that temptation in startling language because such dark insinuations as this have been very common with much tried and troubled men. I remember many who, in telling their experience of how they were brought to Christ, have confessed that when first the hammer of God's law fell upon their hearts it hardened them, when God smote, they were like the bullock which kicks against the pricks of the ox-goad; they felt like a high blooded, unbroken horse, the bit was in their mouths, but they pulled and tugged at it, and the more it cut and wounded them the more resolved they were that they would not turn, in fact, hatred was stirred up against God by what was intended to bring them to his feet. Soul, doth Satan tempt thee thus? Then indeed it is a sad proof that sin is madness. I can only compare thy case to you poor maniac, who has labored hard to destroy himself by existing himself into the fire or into the water. Some kind person, willing to bear all the inconveniences of such an office, has volunteered to be his keeper. See, the man is dashing to the water's brink and means to throw himself into the stream, his keeper holds him back, and with stern words and sterner acts throws him down upon the ground, and binds him so that he cannot take the fatal leap. But look again, he longs to burn himself, he makes a tremendous effort to thrust his body into the flame, but his keeper shuts him up in a room where he cannot get at the devouring flame. All the "while this madman hates him, curses him, spits upon him, and would do anything if he could but kill his keeper and tear him to pieces in his fury. Mark you, when yonder maniac shall get back his reason, he will kiss the feet of that man whom now he hates, he will say—"I bless you for the loving violence which has restrained me from my own destruction, I thank you for denying me my own will, that you stood in my path and thwarted my mad desire, and that you would not let me ruin myself." Now, poor sinner, God is doing this with you. Oh! do not hate him. He does not hate you; he

is not coaling with you in wrath, but in mercy. There is still behind the black cloud the sun of his mercy shining. Oh! that Satan may be cast out of you that you may not be tempted to hate God because of his sore smitings of you.

Or, perhaps, the temptations of Satan have taken another shape, not so much hatred as sullenness. You have lost all you care for now, and you think that your state does not matter much to you, you would as soon die as live, and as for your soul, you think you cannot be more wretched in hell itself than you are, and you say, "So let it be; it is so bad that it cannot be mended." You do not bestir yourself, but you sit down with a stony heart waiting to be crushed. You are like some poor man benighted on the frozen Alps, who feels sleep creeping upon him, and is content to lie down there and die, as he certainly must unless some friendly hand shall shake him out of his desperate sleep. There is a kind of numbness which pain brings to the body, which has its equivalent in the spirit, a numbness because the grief has been so acute, that nature could bear no more. Then death itself loses its horror in the nearer terrors of the soul. "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." Soul, Satan desireth to have thee that he may utterly destroy thee, and this is one of his ways, he seeks to make thee torpid that he may find thee dead; for when thou art sullen he knows that the warnings of the ministry, and the earnest exhortations of the gospel, will have but little force with thee. Wake, man, wake! thy dander is awful! Multitudes have perished here. Wake, I pray thee, wake! Oh! if thou hast any sensibility left, bestir thee. Depend on it, that bad as thy case is, it will be worse in the world to come, unless the badness of it be now blessed to thy soul. Oh! man, the pains thou hast had as yet are but as the finger-ache, they are but mere trifles compared with the miseries of eternity. Instead of opiates to make thee sleep, let them be goads to stir thy sluggish flesh, and make thee start from the deadly couch of presumption. I would be but too glad if I might thrust lancets into thee again, and again, anything sooner than you should sleep that sleep of death and be utterly destroyed.

Possibly, however, the temptation of Satan has taken the form of despair. "Oh," saith he, "there is no hope for you; you can clearly perceive that you are the subject of divine hatred; God has not dealt with others as he has

with you; these trials are but to first drops of the long shower of his eternal wrath. Depend upon it," says Satan, "now that your conscience is in this state, your convictions will deepen into a settled remorse, and then that remorse will end in final despair, and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; your sins are too many and too great; there is hope for any man, but there is no hope for you; you are beyond the lines of mercy; the arm of grace is not long enough or strong enough to reach such a wretch as you are; you are not jammed in hell yet, but you are the same as if you were; you are reprobate; the decree shuts you out of heaven, while the greatness of your sin confirms it; you are bound up in fetters that cannot be broken and cast into a horrible pit out of which you never can be drawn." Satan, thou art a liar, oh! that this poor heart did know it: I tell thee this to thy face, for thou didst once bewitch me with thy falsehood. Thou didst bring me into this state of despair too till I was ready to put an end to myself, because I thought nothing awaited me but the wrath of God. Oh! thou lying hell-hound, how thou didst slander my Lord and Master. He was willing to receive me, but thou modest me think he would reject me; he stood waiting about the door of my heart, saying, "Open to me," and thou saidst that he had gone, that he had shut up the bowels of his compassion, and doomed for ever to destruction. I will be even with thee, thou great destroyer of souls, for thy cruel treachery with me, as long as I live I will raise the hue and cry against thee. Soul, do not thou believe him, he is a murderer of souls, and a liar from the beginning; there is hope for you; there is hope for you now. There is still the gospel preached to you: still is it freely presented in your hearing. May you say today, "Come, let us return unto the Lord" and he will heal you; he will bind you up; he will receive you to his heart; he will in no wise cast you out.

But it may occur, that yet a fourth temptation has been tried with some of you. Satan has said, "Well, now, you can see it is of no use. Give it up altogether, and if you cannot be happy one way, try another; you clearly perceive that you are shut out of heaven, well, make the best of this world." "Now," says the devil, "Christ will not have you, what is the use of your going to a place of worship? Do not go, stay away, it is hopeless; the gospel will never be of any use to you; you have heard it these three or four years, and you only get more hardened; don't go again; besides, why

make yourself miserable for nothing; drink your fill of the world's delight, if you cannot get the best good, get the other; eat, drink, and be merry; live a fast life, and satisfy yourself; you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb; you may as well perish for a great sin as perish for a little one. God evidently has cast you off, follow your own way and choose your own delight." Oh! soul, oh! soul, how sad it is that these afflictions and warnings of conscience which are meant to bring you to Christ should be used by Satan as the reason why you should go from Christ. Oh! soul, the Lord has designs of mercy for you now he has begun to try you in your circumstances and afflict you in your soul; and the devil knows it, and is afraid of losing you and so he wants you to get out of the way of mercy just when mercy is coming. What, suppose you have as yet gained no good by attending the means of grace, does that prove that you will not soon be blessed? You are travelling in the wilderness, you had a torch, and the wind blew it out: you lit it again, and it blew it out again, do not say that therefore you will never see. The sun is rising, the sun is rising, and the fact that torches have been blown out does not prove that the night will last for ever. If your false hopes have left you, and your self-righteous trusts have all been taken away, I am glad. I am glad it is dark with you, for the darkest part of the night is that which heralds the dawning of the day. I am glad the Lord has laid you low, for it is now he means to hit you up. Do not I pray you be cajoled out of this divine mercy by the temptations of the fiend of hell. Rouse thee, man! Cry, "Through he slay me yet will I trust in him! If I be at Bethesda's pool and the water be not stirred, yet will I die there," (that you will never do; mark that) "though I pray, and he hears me not, yet my cries even to my dying hour shall go up to him." And mark you, he will surely hear you; only, do not be led astray of the Evil One to turn what is the mercy of God into an excuse for excess of riot; but, do you rather listen now to the voice of wisdom and mercy, while I seek in the second place to reason with you comfortably that I may bring you to say, "Come, let us return unto the Lord."

II. Now forget your troubles, for a little while if you can, or only think of them as a background for the brightness of THE COMFORT which I would give you as God's messenger.

1. So you say you have had so many trials in life, and so many strivings of conscience, that therefore you feel you must be too guilty to be saved. Do you think that you have been punished for your sins? Permit me to remind you that this is not the place where the Judge of all the earth usually punishes sin; his wrath he reserves for the day of judgment and the world to come. All sorrow is the result of sin, but still it does not come to any particular man, except in some remarkable instances, because of any special sin in him. Now there was Job—will you equal him among the saints? Was he not one of the chief of them? Yet he was more tried than any other man; that evidently was not because he was a greater sinner than others. Do you not know the fact that often the most wicked men are the most prosperous, whilst the most holy are the most afflicted? Therefore this is not the place where God dispenses providence according to the sole and absolute rule of justice; that is to be in the world to come? How would you account for such an instance as this, which occurred not long ago in a certain railway accident? There were two men who entered the train; one of them a Christian, the other a worldling. The Christian man took his seat; so did the other. At a station the worldly one said, "I should like a game of cards; will you get out and go with me?—there is So-and-so in such a carriage; come with me, and we will play together." "No," said the other, "I would much rather be out of your company, if that is what you are at." "Well then," said he, "good morning, I am going there." An accident of the most frightful character occurred; the Christian man saw those on each side of him killed; his two companions crushed, and himself such a mass of bruises and broken bones as you scarcely ever saw; his leg broken in seven different places, and himself as it seemed at death's door. His companion who went to play cards, was perfectly safe all the carriage in which he rode was untouched! Now, this plainly shows that this is of the world in which God deals with men according to the rules of justice. Ships sink whether men are at prayer, or whether they are cursing God. Providence here is not ordered according to the rule by which God shall dispense his favors or his fury in the world to come. This is the land of long-suffering rather than of execution. This is the land where God in his wise providence rather brings us to repentance than to punishment. Now I can see the hand of God in all. The man who escaped as a card player, I fear, was hardened by the providence by which he escaped. Yet, mark you, God was glorified, because his providence will

become a savor of death unto death to that man should he live and die impenitent, while in the Christian who was thus injured God is honored, for if you could see him as I saw him, with his smiling face relating the fact that he has never murmured once, though he had laid upon his bed for very many weeks, you would only admire the favor and goodness of God which gave the sinner space for repentance, and gave the believer room to display the grace of patience. It was good for the one that he was afflicted, it was good for the other that he escaped. But this is not the hand of punishment, and your having more afflictions than others, may be because God loves you; certainly it is not because he hates you. I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading themselves like green bay-trees; and I have seen them in their death too, and they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; they are at ease, they are settled on their lees; they are not emptied from vessel to vessel. As for God's people, they are chastened every morning, and vexed every evening and the Lord's hand lieth heavy on them; yet there is God's goodness in that heavy hand, and infinite lovingkindness in their tribulations. God only gives the wicked prosperity as we give husks to swine; he gives them this world's transient things because he loves them not. I pray you then, do not misconstrue your sufferings of body and mind, they may be tokens of mercy; they certainly are not indicators of any special wrath.

Secondly, you will say that you have great distress of mind, and trials of soul, and therefore there is no hope for you. I say, therefore, there is hope. Perhaps some of those troubles of mind come from Satan. Now observe this, Satan very seldom troubles those men who are all his own. A poor negro who had been tempted by Satan was once laughed at by his master about it. Said he, "The devil never tempts me, I do not even know that there is such a being in existence." They went out sometime after shooting wild ducks, and as the master shot at a covey of them and borne of them were wounded he was exceedingly earnest with clubs and stones to secure those that were wounded, while he left those that were evidently dead to float on the stream till he had time to pick them up. This gave the negro a fine opportunity of explaining his master's experience. "Massa, whilst you was a splashin' in de water after dem wounded ducks, and lettin' de dead ones float on, it jist come into my mind why it is dat de

debil troubles me so much whilst he lets you alone. You are like de dead ducks, he's sure he's got you safe. I'm like de wounded ones, trying to git away from him, and he's afraid I'll die it, so he makes all de fuss after me and jist lets you float on down de stream. He knows he can get you any time, but he knows it now or never wid me. If you were to begin to flutter a little and show signs like you were a goin' to get away from him, he would make jist as big a splashin' after you as he does after me."

But again, you will remember that it is not God's way to send convictions of sin to reprobates. Do men plough the sand? Do they send their oxen upon the rock? No, they attempt to use materials that are utterly rotten? No, they give them up, and leave them alone. Now, why is the all-wise Jehovah at work with you unless he has gracious designs for you; I hope it is because he is about to bring you to himself.

Let me show you yet in the third place that this is according to the analogy of nature. Did you ever hear this parable? There was a certain shepherd who had a sheep, which he desired to lead into another and better field. He called it and it would not come, he led it and it would not follow, he drove it but it would only follow in own devices. At last he thought within himself "I will do this." The sheep had a little lamb by its side, and the shepherd took the lamb up in his arms, and carried it away, and then the ewe came too. And so with you, God has been calling to you, mother, and you did not come. Christ said "Come," and you would not, he sent affliction and you would not come, then he took your child away, and you came then, you followed the Saviour then. You see it was loving work on the shepherd's part, he did but take the lamb to save the sheep, the Saviour took your child to heaven that he might bring you to heaven. We had before the church the other night a sister who is here now I dare say, there were four in the family and the Lord took one child away. But that was not enough he took another, and another, and the fourth lay sick and ready to, die and then the mothers heart was broken, and mother and father both came to Jesus Oh! blessed afflictions, blessed losses, blessed deaths that end in spiritual life! Now this I trust is how God is dealing with you. You know, if a man has a field and desires to gather a harvest from it, what does he do? First of all he ploughs it. The field might say, "Why these scars across my face? Why thus upturn my sods?" Because

there can be no sowing till there has been ploughing, sharp ploughshares make furrows for good seed. Or take yet another picture from nature. A man desireth to make of a rusty piece of iron a bright sword which shall be serviceable to a great warrior. What doth he do? He putteth it into the fire and melteth it, he taketh away all its dross and removeth all its till, then he fashioneth it with his hammer, he beateth it full sore upon the anvil, he anneals it in one fire after another till at last it comes out a good blade that will not snap in the day of warfare. This is what God doeth with you—I pray you do not misread the book of God's providence, for if you read it aright it runs thus—"I will have mercy on this man and therefore have I smitten him and wounded him. Come, therefore, let us return unto the Lord, for he hath wounded and he will heal, he hath smitten and he will bind us up."

I have other arguments to use, and you must bear with me somewhat patiently. Thou art wounded in spirit this morning, poor mourner, wilt thou remember that it is God's delight to bind up broken hearts. "He telleth the number of the stars." What its the next verse—do you remember it?—"He bindeth up the broken in heart." What a mighty stoop this is! From counting the stars and leading them forth, mighty worlds though they be, he bows to become a surgeon to the poor wounded heart. You know what Christ's occupation is in heaven—"If he shall wipe away tears from oft an faces." What a blessed occupation—wiping away tears! Soul, Christ will be glad to wipe away thy tears now. He delights to do it—Christ is never more happy than when he is showing his heart to shiners, he is so glad when he can find his poor lost sheep, and put it on his shoulders and carry it home. It will maker you glad to be saved; but he will be infinitely glad to save you, and delighted to receive you, for he delighteth in mercy.

Please remember, yet once again, that the wounds which you now feel he made himself, and if he is willing to heal any wounds, how much more those that he has himself made. There are some diseases in which the surgeon is compelled to wound; the proud flesh has gotten in; the cure has been a bad one, and in order that it may be thoroughly sound, he perhaps makes a cross out, a deep cross cut that goes into the very core of the matter. Well, his lances has made a bad wound, do you think the

doctor will not do his best to heal it? I will go to him and say, "Surgeon, thou didst thyself make the wound, thou modest it in order to my healing, heal the wound, I pray thee, heal me." Occasionally when a man has broken his leg, it has been badly set by some bungler, and when he has consulted a skillful surgeon, he says, "I can do nothing for you till I break your leg again." And so often is it with men's minds; they get peace, peace, when there is no peace, and there is no doing anything with them until God breaks their heart again. Suppose a surgeon should break a man's leg again, do you think he would go away and leave the poor man without setting it? No, he broke that he might heal, that he might make the cure a sound one. And so is it, perhaps, with your broken heart. Go to him, then, go to him; say, "Lord, thou didst break my heart; I was a hard blasphemer once, but thou hast brought me to my knees. I once said, 'I would never enter a place of worship;' Lord, thou knowest I go there now, though I get no comfort there, but I pray thee give me comfort. It was such-and-such a sermon that brought me to despair; Lord, guide thy servant to preach another that will bring me into liberty. Lord, if thou hast not broken my heart, break it now; but if thou hast broken it, Lord, I appeal to thee to heal it. Thou hast begun the work by killing me, finish the work by making me alive; thou hast begun by stripping me, Lord, clothe me." That is good argument; he will surely do it, he will not fail to carry on and complete that which he has begun to perform.

Once more only—and perhaps this will be the best argument of all—remember you have got his promise for it. The text I read as a promise. It looks at first sight as if it were spoken by man, and so it is; but then inasmuch as it is put in God's book as the utterance of God's inspired prophet, it is a part of God's word, and it is warranted to be most true. "He hath torn and he will heal." Go and put your finger on this text and say, "Lord, thou hast torn me, and it is written in thy word, 'He will heal us;'"

"Lord, I know thou canst not lie,
Heal my soul or else I die."

Put your finger on the next—"He will bind us up." Say, "Lord, I do not deserve it; I deserve only to perish, but then thou hast said thou wilt do it,

be as good as thy word. Lord, here is a poor sinner near despair, he comes to thee, bind up his broken heart; give him peace;"—and soul, the everlasting hills shall bow, the hoary deep shall itself be burned up, and earth's foundation shall be removed, but God's word shall never pass away, nor shall his promise fail in one single case. Only believe the promise; receive the promise, and this very day, poor broken heart, he will heal thy wounds, and thou shalt have joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. I shall not detain you much longer, but I have now the third point to dwell on upon which earnestly. And O Spirit of the living God bless these words, Jesu, do thou woo hearts to thyself whilst we seek to will them to thy love.

And now I would come LOVINGLY TO PERSUADE YOU, and the persuasion I would use is this—"Come, let us return unto the Lord." Do you see it! The prophet does not say, "Go," but "Come;" he does not say, "Go you," but "Come, let us." Poor soul, thou sayest there is none like thyself; behold I take my place side-by-side with thee. Art thou a sinner? So am I. Dost thou deserve God's wrath? So do I. Hast thou gone very far astray? So have I. Come, let us return, let us go together. Or if that comfort thee not enough, let me tell thee I have gone as thou now art; as despairing, perhaps more so; as cast down, perhaps worse, but I have found him to be a loving Saviour, a blessed Saviour, willing and able to save to the uttermost. Soul, come and try him, come and try him. My brothers and sisters in Christ in Christ reject you when you came to him? You were as bad as others, some in you were worse, did he reject you? I am sure that if I should ask it there would be not one thousand here but a vast company, who would rise and say, "I sought the Lord and he heard me, this poor man cried, and the Lord heard me and delivered me from all my fears." Soul, come, let us return. He saved me; he will save you.

"Tell it unto sinners tell
I am, I am saved from hell."

If he could and would save one, why not another; and if the thousands of Israel, why not poor sinful you?

Then, that I may persuade you further, let me remind you that to return to God is not a cruel request to you. He does not ask you to perform a pilgrimage and blister your weary feet, or to thrust an iron in your back and swing yourself aloft as does the Hindoo, he asks you not to lie on a bed of spikes or starve yourself till you can count your bones. He asks no suffering of you, for Christ has suffered for you. All he asks is that you would return to him, and what is that? That you would be unfeignedly sorry for your past sin, that you would ask his grace to keep you from it in the future, that you would now believe in Christ who is set forth to be the propitiation for sin, that through faith in his blood you may see your sin for ever put away and all your iniquity cancelled. That is neither a hard nor a cruel demand. It is for your good as well as for his glory. O Spirit of God, make the sinner now willing to repent and to believe in Christ.

But, yet again, remember the comfortable fruits which will surely follow if you return. What would you think if I could show you yourself within a week? There he stands; he is singing—

"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear with thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring.

The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."

What man is that? Why, that is the man who came in here last Sunday morning, and said he was utterly lost. He heard the minister exhort him to trust Christ, and he did it, and that is where he is standing now. He has been brought up out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and his feet are set upon a rock. "If I thought that would be the case," saith one, "I would try it." My dear sir, you need not think it will be the case. God promises—and he cannot lie—"He that believeth and is baptized," he does not say, "may be," but "shall be saved," and God's "shalls" and "wills" do

not play with men; but he speaks them in real earnestness. "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." Dare you say that this is not true? "No," say you, "it is undoubtedly true." Well, then, if you call upon the name of the Lord you shall be saved, or else the promise is false. Again, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white." Do you believe that? Is it not a promise made to the penitent who casts himself at the feet of Jesus? Very well, try it personally, and if you cast yourself there, either this book must be withdrawn, and God must change, Christ's blood must lose its power, and God must un-God himself, or else he must and will save you. Oh! that there were such a heart in you, and such a mind towards God, that you would now say, "I do believe; I will believe; I trust my Saviour with my soul." This done, you are saved.

Once more, may I not plead with you to return to God, because of the precious love of Christ? Love, I know, has great power to move. You will remember how in that wonderful book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," there is a singular instance of the power of love. Miss Ophelia had been laboring to train up that wicked girl biopsy, but she would not learn anything, though Miss Ophelia tried to make her say the Assembly's Catechism, in order that she might know all about it. But one day, Eva, the little five, (the very gospel incarnate, just as Miss Ophelia was the picture of the law,) sits down by her side, and says to her, "Topsy, why will be so naughty; what is it makes you so wicked?" "Miss Eva," says Topsy, "it aren't no use any being good nobody loves me." The little girl puts her arm round her neck and kisses her, saying. "Why I love you, Topsy, and it grieves me very much to see you so naughty." "Oh!" said Topsy, "I will try to be good if you will but love me." Love had won the poor child, and had subdued her. Well, now, perhaps you are saying, "If Christ would but say he would love me, I think I could repent that I ever sinned against him; I think I would be willing to give him my heart." Soul, if that is what you say, he does love you. He loved you and gave himself for you. Behold his cross—is there better proof of love than that? See his flowing wounds; hear how he groans; behold him dying! "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and he saves them because he loves them. Oh! if that love will woo you, it is indeed in plenteous abundance flowing down to you now. "Ah! well," you

say, "I cannot do enough for him." If that be true, I am glad you have got as far as that, and I have finished when I have told you an anecdote which I trust will do us all good.

A missionary was preaching to the Maori tribe of the New Zealanders. He had been telling them of the suffering love of Christ, how he had poured forth his soul unto death for them; and as he concluded, he put the thrilling question—"Is it nothing to an who pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his Borrow?" Then stood forth a plumed and painted chief, the scarred warrior of a thousand fights, and as his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, he spoke. "And did the Son of the Highest suffer all this for us men? Then the Indian chief would like to offer him some poor return for his great love. Would the Son of God deign to accept the Indian's hunting dog? Swift of foot and keen of scent the tribe has not such another, and he has been to the Indian as a friend." But the missionary told him that the Son of God had need of no such gifts as these. Thinking he had mistaken the gift he resumed—"Yet perchance he would accept the Indian's rifle? Unerring of aim, the chief cannot replace it." Again the missionary shook his head. For a moment the chief paused; then as a new thought struck him, suddenly despoiling himself of his striped blanket he cried with childlike earnestness, "Perhaps he who had not where to lay his head will yet accept the chieftain's blanket. The poor Indian will be cold without it, yet it is offered joyfully." Touched by love's persistency, the missionary tried to explain to him the real nature of the Son of God; that it was not men's gifts but men's hearts that he yearned for. For a moment a cloud of grief darkened the granite features of the old chief; then as the true nature of the Son of God slowly dawned upon him, casting aside his blanket and rifle he clasped his hands, and looking right up into the blue sky, his face beaming with joy, he exclaimed—"Perhaps the Son of the Blessed One will deign to accept the poor Indian himself!"

Is that what you say this morning? You would give Christ this, and that, and the other. Soul, give him your heart. Say to him now,

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ear;

Fain would I sound it out so loud,
That earth and heaven might hear."

And then it is done; the compact is concluded; the work is over; thou art in the arms of Christ, thou lovest him and he loves thee. He wounded but he has healed; he killed thee but he has made thee alive. Go in peace; thou art loved much; thy sin which are many are all forgiven thee."

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Our Watchword

Let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. -
Psalm 70:4

These words occur at least three times in the book of Psalms, and therefore we may regard them as especially important. When God speaks once, twice, thrice, he doth as it were awaken us to peculiar attention, and call for prompt obedience to what he saith. Let us not be deaf to the divine voice, but let each one say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

You will observe that in this, and in the fortieth Psalm, this holy saying is put in opposition to the ungodly speeches of persecutors. The wicked say, "Aha, aha," therefore let those who love God's salvation have a common watchword with which to silence the malicious mockeries of the ungodly; let them say, "LET GOD BE MAGNIFIED." The earnestness of the wicked should be a stimulus to the fervency of the righteous. Surely, if God's enemies do not spare blasphemy and profanity, if they are always upon the watch to find reasons for casting reproach upon the name and church of Christ, we ought to be more than equally vigilant and diligent in spreading abroad the knowledge of the gospel, which magnifies the name of the Lord. Would to God his church were half as earnest as the synagogue of Satan! Oh that we had, in our holy cause, a tithe of the

indefatigable spirit of those Scribes and Pharisees, who compass sea and land to make one proselyte! Even the archfiend shames us by his preserving industry, for he goeth up and down in the earth seeking whom he may destroy!

The clause which we have selected for our text also follows immediately after another which may be looked upon as a stepping-stone to it. Before we can love God's salvation, we must be seekers of it; hence we read, "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee." There is a duty peculiar to seekers, let them see to it; and then there follows a further obligation peculiar to those who have found what they sought for. Let joy and rejoicing be first realised by the seeker through his receiving personally the grace of God, and then let us go on to a stage further. The fresh convert has his business mainly within; it will be well for him if his heart can, in sincerity, be glad in the Lord. When believers are young and feeble they are not fit for the battle; therefore, let them tarry at home awhile, and under their vine and fig-tree eat the sweet fruits of the gospel, none making them afraid. We do not send our children to hard service; we wait till their limbs are developed, and then appoint them their share in life's labors. Let the newly called be carried like lambs in the Savior's bosom, and borne as on eagles' wings. "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee." But when men have advanced beyond the earliest stage, when they are persuaded that Christ is theirs, and that they have been adopted into the family of God, then let them cheerfully accept active service. Let it not be now the main concern with them to possess a joyous experience on their own account, but let them studiously seek the good of their fellow creatures, and the glory of God. Strong men have strength given them that they may bear burdens and perform labors; light is this burden and blessed is this labor. Let them "say continually, Let God be magnified." I shall, therefore, hope that anything of earnest exhortation which shall be addressed to believers at this time, will come with double power to those of you who are advanced in the divine life. The more you know of God's salvation the more you will love it, and the more you love it the more are you bound to recognize the sacred duty and privilege of saying continually, "Let God be magnified." May each one of you here be willing to take up the obligation if you have enjoyed the benefit.

It may simplify our discourse this morning if we arrange it under three heads. Here is, first, the character: "They that love thy salvation. Here is secondly, the saying: "Let them say continually, Let God be magnified. And here is, thirdly, the wish, the wish of the psalmist and of the psalmist's master, that all who answer to the character shall use the watchword, and say continually, Let God be magnified."

I. We will begin, then, by discriminating THE CHARACTER.

The individuals here spoken of are those who love God's salvation. Then it is implied that they are persons who are saved, because it is not according to nature to love a salvation in which we have no part. We may admire the salvation which is preached, but we shall only love the salvation which is experienced. We may hold orthodox views as to salvation, though not ourselves saved; but we shall not have earnest affection towards it unless we are ourselves redeemed by it from the wrath to come. Saved ones, then, are meant here, and we may add that they are so saved as to be assured of it, and consequently to feel the warm glow of ardent, grateful love. They love God's salvation because they have grasped it; they possess it, they know they possess it, and, therefore, they prize it, and their hearts are wedded to it. Beloved, I hope that the large proportion of this congregation could say before the heart searching God, "We are saved; we have come all guilty and heavy laden to the foot of the cross; we have looked up, we have seen the flowing of the Savior's precious blood, we have trusted in him as our atoning sacrifice, and by faith we have received full pardon through his precious blood." Happy people who have this blessing and know it! May no doubts ever becloud your sky! May you clearly read your titles to the mansions in the skies, written legibly and indelibly in the precious blood of Jesus Christ your Savior. You are the persons to whom we speak to-day; you know, and therefore love the salvation of God.

But, more than this, to sustain and bring to perfection in the renewed heart an ardent affection towards the divine salvation of a sort that will continue, and become practically fruitful, there must be an intelligent consideration, and an instructed apprehension as to the character of this

salvation. It is a great pity that so many professors have only a religion of feeling, and are quite unable to explain and justify their faith. They live by passion, rather than by principle. Religion is in them a series of paroxysms, a succession of emotions. They were stirred up at a certain meeting, excited, and carried away, and let us hope they were really and sincerely converted: but they have failed to become to the fullest extent disciples or learners. They do not sit at Jesus' feet, they are not Bereans who search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be so: they are content with the mere rudiments, the simple elements: they are still little children and have need to be fed with milk, for they cannot digest the strong meat of the kingdom. Such persons do not discern so many reasons for admiring and loving the salvation of God, as the intelligent enlightened Spirit-taught believer. I would to God that all of us, after we have received Christ, meditated much upon his blessed person, and the details of his work, and the various streams of blessings which leap forth from the central fount of Calvary's sacrifice. All Scripture is profitable, but especially those Scriptures which concern our salvation. Some things lose by observation, they are most wondered at when least understood; but the gospel gains by study: no man is ever wearied in meditating upon it, nor does he find his admiration diminished, but abundantly increased. Blessed is he who studies the gospel both day and night, and finds his heart's delight in it. Such a man will have a steadier and intenser affection for it, in proportion as he perceives its excellence and surpassing glory. The man who receives the gospel superficially, and holds it as a matter of impression and little more, being quite unable to give a reason for the hope that is in him, lacks that which would confirm and intensify his love.

Now, let me show you, beloved, what it is in salvation that the thoughtful believer loves; and I may begin by saying that he loves, best of all, the Savior himself. Often our Lord is called Salvation, because he is the great worker of it, the author and finisher, the Alpha and the Omega of it. He who has Christ has salvation; and, as he is the essence of salvation, he is the center of the saved ones' affection. Have you, beloved, carefully considered that Jesus is divine, that he counts it not robbery to be equal with God, being our Creator and Preserver, as well as our Redeemer? Do you fully understand that our Lord is infinite, eternal, nothing less than God; and yet for our sakes he took upon himself our nature, was clothed

in that nature with all its infirmities, sin alone excepted, and in that nature agonized, bled, and died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Oh, marvel of marvels, miracle of miracles! The immortal Lord stoops to death; the Prince of glory bows to be spit upon. Shame and dishonor could not make him start back from his blessed purpose, but to the death of the cross he surrendered himself. O, you who are saved, do you not love Christ, who is your salvation? Do you not feel a burning desire to behold him as he is? Is not his presence, even now, a nether heaven to you? Will not a face to face view of his glory be all the heaven that your utmost stretch of imagination can conceive? I know it is so. Your heart is bound to Jesus, his name is set as a seal upon it; therefore, I charge you to say continually, "Let God be magnified." Glory be to the Father who gave his Son, to the Son who gave himself, to the Spirit who revealed all this to us. Triune God, be thou extolled for ever and ever.

But you love not only the Savior's person, but I am sure you delight in the plan of salvation. What is that plan? It is summed up in a single word—substitution.

"He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Sin was not pardoned absolutely, else justice had been dishonored; but sin was transferred from the guilty to the innocent One. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." When our iniquity was found upon the innocent Lamb of God, he was "smitten of God and afflicted," as if he had been a sinner; he was made to suffer for transgressions not his own, as if they had been his own; and thus mercy and justice met together, righteousness and grace kissed each other. Alas! there are many who fight against this plan, but I rejoice that I am surrounded by warm hearts who love it, and would die for it. As for me, I know no other gospel, and let this tongue be dumb rather than it should ever preach any other. Substitution is the very marrow of the whole Bible, the soul of salvation, the essence of the gospel, we ought to saturate all our sermons with it, for it is the life-blood of a gospel ministry. We must daily show how God the Judge can be "just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth." We must

declare that God has made the Redeemer's soul a sacrifice for sin, making him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Our plain testimony must be, that "he was made a curse for us;" that "he his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" that "he was once offered to bear the sins of many;" and that "he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many." About this we must never speak with bated breath, lest we be found unfaithful to our charge. And why, brethren, should we not joyfully proclaim this doctrine? for is it not the grandest, noblest, most divine, under heaven. The plan so adorns all the attributes of the Godhead, and furnishes such a safe footing for a trembling conscience to rest upon, such a fortress, castle, and high tower for faith to rejoice in, that we cannot do otherwise than love it. The very way and plan of it is dearer to our souls than life itself. Oh, then let us always say, "Let God be magnified," since he devised, arranged, and carried out this Godlike method of blending justice with mercy.

But, beloved, we also love God's salvation when we consider what was the object of it. The object of it towards us was to redeem unto Christ a people who should be zealous for good works. The sinner loves a salvation from hell, the saint loves a salvation from sin. Anybody would desire to be saved from the pit, but it is only a child of God who pants to be saved from every false way. We love the salvation of God because it saves us from selfishness, from pride, from lust, from worldliness, bitterness, malice, sloth, and uncleanness. When that salvation is completed in us we shall be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," and shall be renewed in holiness after the image of Christ Jesus our Lord. That its great aim is our perfection in holiness is the main beauty of salvation. We would be content to be poor, but we cannot be content to be sinful; we could be resigned to sickness, but we could not be satisfied to remain in alienation from God. We long for perfection and nothing short of it will content us, and, because this is guaranteed to the believer in the gospel of Christ, we love his salvation, and we would say continually, "Let God be magnified."

I might thus enlarge upon every part of this salvation, and say that it endears itself to us under every aspect, and from every point of view.

We love his salvation because of one or two characteristics in it which especially excite our delight. Foremost is the matchless love displayed in it. Why should the Lord have loved men, such insignificant creatures as they are, compared with the universe? Why should he set his heart upon such nothings? But more, how could he love rebellious men who have wantonly and arrogantly broken his laws? Why should he love them so much as to give up his only begotten? These are things we freely speak of, but who among us knows what is their weight.; "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I believe that even in heaven, with enlarged faculties, it will be a subject of perpetual wonder to us that ever God could love and save us. And shall we not love the salvation which wells up from the deep fount of the Father's everlasting affection? O brethren, our hearts must be harder than adamant, and made of hell-hardened steel, if we can at once believe that we are saved and yet not love, intensely love the salvation which was devised by Jehovah's heart.

We love his salvation, again, because, in addition to the display of wondrous love, it is so safe a salvation, so real, so true: we have not given heed to cunningly devised fables; we have not chanced our souls upon a fiction. We run no risk when we trust the Savior. Though one of our hymns puts it:-

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude."

This is only a condescension to the feelings of trembling unbelievers, for there is no venture in it; it is sure and certain. Did God lay on Christ my sin? Was it really punished in him? Then there cannot exist a reason why I should be condemned, but there are ten thousand arguments why I should for ever be "accepted in the beloved." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Substitution is a basis for intelligent confidence; it satisfies both the demand of the law and the fears of conscience; and gives to believers a

deep, settled, substantial peace, which cannot be broken. We love this salvation because we feel that it places a foundation of granite beneath our feet instead of the quicksand of human merit. Justice being satisfied is as much our friend as even mercy herself; in fact, all the attributes unite to guarantee our safety.

We love God's salvation, too, because it is so complete. Nothing remains unfinished which is necessary to remove sin from the believer and give him righteousness before God. As far as atonement for sin is concerned, the expiation is most gloriously complete. Remember that remarkable expression of the apostle, where he describes the priests as continually standing at the altar, offering sacrifice year by year, and even day by day, because atonement by such means could never be finished. Such sacrifices could never take away sin; therefore must they be perpetually offered, and the priest must always stand at the altar. "But," saith the apostle, "this man (our great Melchisedec), after he had offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, sat down (for the work was accomplished), sat down at the right hand of God." Jesus has performed what the Aaronic priesthood, in long succession, had failed to do. Though streams of blood might flow from bullock, and from goat, like Kishon's mighty river, and though incense might smoke till the pile thereof was high as Lebanon, with all her goodly cedars, what was there in all this to make propitiation for sin? The work was but shadowed, the real expiation was not offered; it was a fair picture, but the substance itself was not there. But, when our Divine Lord went up to Calvary, and on the cross gave up his body, his soul, his spirit, a sacrifice for sin, he finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Herein, my brethren, we have strong consolation, the immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, his word and oath, are our immovable security. By the atonement we are infallibly, effectually, eternally saved, for he has become the "author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him." How we love this salvation! Our inmost heart rejoines in it! I rejoice to preach it, brethren, and I delight to muse upon it, appropriating it to myself by faith in solitary thought. How it makes the tears stream down one's cheeks with joy, to think "He loved me, and gave himself for me: he took my sins, and he destroyed them, they have ceased to be, they are annihilated, they are blotted out like a cloud, and like a thick cloud have

they vanished." Surely, we should have lost sanity, as well as grace, if we did not love this salvation, beyond the choicest joys of earth.

II. Thus I have described the character, and now, secondly, we will meditate on THE SAYING. Every nation has its idiom, every language has its shibboleth, almost every district has its proverb. Behold the idiom of gracious souls, listen to their household word, their common proverb,—it is this, "Let God be magnified! Let God be magnified!"

Let us proceed at once to the consideration of it, I trust it belongs to us, it certainly does if we love his salvation.

Observe that this is a saying which is founded upon truth and justice. "Let God be magnified," for it is he that saved us, and not we ourselves. We trace our salvation not to our ministers, nor to any pretentious priesthood. None can divide the honors of grace, for the Lord alone hath turned our captivity. He decreed our salvation, planned it, arranged it, executed it, applied it, and secures it. From beginning to end salvation is of the Lord, therefore, let God be magnified. Moreover, the Lord wrought salvation that he might be magnified thereby. It was God's object in salvation to glorify his own name. "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." Truly we desire that the Lord's end and purpose should be fully subserved, for it is his well-deserved due. O thou who hast bled upon the cross, may thy throne be glorious! O thou who wast despised and rejected of men, be thou extolled, and be thou very high. Thou deservest all glory, great and merciful God. Such a gift, such a sacrifice, such a work; thou oughtest indeed to be lauded and had in honor by all the intelligent universe. The saying is settled deep in truth, and established in right.

This saying is naturally suggested by love. It is because we love his salvation that we say, "The Lord be magnified." You cannot love God without desiring to magnify him, and I am sure that you cannot know that you are saved without loving him. For here is a wonder, a central wonder of wonders to many of us, that ever we in particular were saved. I do not think I could be so wonder-struck and amazed at the salvation of you all as at my own. I should know it to be infinite mercy that saved any one of you, or all of you, I say I should know it, but in my own case I feel

it is an unspeakable and inconceivably great mercy which has saved me; and I suppose each brother here, each sister here will feel a special love to Christ from the fact of being himself or herself an object of his love. We never sing, I am sure, with warmer hearts any hymn in our hymn-book than that one -

"What was there in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
Twas even so Father, we ever must sing,
For so it seemed good in thy sight."

The Lord might have left as he has left others to carry out their own wills, and wilfully to reject the Savior, but since he has made us willing in the day of his power, we are for ever beyond measure under obligations to him. Let us say continually, "The Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants."

Moreover, this saying of our text is deeply sincere and practical. I am sure David did not wish to see hypocrites multiplied; but such would be the case if men merely said, "Let God be magnified," and did not mean it. No doubt there is a great deal among professors of mere expression without meaning; it is sadly evident that much godly talk is only talk, but it ought not so to be. You know, how often charity is assumed, and men say to the naked and hungry, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled;" but they give nothing to the poor, except vain words, which cannot profit them. So, too, often professors will sing: -

"Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel,
Win and conquer, never cease;
May thy lasting wide dominion
Multiply and still increase."

and so on; but there it ends; they have said it, but they have done nothing for it. Now, as he is condemned as a hypocrite who merely utters words of charity without deeds, so is he who shall say, "Let God be magnified," but who does not put forth his hand and throw in all his energies to promote that which he professes to desire. The wish must be, and oh! if we are

saved by grace, it will be sincere, intense, and fervent in every believing heart.

Moreover, it must not only be sincere, but it must be paramount. I take it that there is nothing which a Christian man should say continually, except this, "Let God be magnified." That which a man may say continually is assuredly the master-thought of his mind. Listen to the cherubim and seraphim; they continually do cry, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts!" Why cry they thus continually? Is it not because it is their chief business, their highest delight? So should it be with us; our end and aim should ever be to glorify him who redeemed us by his most precious blood. You are a citizen, but you are more a Christian. You are a father, but you are more a child of God. You are a laborer, but you are most of all a servant of the Most High. You are wealthy, but yet more enriched by his covenant. You are poor, but you are most emphatically rich if Christ is yours. The first, chief, leading, lordly, master-thought within you must be this, "Let God be magnified."

And, brethren, the text tells us this must be continual. How earnest you feel about the cause of Christ when you have heard an inspiring sermon, but how long does it last? Ah, those old days of mission enterprise, when Exeter Hall used to be crowded because missionaries had interesting stories to tell of what God was doing—what enthusiasm there used to be—where is it now? Where is it now? Echo might well answer "where is it now?" To a great degree it has departed. The zeal of many rises and falls like a barometer. They are hot as fire, and cold as ice, in the shortest space; their fervor is as transient as the flame of thorns, and hence it is very hard to turn it to any practical account. Oh, for more of the deep-seated principle of intense love to God's salvation, steady and abiding, which shall make a man say continually, "Let God be magnified." We would desire to wake up in the morning with this on our lips. We would begin with the enquiry, "What can I do to magnify God this day?" We would be in business in the middle of the day, and yet never lose the one desire to magnify God. We would return to our family at night, urged by the same impulse, "How can I magnify God in my household?" If I lie sick, I would feel that I must magnify God by patience; if I rise from that bed, I would feel the sweet obligation to magnify him by gratitude; if I

take a prominent position, I am doubly bound to magnify him who makes me a leader to his dock, and, if I be unknown and obscure in the church, I must with equal zeal magnify him by a conscientious discharge of the duties of my position. Oh, to have one end always before us, and to press forward towards it, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left. As though we were balls shot out of a rifled cannon we would rush on, never hesitating or turning aside, but flying with all speed towards the center of the target. May our spirits be impelled by a divine energy towards this one only thing. The Lord be magnified! whether I live or die, may God be glorified in me!

According to the text, this saying should be universal among the saints. It should be the mark of all those that love God's salvation, pertaining not to a few who shall be chosen to minister in public, but to all those whom grace has renewed. All of us, women as well as men, illiterate as well as learned, poor as well as rich, silent as well as eloquent, should after our own ability say, "Let God be magnified." Oh, would to God we were all stirred up to this! Our churches seem to be half alive. It is a dreadful thing to read of the punishment practiced by ancient tyrants when they tied a living man to a corpse, and he had to go about with this corpse strapped to him, and rotting under his nostrils, and yet that is too often the condition of the living ones in our churches: they are bound by ties of church union to a portion of the church which is spiritually dead, though not so manifestly corrupt as to render it possible for us to cut it off. The tares, which we may not root up, hamper and dwarf the wheat. O God, the Holy Ghost, make the church alive right through, from the crown of its head to the sole of its foot, so that the whole church may cry continually, "Let God be magnified."

You will notice that the cry is an absolute one. It does not say, let God be magnified by me if he will please to make me successful in business, and happy, and healthy, but it leaves it open. Only let God be magnified, and he may do what he wills with me. As a poor soldier in the regiment of Christ, I only care for this that HE may win the day, and if I see him riding on his white horse and know that he is conquering, though I lie bleeding and wounded in a ditch, I will clap my hands and say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Though I be poor, and despised, and

reproached, this shall compensate for all, if I can only hear that "him hath God highly exalted, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." I would close my eyes in death, and say, my soul is satisfied with favor and hath all she wants if Jesus be exalted. Remember how David put it: when he had said "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," he added, "Amen and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." He desired no more than that; that was the ultimatum of his wishes. Beloved, I trust it is the same with us.

Nor is there any limit as to place or persons. My heart says, "Let God be magnified among the Wesleyans! The Lord be magnified among the Independents! The Lord be magnified among the Episcopalians! The Lord be magnified among the Baptists!" We pray very earnestly, "Let God be magnified in the Tabernacle," but we would not forget to cry, "Let God be magnified in all parts of London, in all counties of England, and Scotland, and Ireland." We desire no restriction as to race—let God be magnified both in France and in Prussia; in Turkey and in Italy; in the United States and in Australia; among any and every people! So that God's name be magnified, what matters it how or where? We know no politics but this, "Let God be magnified." All nationalities sink before our relation to our God. Christians are cosmopolitan; we are burgesses of the New Jerusalem—there is our citizenship; we are freemen of the entire new creation. What is all else to God's glory! So long as the Lord is glorified, let the empires go and the emperors with them; let nations rise or fall, so long as he comes whose right it is to reign; let ancient dynasties pass away, if his throne is but exalted. We would never dictate to the God of history; let him write out as he pleases the stanzas of his own august poem, but let this always be the close of every verse, "The Lord be magnified! The Lord be magnified! The Lord be magnified!" This is the continual saying of all them that love his salvation.

III. We had much to say under our second head, but time will not tarry for us; therefore we must proceed to the last, which is THE WISH. Holy David, and David's perfect Lord both wish that we may say, "Let God be

magnified." This wish is promoted by an anxiety for God's glory; it is a most holy wish, and it ought to be fulfilled. I shall ask your attention only for a minute or two to the reasons of the wish. Why should it be wished?

First, because it always ought to be said, "Let God be magnified." It is only right, and according to the fitness of things, that God should be magnified in the world which he himself created. Such a handiwork deserves admiration from all who behold it. But when he new-made the world, and especially when he laid the foundation of his new palace in the fair colors of Jesus' blood, and adorned it with the sapphires of grace and truth; he had a double claim upon our praise. He gave his Son to redeem us, and for this let his praise be great and endless. Things are out of joint if God the Redeemer be not glorified. Surely the wheels of nature revolve amiss, if God the loving and gracious be not greatly magnified. As every right-hearted man desires to see right and justice done, therefore does he wish that those who love God's salvation may say continually, "Let God be magnified."

But, we wish it next, because it always needs saying. The world is dull and sleepy, and utterly indifferent to the glory of God in the work of redemption. We need to tell it over and over and over again, that God is great in the salvation of his people. There are many, Who will rise up and deny God's Glory; revilers of all sorts abound in rage; but over and above their clamor, let the voice of truth be heard, "Let God be magnified." They cry, "the Bible is worn out." They doubt its inspiration, they question the deity of Christ, they set up new gods that have lately come up, that our fathers knew not. Let us confront them with the truth, let us oppose them with the gospel, let us overcome them through the blood of the Lamb, using this one only war-cry, "Let God be magnified." Everywhere in answer to all blasphemy, in direct conflict with profanity, let us lift up this voice with heart and soul. "Let God be magnified."

And, again, we desire this, because the saying of this continually does good to the sayers. He who blesses God blesses himself. We cannot serve God with the heart without serving ourselves most practically. Nothing, brethren, is more for your benefit than to spend and be spent for the promotion of the divine honor.

Then, again, this promotes the welfare of God's creatures. We ought to desire to spread the knowledge of God, because the dark places of the earth will never cease to be the habitation of cruelty till they become the temple of the Lord of hosts. Myriads are dying, while we are sitting complacently here souls are passing into eternity unforgiven. The wrath of God is abiding still upon the sons of men, for they know not Christ. What stronger motive could there be for desiring that God's name should continually be magnified. I have been told, and I believe it is the general impression, that at this particular time there is a great cessation of the zealous spirit which once ruled among Christians. We have passed over the heroic age, the golden period of missions, and we have come to the time in which the church rests upon her oars, takes matters quietly, what if I say regards them hopelessly? Very few young men are now coming forward, at least in our denomination, to offer themselves for missionaries; the funds are barely sustained and nothing more. I fear there is among those who conduct the affairs of missions too little of faith, and too much of bastard prudence, which last had better be banished to the bottomless pit at once, for it has long been the clog upon the chariot wheels of the gospel. Faith is too much cast into the background, and the work is viewed in a mercantile light, as though it were a rule of three sum—so much money and so many men, and then so many conversions, whereas it is not so. God worketh not according to arithmetical rules and calculations. There is, I fear, on the whole, a general backsliding from the right state; and what a sad thing it is that it should be so, since at our best we were never too zealous. Few can bring the charge of fanaticism against the English Baptists: we have been too solid, if not stolid, for that. I almost wish it were possible for us to err in that direction, for if an evil it would at any rate be a novelty, if not an improvement.

Why is this, and whence comes it? Years ago our fathers compassed this Jericho, they passed round it according to the Master's bidding, and are we about, after having done the same these many years, to relinquish the task, and lose the result? Do we fear that the walls will never fall to the ground? Brethren, I believe it is the duty of the Christian church to go on working quite as earnestly and zealously and believingly, if there be no

conversions, as if half the world were transformed in a twelve month. Our business is not to create a harvest but to sow the seed; if the wheat does not come up, if we have sown it aright, our Master does not hold us responsible. If missions had been an utter failure it would be no sort of reason why we should give them up. There was a great failure when the hosts of Israel, on the first occasion, went round Jericho; a dreadful failure when they marched round the city twice, and the walls shook not; it was an aggravated failure when they had compassed it four times; it was a most discouraging defeat when they had tramped round it five times; and, on the whole, a breakdown, almost enough to drive them to despair, when they had performed the circuit six times and not a single brick had stirred in the wall. Yes; but then the seventh day made amends, when the people shouted and all the walls fell flat to the ground. Brethren, it is not yet time to shout, but we must continue marching and say, "Let God be magnified." The longer the walls stand, and the longer we wait, the louder will be our shout when they lie prostrate before us, as they shall; for, "Verily, verily, I say unto you there shall not be one stone left upon another that shall not be cast down." Remember the Greeks when they attacked old Troy: ye have the record in ancient story. They waited many years till their ships had well nigh rotted on the seas, but the prowess of Hector and the armed men of Troy kept back the "King of men," and all the hosts of the avengers. Suppose that after nine years had dragged along their weary length, the chiefs of the Greeks had said, "It is of no avail, the city is impregnable! O Pelasgi, back to your fair lands washed by the blue Aegean, you will never subdue the valor of Ilium." No.; but they persevered in the weary siege, with feats of strength and schemes of art, till at last they saw the city burned and heard the dire lament: "Troy was, but is no more"

Let us still continue to attack the adversary. We are few, but strength lies not in numbers. The Eternal One has used the few where he has put aside the many. In our weakness lies part of our adaptation to the divine work; only let us gather up fresh faith, and renew our courage and industry, and we shall see greater things than these. "Pshaw," says one, "Protestant Christianity is in a miserable minority, it is ridiculous to suppose it will ever be the dominant religion of the world." We reply, that it is ridiculous, nay blasphemous, to doubt when God has sworn with an oath that "all

flesh shall see the salvation of God." God's oath is better evidence than appearances; for, in a moment, if he wills it, he can give such an impetus to the Christian church, that she shall in her enthusiasm spread the gospel, and at the same time he can give such a turn to the human mind, that it shall be as ready to accept the gospel as the church is to spread it. Observe how the church grew during the first few centuries. After the apostles had died you do not find in the next century the name of any very remarkable man, but all Christians then were earnest, and the good cause advanced. They were mostly poor, they were generally illiterate, but they were all missionaries, they were all seeking to glorify God, and, consequently, before long, down went Jupiter, Saturn lost his throne, even Venus was abjured, and the cross, at least nominally, became supreme throughout all Europe. It shall be done again. In the name of the Eternal, let us set up our banners. Oh, ye that love the Lord and his salvation, vow it in your souls, determine it in your hearts, and, God the Holy Spirit being with you, if you have but faith in him, it will be no empty boast, no vain vaunting. God shall speak and it shall be done. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge; and such being the case, nothing is impossible to us.

May the Lord stir us up with these thoughts, and fling us like firebrands into the midst of his church and the world, to set both on a blaze with love through the love that burns in our hearts. "Let God be magnified." Amen and Amen.

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The Outpouring Of The Holy Spirit

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word - Acts 10:44

The Bible is a book of the Revelation of God. The God after whom the heathen blindly searched, and for whom reason gropes in darkness, is here plainly revealed to us in the pages of divine authorship, so that he

who is willing to understand as much of Godhead as man can know, may here learn it if he be not willingly ignorant and wilfully obstinate. The doctrine of the Trinity is specially taught in Holy Scripture. The word certainly does not occur, but the three divine persons of the One God are frequently and constantly mentioned, and Holy Scripture is exceedingly careful that we should all receive and believe that great truth of the Christian religion, that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God: though they be each of them very God of very God, yet three in one and one in three is the Jehovah whom we worship. You will notice in the works of *Creation* how carefully the Scriptures assure us that all the three divine persons took their share. "In the beginning Jehovah created the heavens and the earth;" and in another place we are told that God said "Let us make man"—not one person, but all three taking counsel with each other with regard to the making of mankind. We know that the Father hath laid the foundations and fixed those solid beams of light on which the blue arches of the sky are sustained; but we know with equal certainty that Jesus Christ, the eternal *Logos*, was with the Father in the beginning, and "without him was not anything made that was made:" moreover we have equal certainty that the Holy Spirit had a hand in Creation, for we are told that "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth; and the spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters;" and brooding with his dove-like wing, he brought out of the egg of chaos this mighty thing, the fair round world. We have the like proof of the three persons in the Godhead in the matter of *Salvation*. We know that God the Father gave his Son; we have abundant proof that God the Father chose his people from before the foundations of the world, that he did invent the plan of salvation, and hath always given his free, willing, and joyous consent to the salvation of his people. With regard to the share that the Son had in salvation, that is apparent enough to all. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he was incarnate in a mortal body; he was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven; he sitteth at the right hand of God, where also he maketh intercession for us. As to the Holy Spirit, we have equally sure proof that the Spirit of God worketh in conversion; for everywhere we are said to be begotten of the Holy Spirit; continually it is declared, that unless a man

be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God; while all the virtues and the graces of Christianity are described as being the fruits of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit doth from first to last work in us and carry out that which Jesus Christ hath beforehand worked for us in his great redemption, which also God the Father hath designed for us in his great predestinating scheme of salvation.

Now, it is to the work of the Holy Spirit that I shall this morning specially direct your attention; and I may as well mention the reason why I do so. It is this. We have received continually fresh confirmations of the good news from a far country, which has already made glad the hearts of many of God's people. In the United States of America there is certainly a great awakening. No sane man living there could think of denying it. There may be something of spurious excitement mixed up with it, but that good, lasting good, has been accomplished, no rational man can deny. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons—that is a quarter of a million—profess to have been regenerated since December last, have made a profession of their faith, and have united themselves with different sections of God's church. The work still progresses, if anything, at a more rapid rate than before, and that which makes me believe the work to be genuine is just this—that the enemies of Christ's holy gospel are exceedingly wroth at it. When the devil roars at anything, you may rest assured there is some good in it. The devil is not like some dogs we know of; he never barks unless there is something to bark at. When Satan howls we may rest assured he is afraid his kingdom is in danger. Now this great work in America has been manifestly caused by the outpouring of the Spirit, for no one minister has been a leader in it. All the ministers of the gospel have co-operated in it, but none of them have stood in the van. God himself has been the leader of his own hosts. It began with a desire for prayer. God's people began to pray; the prayer-meetings were better attended than before. it was then proposed to hold meetings at times that had never been set apart for prayer; these also were well attended; and now, in the city of Philadelphia, at the hour of noon, every day in the week, three thousand persons can always be seen assembled together for prayer in one place. Men of business, in the midst of their toil and labor, find an opportunity of running in there and offering a word of prayer, and then return to their occupations. And so, throughout all the States,

prayer-meetings, larger or smaller in number, have been convened. And there has been real prayer. Sinners beyond all count, have risen up in the prayer-meeting, and have requested the people of God to pray for them; thus making public to the world that they had a desire after Christ; they have been prayed for, and the church has seen that God verily doth hear and answer prayer. I find that the Unitarian ministers for a little while took no notice of it. Theodore Parker snarls and raves tremendously at it, but he is evidently in a maze; he does not understand the mystery, and acts with regard to it as swine are said to do with pearls. While the church was found asleep, and doing very little, the Socinian could afford to stand in his pulpit and sneer at anything like evangelical religion, but now that there has been an awakening, he looks like a man that has just awakened out of sleep. He sees something; he does not know what it is. The power of religion is just that which will always puzzle the Unitarian, for he knows but little about that. At the form of religion he is not much amazed, for he can to an extent endorse that himself, but the supernaturalism of the gospel—the mystery—the miracle—the power—the demonstration of the Spirit that comes with the preaching, is what such men cannot comprehend, and they gaze and wonder, and then become filled with wrath, but still they have to confess there is something there they cannot understand, a mental phenomenon that is far beyond their philosophy—a thing which they cannot reach by all their science nor understand by all their reason.

Now, if we have the like effect produced in this land, the one thing we must seek is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and I thought, perhaps, this morning in preaching upon the work of the Holy Spirit, that text might be fulfilled—"Him that honoureth me I will honor." My sincere desire is to honor the Holy Spirit this morning, and if he will be pleased to honor his church in return, unto him shall be the glory for ever.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." In the first place, I shall endeavor to describe *the method of the Spirit's operation*, secondly, *the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence*, if we could see men converted, and then, in the third place, I shall suggest the ways and means by which under divine grace we may obtain a like falling down of the Spirit upon our churches.

1. In the first place, then, I will endeavor to explain THE METHOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS. But let me guard myself against being misunderstood. We can explain what the Spirit does, but how he does it, no man must pretend to know. The work of the Holy Spirit is the peculiar mystery of the Christian religion. Almost any other thing is plain, but this must remain an inscrutable secret into which it were wrong for us to attempt to pry. Who knoweth where the winds are begotten? Who knoweth, therefore, how the Spirit worketh, for he is like the wind? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In Holy Scripture certain great secrets of nature are mentioned as being parallel with the secret working of the Spirit. The procreation of children is instanced as a parallel wonder, for we know not the mystery thereof; how much less, therefore, shall we expect to know that more secret and hidden mystery of the new birth and new creation of man in Christ Jesus. But let no man be staggered at this, for they are mysteries in nature: the wisest man will tell you there are depths in nature into which he cannot dive, and heights into which he cannot soar. He who pretends to have unravelled the knot of creation hath made a mistake, he may have cut the knot by his rough ignorance, and by his foolish conjectures, but the knot itself must remain beyond the power of man's unravelling, until God himself shall explain the secret. There are marvellous things, that, as yet, men have sought to know in vain. They may, perhaps, discover many of them, but how the Spirit works, no man can know. But now I wish to explain what the Holy Spirit does, although we cannot tell how he does it. I take it that the Holy Spirit's work in conversion is two-fold. First it is an awakening of the powers that man already has, and secondly, it is an implantation of powers which he never had at all.

In the great work of the new birth, the Holy Spirit first of all *awakens the mental powers*; for be it remembered that, the Holy Spirit never gives any man new *mental* powers. Take for instance reason—the Holy Spirit does not give men reason, for they have reason prior to their conversion. What the Holy Spirit does is to teach our reason, right reason—to set our reason in the right track, so that he can use it for the high purpose of

discerning between good and evil; between the precious and vile. The Holy Spirit does not give man a will, for man has a will before; but he makes the will that was in bondage to Satan free to the service of God. The Holy Spirit gives no man the power to think, or the organ of belief—for man has power to believe or think as far as the mental act is concerned; but he gives that belief which is already there a tendency to believe the right thing, and he gives to the power of thought the propensity to think in the right way so that instead of thinking irregularly, we begin to think as God would have us think, and our mind desireth to walk in the steps of God's revealed truth. There may be here, this morning, a man of enlarged understanding in things political—but his understanding is darkened with regard to spiritual things—he sees no beauty in the person of Christ—he sees nothing desirable in the way of holiness—he chooses the evil and forsakes the good. Now the Holy Spirit will not give him a new understanding, but he will cleanse his old understanding so that he will discern between things that differ, and shall discover that it is but a poor thing to enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season," and let go an "eternal weight of glory." There shall be a man here too who is desperately set against religion, and willeth not to come to God, and do what we will, we are not able to persuade him to change his mind and turn to God. The Holy Spirit will not make a new will in that man, but he will turn his old will, and instead of willing to do evil he will make him will to do right—he will make him will to be saved by Christ—he will make him "willing in the day of his power." Remember, there is no power in man so fallen but that the Holy Spirit can raise it up. However debased a man may be, in one instant, by the miraculous power of the Spirit, all his faculties may be cleansed and purged. Ill-judging reason may be made to judge rightly; stout, obstinate wills may be made to run willingly in the ways of God's commandments; evil and depraved affections may in an instant be turned to Christ, and old desires that are tainted with vice, may be replaced by heavenly aspirations. The work of the Spirit on the mind is the re-modelling of it; the new forming of it. He doth not bring new material to the mind—it is in another part of the man that he puts up a new structure—but he puts the mind that had fallen out of order into its proper shape. He builds up pillars that had fallen down, and erects the palaces that had crumbled to the earth. This is the first work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of man.

Besides this, the Holy Spirit gives to men *powers which they never had before*. According to Scripture, I believe man is constituted in a three-fold manner. He has a body; by the Holy Spirit that body is made the temple of the Lord. He has a mind; by the Holy Spirit that mind is made like an altar in the temple. But man by nature is nothing higher than that; he is mere body and soul. When the Spirit comes, he breathes into him a third higher principle which we call the spirit. The apostle describes man as man, "body, soul and spirit." Now if you search all the mental writers through, you will find they all declare there are only two parts—body and mind; and they are quite right, for they deal with unregenerate man; but in regenerate man there is a third principle as much superior to mere mind as mind is superior to dead animal matter—that third principle is that with which a man prays; it is that with which he lovingly believes; or rather it is that which compels the mind to perform their acts. It is that which, operating upon the mind, makes the same use of the mind as the mind does of the body. When, after desiring to walk I make my legs move, it is my mind that compels them; and so my Spirit, when I desire to pray, compels my mind to think the thought of prayer and compels my soul also, if I desire to praise, to think the thought of praise, and lift itself upward towards God. As the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the Spirit is dead, and one work of the Spirit is to quicken the dead soul by breathing into it the firing Spirit; as it is written, "The first man, Adam, was made a living *soul*, but the second Adam was made a quickening *Spirit*"—and, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, so must we bear the image of the heavenly;" that is, we must have in us, if we would be converted, the quickening Spirit, which is put into us by God the Holy Ghost. I say again, the spirit has powers which the mind never has. It has the power of communion with Christ, which to a degree is a mental act, but it can no more be performed by man without the Spirit, than the act of walking could be performed by man, if he were destitute of a soul to suggest the idea of walking. The Spirit suggests the thoughts of communion which the mind obeys and carries out. Nay, there are times, I think, when the spirit leaves the mind altogether, times when we forget everything of earth and one almost ceases to think, to reason, to judge, to weigh, or to will. Our souls are like the chariots of Amminadib, drawn swiftly onwards without any powers of volition. We lean upon the breast

of Jesus, and in rhapsody divine, and in ecstasy celestial, we enjoy the fruits of the land of the blessed, and pluck the clusters of Eschol before entering into the land of promise.

I think I have clearly put these two points before you. The work of the Spirit consists, first, in awakening powers already possessed by man, but which were asleep and out of order; and in the next place in putting into man powers which he had not before. And to make this simple to the humblest mind, let me suppose man to be something like a machine; all the wheels are out of order, the cogs do not strike upon each other, the wheels do not turn regularly, the rods will not act, the order is gone. Now, the first work of the Spirit is to put these wheels in the right place, to fit the wheels upon the axles, to put the right axle to the right wheel, then to put wheel to wheel, so that they may act upon each other. But that is not all his work. The next thing is to put fire and steam so that these things shall go to work. He does not put fresh wheels, he puts old wheels into order, and then he puts the motive power which is to move the whole. First he puts our mental powers into their proper order and condition, and then he puts a living quickening spirit, so that all these shall move according to the holy will and law of God.

But, mark you, this is not all the Holy Spirit does. For if he were to do this, and then leave us, none of us would get to heaven. If any of you should be so near to heaven that you could hear the angels singing over the walls—if you could almost see within the pearly gates still, if the Holy Spirit did not help you the last step, you would never enter there. All the work is through his divine operation. Hence it is the Spirit who keeps the wheels in motion, and who takes away that defilement which, naturally engendered by our original sin, falls upon the machine and puts it out of order. He takes this away, and keeps the machine constantly going without injury, until at last he removes man from the place of defilement to the land of the blessed, a perfect creature, as perfect as he was when he came from the mould of his Maker.

And I must say, before I leave this point, that all the former part of what I have mentioned is done instantaneously. When a man is converted to God, it is done in a moment. Regeneration is an instantaneous work.

Conversion to God, the fruit of regeneration, occupies all our life, but regeneration itself is effected in an instant. A man hates God; the Holy Spirit makes him love God. A man is opposed to Christ, he hates his gospel, does not understand it and will not receive it: the Holy Spirit comes, puts light into his darkened understanding, takes the chain from his bandaged will, gives liberty to his conscience, gives life to his dead soul, so that the voice of conscience is heard, and the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And all this is done, mark you, by the instantaneous supernatural influence of God the Holy Ghost working as he willeth among the sons of men.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the method of the Holy Spirit's work, I shall now turn to the second point, THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN ORDER TO CONVERSION. In our text we are told that "while Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Beloved, the Holy Ghost fell on Peter first, or else it would not have fallen on his hearers. There is a necessity that the preacher himself, if we are to have souls saved, should be under the influence of the Spirit. I have constantly made it my prayer that I might be guided by the Spirit even in the smallest and least important parts of the service; for you cannot tell but that the salvation of a soul may depend upon the reading of a hymn, or upon the selection of a chapter. Two persons have joined our church and made a profession of being converted simply through my reading a hymn -

"Jesus, lover of my soul"

They did not remember anything else in the hymn, but those words made such a deep impression upon their mind, that they could not help repeating them for days afterwards, and then the thought arose, "Do I love Jesus?" And then they considered what strange ingratitude it was that he should be the lover of their souls, and yet they should not love him. Now I believe the Holy Spirit led me to read that hymn. And many persons have been converted by some striking saying of the preacher. But why was it the preacher uttered that saying? Simply because he was led thereunto by the Holy Spirit. Rest assured, beloved, that when any part of the sermon is blessed to your heart, the minister said it because he was

ordered to say it by his Master. I might preach to-day a sermon which I preached on Friday, and which was useful then, and there might be no good whatever come from it now, because it might not be the sermon which the Holy Ghost would have delivered to-day. But if with sincerity of heart I have sought God's guidance in selecting the topic, and he rests upon me in the preaching of the Word, there is no fear but that it shall be found adapted to your immediate wants. The Holy Spirit must rest upon your preachers. Let them have all the learning of the wisest men, and all the eloquence of such men as Desmosthenes and Cicero, still the Word cannot be blessed to you, unless first of all the Spirit of God hath guided the minister's mind in the selection of his subject, and in the discussion of it.

But if Peter himself were under the hand of the Spirit, that would fail unless the Spirit of God, then, did fall upon our hearers; and I shall endeavor now to show the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work in the conversion of men.

Let us remember what kind of thing the work is, and we shall see that other means are altogether out of the question. It is quite certain that men cannot be converted by physical means. The Church of Rome thought that she could convert men by means of armies; so she invaded countries, and threatened them with war and bloodshed unless they would repent and embrace her religion. However, it availed but little, and men were prepared to die rather than leave their faith; she therefore tried those beautiful things—stakes, racks, dungeons, axes, swords, fire; and by these things she hoped to convert men. You have heard of the man who tried to wind up his watch with a pick-axe. That man was extremely wise, compared with the man who thought to touch mind through matter. All the machines you like to invent cannot touch mind. Talk about tying angel's wings with green withes, or manacling the cherubim with iron chains, and then talk about meddling with the minds of men through physical means. Why, the things don't set; they cannot act. All the king's armies that ever were, and all the warriors clothed with mail, with all their ammunition, could never touch the mind of man. That is an impregnable castle which is not to be reached by physical agency.

Nor, again, can man be converted by moral argument. "Well," says one, "I think he may. Let a minister preach earnestly, and he may persuade men to be converted." Ah! beloved, it is for want of knowing better that you say so. Melancthon thought so, but you know what he said after he tried it—"Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon." So will every preacher find it, if he thinks his arguments can ever convert man. Let me give you a parallel case. Where is the logic that can persuade an Ethiopian to change his skin? By what argument can you induce a leopard to renounce his spots? Even so may he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. But if the Ethiopian's skin be changed it must be by a supernatural process. and if the leopard's spots be removed, he that made the leopard must do it. Even so is it with the heart of man. If sin were a thing *ab extra* and external, we could induce man to change it. For instance, you may induce a man to leave off drunkenness or swearing, because those things are not a part of his nature—he has added that vice to his original depravity. But the hidden evil at the heart is beyond all moral suasion. I dare say a man might have enough argument to induce him to hang himself, but I am certain no argument will ever induce him to hang his sins, to hang his self-righteousness, and to come and humble himself at the foot of the cross; for the religion of Christ is so contrary to all the propensities of man, that it is like swimming against the stream to approach it, for the stream of man's will and man's desire is exactly the opposite of the religion of Jesus Christ. If you wanted a proof of that, at the lifting of my finger, there are thousands in this hall who would rise to prove it, for they would say, "I have found it so sir, in my experience; I hated religion as much as any men; I despised Christ, and his people, and I know not to this day how it is that I am what I am, unless it be the work of God." I have seen the tears run down a man's cheeks when he has come to me in order to be united to the church of Christ, and he has said, "Sir, I wonder how it is I am here to-day, if anyone had told me a year ago that I should think as I now think, and feel as I now feel, I should have called him a born fool for his pains; I used to say I never would be one of those canting Methodists, I liked to spend my Sunday in pleasure, and I did not see why I was to be cooping myself up in the house of God listening to a man talk. I pray, sir? No, not I. I said the best providence in all the world was a good strong pair of hands, and to take care of what you got. If any man talked to me about religion, why I would slam the door in his face, and

pretty soon put him out; but the things that I loved then, I now hate, and the things that then I hated, now I love, I cannot do or say enough to show how total is the change that has been wrought in me. It must have been the work of God; it could not have been wrought by me, I feel assured; it must be some one greater than myself, who could thus turn my heart." I think these two things are proofs that we want something more than nature, and since physical agency will not do, and mere moral suasion will never accomplish it, that there must be an absolute necessity for the Holy Spirit.

But again, if you will just think a minute what the work is, you will soon see that none but God can accomplish it. In the Holy Scripture, conversion is often spoken of as being a new creation. If you talk about creating yourselves, I should feel obliged if you would create a fly first. Create a gnat. create a grain of sand, and when you have created that, you may talk about creating a new heart. Both are alike, impossible, for creation is the work of God. But still, if you could create a grain of dust, or create even a world, it would not be half the miracle, for you must first find a thing which has created itself. Could that be? Suppose you had no existence, how could you create yourself? Nothing cannot produce anything. Now, how can man re-create himself. A man cannot create himself into a new condition, when he has no being in that condition, but is, as yet, a thing that is not.

Then, again, the work of creation is said to be like the resurrection. "We are alive from the dead." Now, can the dead in the grave raise themselves. Let any minister who thinks he can convert souls, go and raise a corpse let him go and stand in one of the cemeteries, and bid the tombs open wide their mouths, and make room for those once buried there to awaken, and he will have to preach in vain. But if he could do it, that is not the miracle: it is for the dead to raise themselves, for an inanimate corpse to kindle in its own breast the spark of life anew. If the work be a resurrection, a creation, does it not strike you that it must be beyond the power of man? It must be wrought in him by no one less than God himself.

And there is yet one more consideration, and I shall have concluded this

point. Beloved, even if man could save himself, I would have you recollect how averse he is to it? If we could make our hearers all willing, the battle would be accomplished. "Well," says one, "If I am willing to be saved, can I not be saved?" Assuredly you can, but the difficulty is, we cannot bring men to be willing. That shows, therefore, that there must be a constraint put upon their will. There must be an influence exerted upon them, which they have not in themselves, in order to make them willing in the day of God's power. And this is the glory of the Christian religion. The Christian religion has within its own bowels power to spread itself. We do not ask you to be willing first. We come and tell you the news, and we believe that the Spirit of God working with us, will make you willing. If the progress of the Christian religion depended upon the voluntary assent of mankind it would never go an inch further but because the Christian religion has within an omnipotent influence, constraining men to believe it, it is therefore that it is and must be triumphant, "till like a sea of glory it spreads from shore to shore."

III. Now I shall conclude by bringing one or two thoughts forward, with regard to WHAT MUST BE DONE AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO BRING DOWN THE HOLY SPIRIT. It is quite certain, beloved, if the Holy Spirit willed to do it, that every man, woman, and child in this place might be converted now. If God, the Sovereign Judge of all, would be pleased now to send out his Spirit, every inhabitant of this million-peopled city might be brought at once to turn unto the living God. Without instrumentality, without the preacher, without books, without anything, God has it in his power to convert men. We have known persons about their business, not thinking about religion at all, who have had a thought injected into their heart, and that thought has been the prolific mother of a thousand meditations. and through these meditations they have been brought to Christ. Without the aid of the minister, the Holy Spirit has thus worked, and to-day he is not restrained. There may be some men, great in infidelity, staunch in opposition to the cross of Christ, but, without asking their consent, the Holy Spirit can pull down the strong man, and make the mighty man bow himself. For when we talk of the Omnipotent God, there is nothing too great for him to do. But, beloved, God has been pleased to put great honor upon instrumentality; he could work without it if he pleased but he does not do so. However, this is the first thought I

want to give you; if you would have the Holy Spirit exert himself in our midst, you must first of all look to him and not to instrumentality. When Jesus Christ preached, there were very few converted under him, and the reason was, because the Holy Spirit was not abundantly poured forth. He had the Holy Spirit without measure himself, but on others the Holy Spirit was not as yet poured out. Jesus Christ said, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father, in order to send the Holy Spirit;" and recollect that those few who were converted under Christ's ministry, were not converted by him, but by the Holy Spirit that rested upon him at that time. Jesus of Nazareth was anointed of the Holy Spirit. Now then, if Jesus Christ, the great founder of our religion, needed to be anointed of the Holy Spirit, how much more our ministers? And if God would always make the distinction even between his own Son as an instrument, and the Holy Spirit as the agent, how much more ought we to be careful to do that between poor puny men and the Holy Spirit? Never let us hear you say again, "So many persons were converted by So-and-so." They were not. If converted they were not converted by man. Instrumentality is to be used, but the Spirit is to have the honor of it. Pay no more a superstitious reverence to man, think no more that God is tied to your plans, and to your agencies. Do not imagine that so many city missionaries, so much good will be done. Do not say, "So many preachers; so many sermons, so many souls saved." Do not say, "So many Bibles, so many tracts; so much good done." Not so, use these, but remember it is not in that proportion the blessing comes; it is, so much Holy Spirit, so many souls in-gathered.

And now another thought. If we would have the Spirit, beloved, we must each of us try to honor him. There are some chapels into which if you were to enter, you would never know there was a Holy Spirit. Mary Magdalen said of old, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," and the Christian might often say so, for there is nothing said about the Lord until they come to the end, and then there is just the benediction, or else you would not know that there were three persons in one God at all. Until our churches honor the Holy Spirit, we shall never see it abundantly manifested in our midst. Let the preacher always confess before he preaches that he relies upon the Holy Spirit. Let him burn his manuscript and depend upon the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit

does not come to help him, let him be still and let the people go home and pray that the Spirit will help him next Sunday.

And do you also, in the use of all your agencies, always honor the Spirit? We often begin our religious meetings without prayer; it is all wrong. We must honor the Spirit; unless we put him first, he will never make crowns for us to wear. He will get victories, but he will have the honor of them, and if we do not give to him the honor, he will never give to us the privilege and success. And best of all, if you would have the Holy Spirit, let us meet together earnestly to pray for him. Remember, the Holy Spirit will not come to us as a church, unless we seek him. "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." We purpose during the coming week to hold meetings of special prayer, to supplicate for a revival of religion. On the Friday morning I opened the first prayer meeting at Trinity Chapel, Brixton; and, I think, at seven o'clock, we had as many as two hundred and fifty persons gathered together. It was a pleasant sight. During the hour, nine brethren prayed, one after the other; and I am sure there was the spirit of prayer there. Some persons present sent up their names, asking that we would offer special petitions for them; and I doubt not the prayers will be answered; At Park Street, on Monday morning, we shall have a prayer. meeting from eight to nine; then during the rest of the week there will be a prayer-meeting in the morning from seven to eight. On Monday evening we shall have the usual prayer-meeting at seven, when I hope there will be a large number attending. I find that my brother, Baptist Noel, has commenced morning and evening prayer-meetings, and they have done the same thing in Norwich and many provincial towns, where, without any pressure, the people are found willing to come. I certainly did not expect to see so many as two hundred and fifty persons at an early hour in the morning meet together for prayer. I believe it was a good sign The Lord hath put prayer into their hearts and therefore they were willing to come, "Prove me now here, saith the Lord of host., and see if I do not pour you out a blessing so that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Let us meet and pray, and if God doth not hear us, it will be the first time he has broken his promise. Come, let us go up to the sanctuary; let us meet together in the house of the Lord, and offer solemn supplication; and I say again, if the Lord doth not make bare his arm in the sight of all the

people, it will be the reverse of all his previous actions, it will be the contrary of all his promises, and contradictory to himself. We have only to try him, and the result is certain. In dependence on his Spirit, if we only meet for prayer, the Lord shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. O Lord, lift up thyself because of thine enemies; pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom, O Lord our God, for Christ's sake, Amen.

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Over Against The Sepulchre

Sitting over against the sepulcher. - Matthew 27:61

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were last at the Savior's grave. They had associated themselves with Joseph and Nicodemus in the sad but loving task of placing the body of their Lord in the silent tomb, and after the holy men had gone home they lingered still near the grave. Sitting down, perhaps upon some seat in the garden, or on some projection of the rock, they waited in mournful solitude. They had seen where and how the body was laid, and so had done their utmost, but yet they sat watching still: love has never done enough, it is hungry to render service. They could scarcely take their eyes away from the spot which held their most precious treasure, nor leave till they were compelled to do so the sacred relics of their Best Beloved. The Virgin Mary had been taken by John to his own home. She had sustained too great a shock to remain at the tomb, for in her were fulfilled the words, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also." She was wise to leave to others those sorrowful offices which were beyond her own power; exceeding wise, also, from that hour to her life's end, to remain in the shade, modestly bearing the honor which made her blessed among women. The mother of Zebedee's children, who also lingered late at the tomb, was gone home too, for as she was the mother of John it is exceedingly probable that John resided with her, and had taken the Virgin to her home: hence she was needed at home to act as hostess and assist her son, and thus she would be obeying the last wish of her dying Lord when he said "Son, behold thy mother," and explained his meaning by a look. All having thus departed, the two Marys were the sole watchers at the tomb of Christ at the time of the going down of the sun. They had work yet to do for his burial, and this called them away, but they staid as long as they could-last to go and first to return.

This morning we shall with the women take up the somewhat unusual post of "sitting over against the sepulcher." I call it unusual, for as none

remained save these two women, so few have preached upon our Redeemer's burial. Thousands of sermons have been delivered upon his death and resurrection, and in this I greatly rejoice, only wishing that there were thousands more; but still the burial of our Lord deserves a larger share of consideration than it generally obtains. "He was crucified, dead, and buried," says the creed, and therefore those who wrote that summary must have thought his burial an important truth; and so indeed it is. It was the natural sequence and seal of his death, and so was related to that which went before; it was the fit and suitable preparation for his rising again, and so stood in connection with that which followed after. Come, then, let us take our seat with the holy women "over against the sepulcher," and sing-

"Rest, glorious Son of God: thy work is done,
And all thy burdens borne;
Rest on that stone till the third sun has brought
Thine everlasting morn."

"How calmly in that tomb thou liest now,
Thy rest how still and deep!
O'er thee in love the Father rests: he gives
To his beloved sleep."

"On Bethel pillow now thy head is laid,
In Joseph's rock-hewn cell;
Thy watchers are the angels of thy God
They guard thy slumbers well."

I. Supposing ourselves to be sitting in the garden with our eyes fixed upon the great stone which formed the door of the tomb, we first of all ADMIRE THAT HE HAD A GRAVE AT ALL. We wonder how that stone could hide him who is the brightness of his Father's glory; how the Life of all could lie among the dead; how he who holds creation in his strong right hand could even for an hour be entombed. Admiring this, we would calmly reflect, first, upon the testimony of his grave that he was really dead. Those tender women could not have been mistaken, their eyes were too quick to suffer him to be buried alive, even if any one had wished to

do so. Of our Lord's actual death we have many proofs connected with his burial. When Joseph of Arimathaea went to Pilate and begged the body, the Roman ruler would not give it up till he was certified of his death. The centurion, a man under authority, careful in all that he did, certified that Jesus was dead. The soldier who served under the centurion had by a very conclusive test established the fact of his death beyond all doubt, for with a spear he pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. Pilate, who would not have given up the body of a condemned person unless he was sure that execution had taken place, registered the death and commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph. Both Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus and all the friends who aided in the interment were beyond all question convinced that he was dead. They handled the lifeless frame, they wrapped it in the bands of fine linen, they placed the spices about the sacred flesh which they loved so well they were sadly assured that their Lord was dead. Even his enemies were quite certain that they had slain him they never had a suspicion that possibly a little life remained in him, and that it could be revived, for their stern hate allowed no doubt to remain upon that point, they knew even to the satisfaction of their mistrustful malice that Jesus of Nazareth had died. Even when in their anxiety they went to Pilate, it was not that they might obtain stronger proofs of death, but to prevent the disciples from stealing his dead body and giving out that he had risen from the dead. Yes, Jesus died, literally and actually died, and his body of flesh and bones was really laid in Joseph's grave. It was no phantom that was crucified, as certain heretics dreamed of old. We have not to look to a spectral atonement or to a visionary sacrifice, though some in our own times would reduce redemption to something shadowy and unsubstantial. Jesus was a real man, and truly tasted the bitter pangs of death; and therefore he in very deed lay in the sepulcher, motionless as the rock out of which it was hewn, shrouded in his winding-sheet. Remember as you think of your Lord's death that the day will come, unless the second advent should intervene, in which you and I shall lie low among the dead, as once our Master did. Soon to this heart there will be left no pulsing life, to this eye no glance of observation, to this tongue no voice, to this ear no sensibility of sound. We naturally start from this, yet must it be. We shall certainly mingle with the dust we tread upon and feed the worm. But as we gaze on Jesus' tomb and assure ourselves that our great Lord and

Master died each thought of dread is gone, and we no longer shudder: we feel that we can safely go where Christ has gone before.

Sitting down over against the sepulcher, after one has ruminated upon the wondrous fact that he who only hath immortality was numbered with the dead, the next subject which suggests itself is the testimony of the grave to his union with us. He had his grave hard by the city, and not on some lone mountain peak where foot of man could never tread. His grave was where it could be seen; it was a family grave which Joseph had no doubt prepared for himself and his household. Jesus was laid in a family vault where another had expected to lie. Where was Moses buried? No man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day. But where Jesus was buried was well known to his friends. He was not caught away in a chariot of fire, nor was it said of him that God took him, but he was laid in the grave, "as the manner of the Jews is to bury." Jesus found his grave amongst the men he had redeemed. Hard by the common place of execution there was a garden, and in that garden they laid him in a tomb which was meant for others; so that our Lord's sepulcher stands, as it were, among our homes and gardens, and is one tomb among many. Before me rises a picture. I see the cemetery, or sleeping place, of the saints, where each one rests on his lowly bed. They lie not alone, but like soldiers sleeping around their captain's pavilion, where he also spent the night, though he is up before them. The sepulcher of Jesus is the central grave of God's acre; it is empty now, but his saints lie buried all around that cave in the rock, gathered in ranks around their dear Redeemer's resting-place. Surely it robs the grave of its ancient terror when we think that Jesus slept in one of the chambers of the great dormitory of the sons of men.

Very much might be said about the tomb in which Jesus lay. It was a new tomb, wherein no remains had been previously laid, and thus if he came forth from it there would be no suspicion that another had arisen, nor could it be imagined that he rose through touching some old prophet's bones, as he did who was laid in Elisha's grave. As he was born of a virgin mother, so was he buried in a virgin tomb, wherein never man had lain. It was a rocky tomb, and therefore nobody could dig into it by night, or tunnel through the earth. It was a borrowed tomb; so poor was Jesus that he owed a grave to charity; but that tomb was spontaneously offered, so

rich was he in the love of hearts which he had won. That tomb he returned to Joseph, honored unspeakably by his temporary sojourn therein. I know not whether Joseph ever used it for any of his house; but I see no reason why he should not have done so. Certainly, our Lord when he borrows always makes prompt repayment, and gives a bonus over: he filled Simon's boat with fish when he used it for a pulpit, and he sanctified the rocky cell wherein he had lodged, and left it perfumed for the next who should sleep therein.

We, too, expect, unless special circumstances should intervene, that these bodies of ours will lie in their narrow beds beneath the greensward, and slumber till the resurrection. Nor need we be afraid of the tomb, for Jesus has been there. Sitting over against his sepulcher we grow brave, and are ready, like knights of the holy sepulcher, to hurl defiance at death. At times we almost long for evening to undress that we may rest with God, in the chamber where he giveth to his beloved sleep.

Now, note that our Lord's tomb was in a garden; for this is typically the testimony of his grave to the hope of better things. Just a little beyond the garden wall you would see a little knoll, of grim name and character, the Tyburn of Jerusalem, Golgotha, the place of a skull, and there stood the cross. That rising ground was given up to horror and barrenness; but around the actual tomb of our Savior there grew herbs and plants and flowers. A spiritual garden still blooms around his tomb; the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for him, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. He hath made another Paradise for us, and he himself is the sweetest flower therein. The first Adam sinned in a garden and spoiled our nature; the second Adam slept in a garden and restored our loss. The Savior buried in the earth hath removed the curse from the soil; henceforth blessed is the ground for his sake. He died for us that we ourselves might become in heart and life fruitful gardens of the Lord. Let but his tomb, and all the facts which surround it, have due influence upon the minds of men, and this poor blighted earth shall again yield her increase: instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name.

Sitting over against the sepulcher perhaps the best thought of all is that

now it is empty and so bears testimony to our resurrection. It must have made the two Marys weep, when before they left the grave they saw it filled with so beloved a treasure, so surely dead; they ought to have rejoiced to find it empty when they returned, but they knew not as yet the angel's message,- " He is not here, for he is risen." Our Christ is not dead now; he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He could not be holden by the bands of death. There was nothing corruptible about him, and therefore his body has left the abode of decay to live in newness of life. The sepulcher is spoiled and the spoiler has gone up to glory, leading captivity captive. As you sit over against the sepulcher let your hearts be comforted concerning death, whose sting is gone for ever. There shall be a resurrection. Be ye sure of this, for if the dead rise not then is Christ not risen; but the Lord is risen indeed, and his rising necessitates that all who are in him should rise as he has done.

Yet another thought comes to me, - Can I follow Christ as fully as these two women did? That is to say, can I still cling to him though to sense and reason his cause should seem dead and laid in a rocky sepulcher? Can I like Joseph and Magdalene be a disciple of a dead Christ? Could I follow him even at his lowest point? I want to apply this practically. Times have come upon the Christian church when truth seems to be fallen in the streets, and the kingdom of Christ is in apparent peril. Just now the Lord Jesus is betrayed by not a few of his professed ministers. He is being crucified afresh in the perpetual attacks of scepticism against his blessed gospel; and it may be things may wax worse and worse. This is not the first occasion when it has been so, for at various times in the history of the church of God his enemies have exulted, and cried out that the gospel of past ages was exploded, and might be reckoned as dead and buried. For one I mean to sit over against the very sepulcher of truth. I am a disciple of the old- fashioned doctrine as much when it is covered with obloquy and rebuke as when it shall again display its power, as it surely shall. Sceptics may seem to take truth and bind it, and scourge it, and crucify it, and say that it is dead, and they may endeavor to bury it in scorn, but the Lord has many a Joseph and a Nicodemus who will see honor done even to the body of truth, and will wrap the despised creed in sweet spices, and hide it away in their hearts. They may, perhaps, be half afraid that it is really dead, as the wise men assert, yet it is precious to

their souls, and they will come forth right gladly to espouse its cause, and to confess that they are its disciples. We will sit down in sorrow but not in despair, and watch until the stone is rolled away, and Christ in his truth shall live again, and be openly triumphant. We shall see a divine interposition and shall cease to fear; while they who stand armed to prevent the resurrection of the grand old doctrine shall quake and become as dead men, because the gospel's everlasting life has been vindicated, and they are made to quail before the brightness of its glory.

This, then, is our first meditation: we admire that Jesus ever had a grave, and we sit in wonder over against the sepulcher.

II. Secondly, sitting here, WE REJOICE IN THE HONOURS OF HIS BURIAL. The burial of Christ was, under some aspects of it, the lowest step of his humiliation: he must not merely for a moment die, but he must be buried awhile in the heart of the earth. On the other hand, under other aspects our Lord's burial was the first step of his glory: it was a turning-point in his great career, as we shall hope to show you. Our Lord's body was given up by Pilate to Joseph, and he went with authority to receive it from those who were appointed to see him take it down. I yesterday had a glimpse at a work of art by one of our own Lembeth neighbors, exhibited by Mr. Doulton; it is a fine piece of work in terracotta, representing the taking down of Christ from the cross. I could have wished to have studied it more at leisure, but a mere glimpse has charmed me. The artist represents a Roman soldier at the top of the cross taking down the parchment upon which the accusation was written; he is rolling it up to put it away for ever. I thought of the taking away of the handwriting which was against him, even as he had taken away that which was against us. The Roman soldier by authority is thus represented as removing the charge which was once nailed over the ever blessed head; there is no accusation against him now: he died, and the law is satisfied, it can no longer accuse the man who has endured its penalty. Another soldier is represented with a pair of pincers drawing out one of the big nails from the hands; the sacred body is free now, law has no further claims upon it, and withdraws its nails. A disciple, not a soldier, has mounted a ladder on the other side, and with a pair of scissors is cutting away the crown of thorns; and I think the artist did well to represent his

doing so, for henceforth it is our delight to remove all shame from the name of Jesus, and to crown him in another fashion. Then the artist has represented certain of his disciples as gently taking hold of the body as it is gradually being unloosed by the soldiers, while Joseph of Arimathaea stands there with his long linen sheet ready to receive him. Jars of precious myrrh and spices are standing there, and the women ready to open the lids and to place the spices around the holy flesh. Every part of the design is significant and instructive, and the artist deserves great praise for it: it brought before my mind the descent from the cross with greater vividness than any painting I have ever seen. The nails are all extracted, he is held no longer to the cross, the body is taken down, no longer to be spit upon, and despised, and rejected, but tenderly handled by his friends; for all and everything that has to do with shame, and suffering, and paying of penalty is ended once for all. What became of the cross of wood? You find in Scripture no further mention of it. The legends concerning it are all false upon the face of them. The cross is gone for ever; neither gibbet, nor nail, nor spear, nor thorny crown can be found; there is no further use for them. Jesus our Lord has gone to his glory; for by his one sacrifice he hath secured the salvation of his own.

But now as to his burial. Beloved, there were many honorable circumstances about it. Its first effect was the development of timid minds. Joseph of Arimathaea occupied a high post as an honorable councillor, but he was a secret disciple. Nicodemus, too, was a ruler of the Jews, and though he had spoken a word for the Master now and then, as probably Joseph had done (for we are told that he had not consented to their counsel and deed), yet he had never come out boldly till now. He came to Jesus by night aforetime, but he came by daylight now. At the worst estate of the Savior's cause we should have thought that these two men would remain concealed, but they did not. Now that the case seemed desperate, they show their faith in Jesus and pluck up courage to honor their Lord. Lambs become lions when the Lamb is slain. Joseph went boldly in unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. For a dead Christ he risks his position, and even his life, for he is asking the body of a reputed traitor, and may himself be put to death by Pilate; or else the members of the Sanhedrim may be enraged at him, and bind themselves with an oath that they will slay him for paying honor to the Nazarene, whom they

called "that deceiver." Joseph can venture everything for Jesus, even though he knows him to be dead. Equally brave is Nicodemus; for publicly at the foot of the cross he stands with his hundred pounds weight of spices, caring nothing for any who may report the deed. I cheerfully hope, dear brethren, that one result of the ferocious attacks made upon the gospel at this time will be that a great number of quiet and retiring spirits will be roused to energy and courage. Such works of evil might move the very stones to cry out. While, perhaps, some who have spoken well in other days and have usually done the battling may be downcast and quiet, these who have kept in the rear rank, and have only in secret followed Jesus, will be brought to the front, and we shall see men of substance and of position avowing their Lord. Joseph and Nicodemus both illustrate the dreadful truth that it is hard for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God; but they also show us that when they do enter they frequently excel. If they come last they remain to the last. If cowards when others are heroes, they can also be heroes when even apostles are cowards. Each man has his turn, and so while the fishermen-apostles were hiding away, the wealthy non-committal brethren came to the front: though bred in luxury, they bore the brunt of the storm, and avowed the cause whose leader lay dead. Brave are the hearts which stand up for Jesus in his burial. "Sitting over against the sepulcher," we draw comfort from the sight of the friends who honored the Lord in his death.

I like to remember that the burial of the Lord displayed the union of loving hearts. The tomb became the meeting-place of the old disciples and the new, of those who had long consorted with the Master, and those who had but newly avowed him. Magdalene and Mary had been with the Lord for years, and had ministered to him of their substance; but Joseph of Arimathaea, as far as his public avowal of Christ is concerned, was, like Nicodemus, a new disciple: old and new followers united in the deed of love, and laid their Master in the tomb. A common sorrow and a common love unite us wondrously. When our great Master's cause is under a cloud and his name blasphemed it is pleasant to see the young men battling with the foe and aiding their fathers in the stern struggle. Magdalene with her penitent love, and Mary with her deep attachment to her Lord, join with the rabbi and the counsellor who now begin to prove that they intensely love the Man of Nazareth. That small society, that little working

meeting, which gathered around our Master's body, was a type of the whole Christian church. When once aroused, believers forget all differences and degrees of spiritual condition, and each one is eager to do his part to honor his Lord.

Mark, too, that the Savior's death brought out abundant liberality. The spices, one hundred pounds in weight, and the fine linen, were furnished by the men; and then the holy women prepared the liquid spices with which to carry out what they might have called his great funeral, when they would more completely wrap the body in odoriferous spices as the manner of the Jews was to bury. There was much of honor intended by all that they brought. A very thoughtful writer observes that the clothes in which our Lord was wrapped are not called 'grave-clothes' but linenclothes, and that the emphasis would seem to be put upon their being linen; and he reminds us that when we read of the garments of the priests in the Book of the Law we find that every garment must be of linen. Our Lord's priesthood is, therefore, suggested by the sole use of linen for his death robes. The Apostle and High Priest of our profession in his tomb slept in pure white linen, even as now to-day he represents himself to his servants as clothed with a garment down to the foot. Even after death he acted as a priest, and poured out a libation of blood and water; and it was, therefore, meet that in the grave he should still wear priestly garments.

"He made his grave with the wicked," - there was his shame; "but with the rich in his death,"-there was his honor. He was put to death by rough soldiery, but he was laid in his grave by tender women. Persons of honorable estate helped gently to receive, and reverentially to place in its position his dear and sacred frame; and then, as if to do him honor, though they meant it not, his tomb must not be left unsentinelled, and Caesar lends his guards to watch the couch of the Prince of Peace. Like a king he slumbers, till as the King of kings he wakes at daybreak.

To my mind it is very pleasant to see all this honor come to our Lord when he is in his worst estate,-dead and buried. Will we not also honor our Lord when others despise him? Will we not cleave to him, come what may? If the church were all but extirpated, if every voice should go over to

the enemy, if a great stone of philosophic reasoning were rolled at the door of truth, and it should seem no longer possible for argument to remove it, yet would we wait till the gospel should rise again to confound its foes. We will not be afraid, but keep our position; we will stand still and see the salvation of God, or "sitting over against the sepulcher," we will watch for the Lord's coming. Let the worst come to the worst we would sooner serve Christ while he is conceived to be dead than all the philosophers that ever lived when in their prime. Even if fools should dance over the grave of Christianity there shall remain at least a few who will weep over it, and brushing away their tears from their eyes expect to see it revive, and put forth all its ancient strength.

III. I must now pass to a third point. While sitting over against the sepulcher WE OBSERVE THAT HIS ENEMIES WERE NOT AT REST. They had their own way, but they were not content; they had taken the Savior, and with wicked hands they had crucified and slain him; but they were not satisfied. They were the most uneasy people in the world, though they had gained their point. It was their Sabbath day, and it was a high day, that Sabbath of Sabbaths, the Sabbath of the Passover. They kept a preparation for it and had been very careful not to go into the place called the pavement, lest they should defile themselves—sweet creatures! And now have they not gained all they wanted? They have killed Jesus and buried him: are they not happy? No: and what is more, their humiliation had begun—they were doomed to belie their own favourite profession. What was that profession? Their boast of rigid Sabbath-keeping was its chief point, and they were perpetually charging our blessed Lord with Sabbath-breaking, for healing the sick, and even because his disciples rubbed a few ears of wheat between their hands, when they were hungry on the Sabbath-day. Brethren, look at these men and laugh at their hypocrisy. It is the Sabbath-day, and they come to Pilate, holding counsel on the Sabbath with a heathen! They tell him that they are afraid that Jesus' body will be spirited away, and he says, "Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as you can"; and they go and seal the stone on the Sabbath. O ye hypocritical Pharisees, here was an awful breaking of your Sabbath by your own selves! According to their superstitious tradition the rubbing ears of wheat between the hands was a kind of threshing, and therefore it was a breach of the law; surely, by the

same reasoning the burning of a candle to melt the wax must have been similar to the lighting of a furnace, and the melting of wax must have been a kind of foundry work, like that of the smith who pours metal into a mould; for in such a ridiculous fashion their rabbis interpreted the smallest acts. But they had to seal the stone and break their own absurd laws to satisfy their restless malice. One is pleased to see either Pharisees or Sadducees made to overturn their own professions and lay bare their hypocrisy. Modern-thought gentlemen will, ere long, be forced to the same humiliation.

Next, they had to retract their own accusation against our Lord. They charged Jesus with having said, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it in three days"; pretending that he referred to the temple upon Zion. Now they come to Pilate and tell him, "This deceiver said, after three days I will rise again." Oh, ye knaves, that is your new version, is it? Ye put the man to death for quite another rendering! Now you understand the dark saying? Yes, ye deceivers, and ye understood it before; but now ye must eat your leek, and swallow your own words. Truly, he scorneth the scorners, and poureth contempt upon his enemies.

And now see how these kill-Christ's betray their own fears. He is dead, but they are afraid of him! He is dead, but they cannot shake off the dread that he will vanquish them yet. They are full of agitation and alarm.

Nor was this all, they were to be made witnesses for God,-to sign certificates of the death and resurrection of his Anointed. In order that there might be no doubt about the resurrection at all, there must be a seal, and they must go and set it; there must be a guard, and they must see it mustered. The disciples need not trouble about certifying that Jesus is in the grave, these Jews will do it, and set their own great seal to the evidence. These proud ones are sent to do drudges' work in Christ's kitchen, to wait upon a dead Christ, and to protect the body which they had slain. The lie which they told afterwards crowned their shame: they bribed the soldiers to say that his disciples stole him away while they slept; and this was a transparent falsehood; for if the soldiers were asleep how could they know what was done? We cannot conceive of an instance in which men were more completely made to contradict and convict

themselves. That Sabbath was a high day, but it was no Sabbath to them, nor would the overthrow of the gospel be any rest of soul to its opponents. If ever we should live to see the truth pushed into a corner, and the blessed cause of Christ fastened up as with rationalistic nails, and its very heart pierced by a critic's spear; yet, mark you, even in the darkest night that can ever try our faith, the adversaries of the gospel will still be in alarm lest it should rise again. The old truth has a wonderful habit of leaping up from every fall as strong as ever. In Dr. Doddridge's days men had pretty nearly buried the gospel. Socinianism was taught in many if not most dissenting pulpits, and the same was true of the Church of England: the liberal thinkers dreamed that they had won the victory and extinguished evangelical teaching; but their shouting came a little too soon. They said, "We shall hear no more of this miserable justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost." They laid the gospel in a tomb cut out in the cold rock of Unitarianism, and they set the seal of their learning upon the great stone of doubt which shut in the gospel. There it was to lie for ever; but God meant otherwise. There was a pot-boy over in Gloucester called George Whitefield, and there was a young student who had lately gone to Oxford called John Wesley, and these two passed by the grave of the gospel and beheld a strange sight, which they began to tell; and as they told it, the sods of unbelief and the stones of learned criticism began to move, and the truth which had been buried started up with Pentecostal power. Aha! ye adversaries, how greatly had ye deceived yourselves! Within a few months all over England the work of the devil and his ministers was broken to pieces, as when a tower is split by lightning, or the thick darkness scattered by the rising sun. The weight of ignorance and unbelief fled before the bright day of the gospel, though that gospel was for the most part proclaimed by unlettered men. The thing which has been is the thing which shall be. History repeats itself. O generation of modern thinkers, you will have to eat your own words, and disprove your own assertions. You will have to confute each other and yourselves, even as the Moabites and Elamites slew each other. It may even happen that your infidelities will work themselves out into practical evil of which you will be the victims. You may bring about a repetition of the French Revolution of 1789, with more than all its bloodshed, and who will wonder. You, some of you calling yourselves ministers of God, with your insinuations of doubt, your denials of future punishment, your

insults of the gospel, your ingenious speeches against the Bible, are shaking the very foundation of society. I impeach you as the worst enemies of mankind. In effect you proclaim to men that they may sin as they like, for there is no hell, or if there be, it is but a little one: thus you publish a gospel of licentiousness, and you may one day rue the result. You may live to see a reign of terror of your own creating, but even if you do, the gospel of Jesus will come forth from all the filth you have heaped upon it, for the holy gospel will live as Christ lives, and its enemies shall never cease to be in fear. Your harsh speeches against those who preach the gospel, your bitterness and your sneers of contempt, all show that you know better than you say, and are afraid of the very Christ whom you kill. We who cleave to the glorious gospel will abide in peace, come what may, but you will not.

IV. And now our last thought is that while these enemies of Christ were in fear and trembling **WE NOTE THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WERE RESTING.** It was the seventh day, and therefore they ceased from labor. The Marys waited, and Joseph and Nicodemus refrained from visiting the tomb; they obediently observed the Sabbath rest. I am not sure that they had faith enough to feel very happy, but they evidently did expect something, and anxiously awaited the third day. They had enough of the comfort of hope to remain quiet on the seventh day.

Now, beloved, sitting over against the sepulcher while Christ lies in it, my first thought about it is, I wilt rest, for he rests. What a wonderful stillness there was about our Lord in that rocky grave. He had been daily thronged by thousands: even when he ate bread they disturbed him. He scarce could have a moment's stillness in life; but now how quiet is his bed! Not a sound is heard. The great stone shuts out all noise, and the body is at peace. Well, if he rests, I may. If for a while the Lord seems to suspend his energies, his servants may cry unto him, but they may not fret. He knows best when to sleep and when to wake.

As I see the Christ resting in the grave, my next thought is, he has the power to come forth again. Some few months ago I tried to show you that when the disciples were alarmed because Jesus was asleep they were in error, for his sleep was the token of their security. When I see a captain

on board ship pacing anxiously up and down the deck, I may fear that danger is suspected; but when the captain turns into his cabin, then I may be sure that all is right, and there is no reason why I should not turn in too. So if our blessed Lord should ever suffer his cause to droop, and if he should give no marvellous manifestations of his power, we need not doubt his power; let us keep our Sabbath, pray to him, and work for him, for these are duties of the holy day of rest; but do not let us fret and worry, for his time to work will come.

The rest of the Christian lies in believing in Christ under all circumstances. Go in for this, beloved. Believe in him in the manger, when his cause is young and weak. Believe in him in the streets, when the populace applaud him, for he deserves their loudest acclamations. Believe in him when they take him to the brow of the hill to cast him headlong, he is just as worthy as when they cry "Hosanna." Believe in him when he is in an agony, and believe in him when he is on the cross; and if ever it should seem to you that his cause must die out, believe in him still. Christ's gospel in any circumstances deserves our fullest trust. That gospel which has saved your souls, that gospel which ye have received, and which has been sealed upon your hearts by the Holy Ghost, stand fast in it, come what may, and through faith peace and quiet shall pervade your souls.

Once more, it will be well if we can obtain peace by having fellowship with our Lord in his burial. Die with him, and be buried with him; there is nothing like it. I desire for my soul while she lives in the Lord that, as to the world and all its wisdom, I may be as a dead man. When accused of having no power of thought, and no originality of teaching, I am content to own the charge, for my soul desires to be dead to all but that which is revealed and taught by the Lord Jesus. I would lie in the rocky tomb of the everlasting truth, not creating thought, but giving myself up to God's thoughts. But, brethren, if we are ever to lie in that tomb, we must be wrapped about with the fine linen of holiness: these are the shrouds of a man who is dead to sin. All about us must be the spices, the myrrh, and aloes of preserving grace, that being dead with Christ we may see no corruption, but may show that death to be only another form of the new life which we have received in him. When the world goes by, let it know

concerning our heart's desire and ambition, that they are all buried with Christ, and it is written on the memorial of our spiritual grave, "Here he lies;" as far as this world's sin, and pleasure, and self-seeking, and wisdom are concerned, "Here he lies buried with his Master." Know, you who are not converted, that the way of salvation is by believing in Christ, or trusting in him, and if you do so trust you shall never be confounded, world without end, for he that trusteth Christ, and believeth in him even as a little child, the same shall enter into his kingdom, and he that will follow him, even down to his grave, shall be with him in his glory, and shall see his triumphs for ever and ever. Amen.

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The Parable Of The Lost Sheep

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance - Luke 15:4-7

Our Lord Jesus Christ while he was here below was continually in the pursuit of lost souls. He was seeking lost men and women, and it was for this reason that he went down among them, even among those who were most evidently lost, that he might find them. He took pains to put himself where he could come into communication with them, and he exhibited such kindness toward them that in crowds they drew near to hear him. I dare say it was a queer-looking assembly, a disreputable rabble, which made the Lord Jesus its centre. I am not astonished that the Pharisee, when he looked upon the congregation, sneered and said, "He collects around him the pariahs of our community, the wretches who collect taxes for the foreigner of God's free people; the fallen women of the town, and

such-like riffraff make up his audiences; he, instead of repelling them, receives them, welcomes them, looks upon them as a class to whom he has a peculiar relationship. He even eats with them. Did he not go into the house of Zaccheus, and the house of Levi, and partake of the feasts which these low people made for him?" We cannot tell you all the Pharisees thought, it might not be edifying to attempt it; but they thought as badly of the Lord as they possibly could, because of the company which surrounded him. And so, he deigns in this parable to defend himself;—not that he cared much about what they might think, but that they might have no excuse for speaking so bitterly of him. He tells them that he was seeking the lost, and where should he be found but among those whom he is seeking? Should a physician shun the sick? Should a shepherd avoid the lost sheep? Was he not exactly in his right position when there "drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him"?

Our divine Lord defended himself by what is called an *argumentum ad hominem*, an argument to the men themselves; for he said, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not go after that which is lost, until he find it?" No argument tells more powerfully upon men than one which comes close home to their own daily life, and the Saviour put it so. They were silenced, if they were not convinced. It was a peculiarly strong argument, because in their case it was only a sheep that they would go after, but in his case it was something infinitely more precious than all the flocks of sheep that ever fed on Sharon or Carmel; for it was the soul of man which he sought to save. The argument had in it not only the point of peculiar adaptation, but a force at the back of it unusually powerful for driving it home upon every honest mind. It may be opened out in this fashion,— "If you men would each one of you go after a lost sheep, and follow in its track until you found it, how much more may I go after lost souls, and follow them in all their wanderings until I can rescue them?" The going after the sheep is a part of the parable which our Lord meant them to observe: the shepherd pursues a route which he would never think of pursuing if it were only for his own pleasure; his way is not selected for his own ends, but for the sake of the stray sheep. He takes a track up hill and down dale, far into a desert, or into some dark wood, simply because the sheep has gone that way, and he must follow it until he finds it. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as a matter of taste

and pleasure, would never have been found among the publicans and sinners, nor among any of our guilty race: if he had consulted his own ease and comfort he would have consorted only with pure and holy angels, and the great Father above; but he was not thinking of himself, his heart was set upon the lost ones, and therefore he went where the lost sheep were; "for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The more steadily you look at this parable the more clearly you will see that our Lord's answer was complete. We need not this morning regard it exclusively as an answer to Pharisees, but we may look at it as an instruction to ourselves; for it is quite as complete in that direction. May the good Spirit instruct us as we muse upon it.

I. In the first place, I call attention to this observation: THE ONE SUBJECT OF THOUGHT to the man who had lost his sheep. This sets forth to us the one thought of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, when he sees a man lost to holiness and happiness by wandering into sin.

The shepherd, on looking over his little flock of one hundred, can only count ninety-nine. He counts them again, and he notices that a certain one has gone: it may be a white-faced sheep with a black mark on its foot: he knows all about it, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his." The shepherd has a photograph of the wanderer in his mind's eye, and now he thinks but little of the ninety and nine who are feeding in the pastures of the wilderness, but his mind is in a ferment about the one lost sheep. This one idea possesses him: "a sheep is lost!" This agitates his mind more and more—"a sheep is lost." It masters his every faculty. He cannot eat bread; he cannot return to his home; he cannot rest while one sheep is lost.

To a tender heart a lost sheep is a painful subject of thought. It is a sheep, and therefore utterly defenseless now that it has left its defender. If the wolf should spy it out, or the lion or the bear should come across its track, it would be torn in pieces in an instant. Thus the shepherd asks his heart the question—"What will become of my sheep? Perhaps at this very moment a lion may be ready to spring upon it, and, if so, it cannot help itself!" A sheep is not prepared for fight, and even for flight it has not the swiftness of its enemy. That makes its compassionate owner the more sad as he thinks again—"A sheep is lost, it is in great danger of a cruel death."

A sheep is of all creatures the most senseless. If we have lost a dog, it may find its way home again; possibly a horse might return to its master's stable; but a sheep will wander on and on, in endless mazes lost. It is too foolish a thing to think of returning to the place of safety. A lost sheep is lost indeed in countries where lands lie unenclosed and the plains are boundless. That fact still seems to ring in the man's soul—"A sheep is lost, and it will not return, for it is a foolish thing. Where may it not have gone by this time? Weary and worn, it may be fainting; it may be far away from green pastures, and be ready to perish with hunger among the bare rocks or upon the arid sand." A sheep is shiftless; it knows nothing about providing for itself. The camel can scent water from afar, and a vulture can espy its food from an enormous distance; but the sheep can find nothing for itself. Of all wretched creatures a lost sheep is one of the worst. If anybody had stepped up to the shepherd just then, and said, "Good sir, what aileth you? you seem in great concern;" he would have replied, "And well I may be, for a sheep is lost." "It is only one, sir; and I see you have ninety-nine left." "Do you call it nothing to lose one? You are no shepherd yourself, or you would not trifle so. Why, I seem to forget these ninety-nine that are all safe, and my mind only remembers that one which is lost."

What is it which makes the Great Shepherd lay so much to his heart the loss of one of his flock? What is it that makes him agitated as he reflects upon that supposition—"if he lose one of them"?

I think it is, first, because of his property in it. The parable does not so much speak of a hired shepherd, but of a shepherd proprietor. "What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them." Jesus, in another place, speaks of the hireling, whose own the sheep are not, and therefore he flees when the wolf comes. It is the shepherd proprietor who lays down his life for the sheep. It is not a sheep alone, and a lost sheep, but it is one of his own lost sheep that this man cares for. This parable is not written about lost humanity in the bulk—it may be so used if you please—but in its first sense it is written about Christ's own sheep; as also is the second parable concerning the woman's own money; and the third, not concerning any prodigal youth, but the father's own son. Jesus has his own sheep, and some of them are lost; yea, they were all once in the same

condition; for "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The parable refers to the unconverted, whom Jesus has redeemed with his most precious blood, and whom he has undertaken to seek and to save: these are those other sheep whom also he must bring in. "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." The sheep of Christ are his long before they know it—his even when they wander; when they are brought into the fold by the effectual working of his grace they become manifestly what they were in covenant from of old. The sheep are Christ's, first, because he chose them from before the foundations of the world—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." His, next, because the Father gave them to him. How he dwells upon that fact in his great prayer in John 17: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We are the Lord's own flock, furthermore, by his purchase of us; he says: "I lay down my life for the sheep." It is nearly nineteen centuries ago since he paid the ransom price, and bought us to be his own; and we shall be his, for that purchase-money was not paid in vain. And so the Saviour looks upon his hands, and sees the marks of his purchase; he looks upon his side, and sees the token of the effectual redemption of his own elect unto himself by the pouring out of his own heart's blood before the living God. This thought, therefore, presses upon him, "One of my sheep is lost." It is a wonderful supposition, that is contained in this parable—"if he lose one of them." What! lose one whom he loved before ever the earth was? It may wander for a time, but he will not have it lost for ever, that he cannot bear. What! lose one whom his Father gave him to be his own? Lose one whom he has bought with his own life? He will not endure the thought. That word—"if he lose one of them" sets his soul on fire. It shall not be. You know how much the Lord has valued each one of his chosen, laying down his life for his redemption. You know how dearly he loves every one of his people: it is no new passion with him, neither can it grow old. He has loved his own and must love them to the end. From eternity that love has endured already, and it must continue throughout the ages, for he changeth not. Will he lose one of those so dearly loved? Never; never. He

has eternal possession of them by a covenant of salt, wherein the Father has given them to him: this it is that in great measure stirs his soul so that he thinks of nothing but this fact,—One of my sheep is lost.

Secondly, he has yet another reason for this all-absorbing thought, namely, his great compassion for his lost sheep. The wandering of a soul causes Jesus deep sorrow; he cannot bear the thought of its perishing. Such is the love and tenderness of his heart that he cannot bear that one of his own should be in jeopardy. He can take no rest as long as a soul for whom he shed his blood still abides under the dominion of Satan and under the power of sin; therefore the Great Shepherd neither night nor day forgets his sheep: he must save his flock, and he is straitened til it be accomplished.

He has a deep sympathy with each stray heart. He knows the sorrow that sin brings, the deep pollution and the terrible wounding that comes of transgression, even at the time; and the sore heart and the broken spirit that will come of it before long; so the sympathetic Saviour grieves over each lost sheep, for he knows the misery which lies in the fact of being lost. If you have ever been in a house with a mother and father, and daughters and sons, when a little child has been lost, you will never forget the agitation of each member of the household. See the father as he goes to the police-station, and calls at every likely house; for he must find his child or break his heart. See the deep oppression and bitter anguish of the mother; she is like one distracted until she has news of her darling. You now begin to understand what Jesus feels for one whom he loves, who is graven on the palms of his hands, whom he looked upon in the glass of his foreknowledge, when he was bleeding his life away upon the tree; he hath no rest in his spirit til his beloved is found. He has compassion like a God, and that doth transcend all the compassion of parents or of brothers,—the compassion of an infinite heart brimming over with an ocean of love. This one thought moves the pity of the Lord—"if he lose one of them."

Moreover, the man in the parable had a third relation to the sheep, which made him possessed with the one thought of its being lost,—he was a shepherd to it. It was his own sheep, and he had therefore for that very

reason become its shepherd; and he says to himself, "If I lose one of them my shepherd-work will be ill-done." What dishonour it would be to a shepherd to lose one of his sheep! Either it must be for want of power to keep it, or want of will, or want of watchfulness; but none of these can appertain to the Chief Shepherd. Our Lord Jesus Christ will never have it said of him that he has lost one of his people, for he glories in having preserved them all. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." The devil shall never say that Jesus suffered one whom his Father gave him to perish. His work of love cannot in any degree become a failure. His death in vain! No, not in jot or tittle. I can imagine, if it were possible, that the Son of God should live in vain; but to die in vain! It shall never be. The purpose that he meant to achieve by his passion and death he shall achieve, for he is the Eternal, the Infinite, the Omnipotent; and who shall stay his hand, or baffle his design? He will not have it. "If he lose one of them," says the passage; imagine the consequence. What scorn would come from Satan! What derision would he pour upon the Shepherd! How hell would ring with the news, "He hath lost one of them." Suppose it to be the feeblest; then would they cry, "He could keep the strong, who could keep themselves." Suppose it to be the strongest; then would they cry, "He could not even keep one of the mightiest of them, but must needs let him perish." This is good argument, for Moses pleaded with God, "What will the Egyptians say?" It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones shall perish, neither is it for the glory of Christ that one of his own sheep should be eternally lost.

You see the reason for the Lord's heart being filled with one burning thought; for first, the sheep is his own; next, he is full of compassion; and then again, it is his office to shepherd the flock.

All this while the sheep is not thinking about the shepherd, or caring for him in the least degree. Some of you are not thinking at all about the Lord Jesus. You have no wish nor will to seek after him! What folly! Oh, the pity of it, that the great heart above should be yearning over you to-day, and should fall to rest because you are in peril, and you, who will be the greater loser, for you will lose your own soul, are sporting with sin, and

making yourself merry with destruction. Ah, me! how far you have wandered! How hopeless would your case be if there were not an Almighty Shepherd to think upon you.

II. Now we come to the second point, and observe THE ONE OBJECT OF SEARCH. This sheep lies on the shepherd's heart, and he must at once set out to look for it. He leaves the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness and goes after that which is lost until he find it.

Observe here that it is a definite search. The shepherd goes after the sheep, and after nothing else; and he has the one particular sheep in his mind's eye. I should have imagined, from the way in which I have seen this text handled, that Christ, the Shepherd, went down into the wilderness to catch anybody's sheep he could find. Many were running about, and he did not own any one of them more than another, but was content to pick up the one that he could first lay hold upon; or rather, that which first came running after him. Not so is the case depicted in the parable. It is his own sheep that he is seeking, and he goes distinctly after that one. It is his sheep which was lost,—a well-known sheep; well known not only to himself, but even to his friends and neighbours,—for he speaks to them as if it was perfectly understood which sheep it was that he went to save. Jesus knows all about his redeemed, and he goes definitely after such and such a soul. When I am preaching in the name of the Lord, I delight to think that I am sent to individuals with the message of mercy. I am not going to draw the bow at a venture at all; but when the Divine hands are put on mine to draw the bow, the Lord takes such aim that no arrow misses its mark; into the very centre of the heart the word finds its way; for Jesus goes not forth at a peradventure in his dealings with men. He subdues the will and conquers the heart, making his people willing in the day of his power. He calls individuals and they come. He says, "Mary," and the response is, "Rabboni." I say, the man in the parable sought out a distinct individual, and rested not til he found it; so does the Lord Jesus in the movements of his love go forth at no uncertainty; he does not grope about to catch whom he may, as if he played at Blindman's-buff with salvation, but he seeks and saves the one out of his own sheep which he has his eye upon in its wanderings. Jesus knows what he means to do, and he will perform it to the glory of the

Father.

Note that this is an all-absorbing search. He is thinking of nothing but his own lost sheep. The ninety-and-nine are left in safety; but they are left. When we read that he leaves them in the wilderness we are apt to think of some barren place; but that is not intended: it simply means the open pasturage, the steppe, the prairie: he leaves them well provided for, leaves them because he can leave them. For the time being he is carried away with the one thought that he must seek and save the lost one, and therefore he leaves the ninety-and-nine in their pasture. "Shepherd, the way is very rocky!" He does not seem to know what the way is, his heart is with his lost sheep. "Shepherd, it is a heavy climb up yon mountainside." He does not note his toll; his excitement lends him the feet of the wild goat; he stands securely where at other times his foot would slip. He looks around for his sheep and seems to see neither crag nor chasm. "Shepherd, it is a terrible path by which you must descend into yonder gloomy valley." It is not terrible to him: his only terror is lest his sheep should perish; he is taken up with that one fear, and nothing else. He leaps into danger, and escapes it by the one strong impulse which bears him on. It is grand to think of the Lord Jesus Christ with his heart set immovably upon the rescue of a soul which at this moment is lost to him.

It is an active search too; for observe, he goes after that which is lost, until he finds it; and he does this with a personal search. He does not say to one of his underlings, "Here, hasten after that sheep which was lost, and bring it home." No, he follows it himself. And if ever there is a soul brought from sin to grace, it is not by us poor ministers working alone, but it is by the Master himself, who goes after his own sheep. It is glorious to think of him still personally tracking sinners, who, though they fly from him with a desperateness of folly, yet are still pursued by him—pursued by the Son of God, by the Eternal Lover of men—pursued by him until he finds them.

For notice the perseverance of the search: "until he find it." He does not stop til he has done the deed. You and I ought to seek after a soul, how long? Why, until we find it; for such is the model set before us by the Master. The parable says nothing about his not finding it; no hint of

failure is given; we dream not that there may be a sheep belonging to him which he will never find. Oh, brethren, there are a great many whom you and I would never find; but when Jesus is after his own lost sheep, depend upon it such is his skill, so clearly does he see, and so effectually does he intervene, that he will surely bring them in. A defeated Christ I cannot conceive of. It is a personal search, and a persevering search, and a successful search, until he finds it. Let us praise and bless his name for this.

Observe that when the shepherd does find it, there is a little touch in the parable not often noticed,—he does not appear to put it back into the fold again: I mean, we do not find it so written, as a fact to be noted. I suppose he did so place it ultimately; but for the time being he keeps it with himself rather than with its fellows. The next scene is the shepherd at home, saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." It looks as if Jesus did not save a soul so much to the church as to himself, and though the saved are in the flock, the greatest joy of all is that the sheep is with the shepherd. This shows you how thoroughly Christ lays himself out that he may save his people. There is nothing in Christ that does not tend toward the salvation of his redeemed. There are no pullbacks with him, no half-consecrated influences which make him linger. In the pursuit of certain objects we lay out a portion of our faculties; but Jesus lays out all his powers upon the seeking and saving of souls.

The whole Christ seeks after each sinner; and when the Lord finds it, he gives himself to that one soul as if he had but that one soul to bless. How my heart admires the concentration of all the Godhead and manhood of Christ in his search after each sheep of his flock.

III. Now, we must pass on very briefly to notice a third point. We have had one subject of thought and one object of search; now we have ONE BURDEN OF LOVE. When the seeking is ended, then the saving appears,—"When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." Splendid action this! How beautifully the parable sets forth the whole of salvation. Some of the old writers delight to put it thus: in his incarnation he came after the lost sheep; in his life he continued to seek it; in his

death he laid it upon his shoulders; in his resurrection he bore it on its way, and in his ascension he brought it home rejoicing. Our Lord's career is a course of soul-winning, a life laid out for his people; and in it you may trace the whole process of salvation.

But now, see, the shepherd finds the sheep, and he lays it on his shoulders. It is an uplifting action, raising the fallen one from the earth whereon he has strayed. It is as though he took the sheep just as it was, without a word of rebuke, without delay or hesitancy, and lifted it out of the slough or the briers into a place of safety. Do you not remember when the Lord lifted you up from the horrible pit? When he sent from above, and delivered you, and became your strength? I shall never forget that day. What a wonderful lift it was for me when the Great Shepherd lifted me into newness of life. The Lord said of Israel, "I bare you on eagles' wings;" but it is a dearer emblem still to be born upon the shoulders of the incarnate Lord.

This laying on the shoulders was an appropriating act. He seemed to say, "You are my sheep, and therefore I lay you on my shoulders." He did not make his claim in so many words, but by a rapid action he declared it: for a man does not bear away a sheep to which he has no right: this was not a sheep-stealer, but a shepherd-proprietor. He holds fast the sheep by all four of its legs, so that it cannot stir, and then he lays it on his own shoulders, for it is all his own now. He seems to say, "I am a long way from home, and I am in a weary desert; but I have found my sheep, and these hands shall hold it." Here are our Lord's own words, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Hands of such might as those of Jesus will hold fast the found one. Shoulders of such power as those of Jesus will safely bear the found one home. It is all well with that sheep, for it is positively and experimentally the Good Shepherd's own, just as it always had been his in the eternal purpose of the Father. Do you remember when Jesus said unto you, "Thou art mine"? Then I know you also appropriated him, and began to sing -

"So I my best Beloved's am,
And he is mine."

More condescending still is another view of this act: it was a deed of service to the sheep. The sheep is uppermost, the weight of the sheep is upon the shepherd. The sheep rides, the shepherd is the burden-bearer. The sheep rests, the shepherd labours. "I am among you as he that serveth," said our Lord long ago. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." On that cross he bore the burden of our sin, and what is more, the burden of our very selves. Blessed be his name, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and he hath laid us on him, too, and he beareth us. Remember that choice Scripture: "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Soul-melting thought, the Son of God became subservient to the sons of man! The Maker of heaven and earth bowed his shoulders to bear the weight of sinners.

It was a rest-giving act, very likely needful to the sheep which could go no further, and was faint and weary. It was a full rest to the poor creature if it could have understood it, to feel itself upon its shepherd's shoulders, irresistibly carried back to safety. What a rest it is to you and to me to know that we are born along by the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ! "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." The Christ upbears us to-day: we have no need of strength: our weakness is no impediment, for he bears us. Hath not the Lord said, "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you"? We shall not even stumble, much less fall to ruin: the shepherd's feet shall traverse all the road in safety. No portion of the way back should cause us fear, for he is able to bear us even to his home above. What a sweet word is that in Deuteronomy: "The Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." Blessed rest of faith, to give yourself up entirely to those hands and shoulders to keep and carry you even to the end! Let us bless and praise the Lord. The shepherd is consecrated to his burden: he bears nothing on his shoulders but his sheep; and the Lord Jesus seemeth to bear no burden but that of his people. He lays out his omnipotence to save his chosen; having redeemed them first with price of blood, he redeems them still with all his power. "And they shall be mine,

saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Oh the glorious grace of our unfailing Saviour, who consecrates himself to our salvation, and concentrates upon that object all that he has and is!

IV. We close by noticing one more matter, which is—THE ONE SOURCE OF JOY. This man who had lost his sheep is filled with joy, but his sheep is the sole source of it. His sheep has so taken up all his thought, and so commanded all his faculties, that as he found all his care centred upon it, so he now finds all his joy flowing from it.

I invite you to notice the first mention of joy we get here: "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." "That is a great load for you, shepherd!" Joyfully he answers, "I am glad to have it on my shoulders." The mother does not say when she has found her lost child, "This is a heavy load." No; she presses it to her bosom. She does not mind how heavy it is; it is a dear burden to her. She is rejoiced to bear it once again. "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." Remember that text: "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." A great sorrow was on Christ when our load was laid on him; but a greater joy flashed into his mind when he thought that we were thus recovered from our lost estate. He said to himself, "I have taken them up upon my shoulders, and none can hurt them now, neither can they wander to destruction. I am bearing their sin, and they shall never come into condemnation. The penalty of their guilt has been laid on me that it may never be laid on them. I am an effectual and efficient Substitute for them. I am bearing, that they may never bear, my Father's righteous ire." His love to them made it a joy to feel every lash of the scourge of justice; his love to them made it a delight that the nails should pierce his hands and feet, and that his heart should be broken with the absence of his Father, God. Even "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," when the deeps of its woe have been sounded, will be found to have pearls of joy in its caverns. No shout of triumph can equal that cry of grief, because our Lord joyed to bear even the forsaking by his Father for the sin of his chosen whom he had loved from before the foundation of the world. Oh, you cannot understand it except in a very feeble measure! Let us try to find an earthly miniature likeness. A son is taken ill far away from home. He is laid sick with a fever, and a telegram is sent home. His mother says she must go

and nurse him; she is wretched til she can set out upon the journey. It is a dreary place where her boy lies, but for the moment it is the dearest spot on earth to her. She joys to leave the comforts of her home to tarry among strangers for the love of her boy. She feels an intense joy in sacrificing herself; she refuses to retire from the bedside, she will not leave her charge; she watches day and night, and only from utter exhaustion does she fall asleep. You could not have kept her in England, she would have been too wretched. It was a great, deep, solemn pleasure for her to be where she could minister to her own beloved. Soul, remember you have given Jesus great joy in his saving you. He was for ever with the Father, eternally happy, infinitely glorious, as God over all; yet he must needs come hither out of boundless love, take upon himself our nature, and suffer in our stead to bring us back to holiness and God. "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." That day the shepherd knew but one joy. He had found his sheep, and the very pressure of it upon his shoulders made his heart light, for he knew by that sign that the object of his care was safe beyond all question.

Now he goes home with it, and this joy of his was then so great that it filled his soul to overflowing. The parable speaks nothing as to his joy in getting home again, nor a word concerning the joy of being saluted by his friends and neighbours. No, the joy of having found his sheep eclipsed all other gladness of heart, and dimmed the light of home and friendship. He turns around to friends and neighbours and entreats them to help him to bear the weight of his happiness. He cries, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." One sinner had repented, and all heaven must make holiday concerning it. Oh, brethren, there is enough joy in the heart of Christ over his saved ones to flood all heaven with delight. The streets of Paradise run knee-deep with the heavenly waters of the Saviour's joy. They flow out of the very soul of Christ, and angels and glorified spirits bathe in the mighty stream. Let us do the same. We are friends if we are not neighbours. He calls us to-day to come and bring our hearts, like empty vessels, that he may fill them with his own joy, that our joy may be full. Those of us who are saved must enter into the joy of our Lord. When I was trying to think over this text I rejoiced with my Lord in the bringing in of each of his sheep, for each one makes a heaven full of joy. But, oh to see all the redeemed brought in! Jesus would have no joy if

he should lose one: it would seem to spoil it all. If the purpose of mercy were frustrated in any one instance it were a dreary defeat of the great Saviour. But his purpose shall be carried out in every instance. He "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He shall carry out the will of the Father. He shall have the full reward of his passion. Let us joy and rejoice with him this morning!

But the text tells us there was more joy over that one lost sheep than over the ninety-and-nine that went not astray. Who are these just persons that need no repentance? Well, you should never explain a parable so as to make it run on four legs if it was only meant to go on two. There may not be such persons at all, and yet the parable may be strictly accurate. If all of us had been such persons, and had never needed repentance, we should not have given as much joy to the heart of Christ as one sinner does when he repents. But suppose it to mean you and me who have long ago repented—who have, in a certain sense, now no need of repentance, because we are justified men and women—we do not give so much joy to the heart of God, for the time being, as a sinner does when he first returns to God. It is not that it is a good thing to go astray, or a bad thing to be kept from it. You understand how that is: there are seven children in a family, and six of them are all well; but one dear child is taken seriously ill, and is brought near to the gates of death. It has recovered, its life is spared, and do you wonder that for the time being it gives more joy to the household than all the healthy ones? There is more expressed delight about it a great deal than over all those that have not been ill at all. This does not show it is a good thing to be ill. No, nothing of the kind; we are only speaking of the joy which comes of recovery from sickness. Take another case: you have a son who has been long away in a far country, and another son at home. You love them both equally, but when the absent son comes home he is for a season most upon your thoughts. Is it not natural that it should be so? Those at home give us joy constantly from day to day, but when the stream of joy has been dammed back by his absence, it pours down in a flood upon his return. Then we have "high days and holy days" and "bonfire nights."

There are special circumstances about repentance and conversion which produce joy over a restored wanderer. There was a preceding sorrow, and

this sets off the joy by contrast. The shepherd was so touched with compassion for the lost sheep, that now his sorrow is inevitably turned into joy. He suffered a dreadful suspense, and that is a killing thing; it is like an acid eating into the soul. That suspense which makes one ask, Where is the sheep? Where can it be? is a piercing of the heart. All those weary hours of searching, and seeking, and following are painfully wearing to the heart. You feel as if you would almost sooner know that you never would find it than be in that doubtful state of mind. That suspense when it is ended naturally brings with it a sweet liberty of joy. Moreover, you know that the joy over penitents is so unselfish that you who have been kept by the grace of God for many years do not grieve that there should be more joy over a repenting sinner than over you. No, you say to yourself, "There is good cause. I am myself among those who are glad." You remember that good men made great rejoicing over you when you first came to Jesus; and you heartily unite with them in welcoming newcomers. You will not act the elder brother, and say, I will not share the joy of my Father. Not a bit of it; but you will enter heartily into the music and dancing, and count it your heaven to see souls saved from hell. I feel a sudden flush and flood of delight when I meet with a poor creature who once lay at hell's dark door, but is now brought to the gate of heaven. Do not you?

The one thing I want to leave with you is how our gracious Lord seems to give himself up to his own redeemed. How entirely and perfectly every thought of his heart, every action of his power, goes toward the needy, guilty, lost soul. He spends his all to bring back his banished. Poor souls who believe in him have his whole strength engaged on their behalf. Blessed be his name! Now let all our hearts go forth in love toward him, who gave all his heart to work our redemption. Let us love him. We cannot love him as he loved us as to measure; but let us do so in like manner. Let us love him with all our heart and soul. Let us feel as if we saw nothing, knew nothing, loved nothing save Jesus crucified. As we filled all his heart let him fill all our hearts!

Oh, poor sinner, here to-day, will you not yield to the Good Shepherd? will you not stand still as he draws near? Will you not submit to his mighty grace? Know that your rescue from sin and death must be of him,

and of him alone. Breathe a prayer to him,—"Come, Lord, I wait for thy salvation! Save me, for I trust in thee." If thou dost thus pray, thou hast the mark upon thee of Christ's sheep, for he saith, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Come to him, for he comes to you. Look to him for he looks to you.

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The Parable Of The Wedding Feast

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. - Matthew 22:2-4

If God grant me strength I hope to go through this parable, but at this present we shall confine our thoughts to the opening scene of the royal festival. Before, however, we proceed further, it is most fitting that we give expression to our deep gratitude, that it has pleased the infinite mind to stoop to our narrow capacities, and instruct us by parable. How tenderly condescending is God to devise similitudes, that his children may learn the mysteries of the kingdom! If it be sometimes marvelled at among men that great minds are ever ready to stoop, what a far greater marvel that God himself should bow the heavens and come down to meet our ignorance and slowness of comprehension! When the learned professor has been instructing his class in the hall in recondite matters of deep philosophy, and then goes home and takes his child upon his knee, and tries to bring down great truth to the grasp of his child's mind, then you see the great love of the man's heart: and when the eternal God, before whom seraphim are but insects of an hour, condescends to instruct our childishness and make us wise unto salvation, we may well say, "herein is love." Just as we give our children pictures that we may

win the attention, and may by pleasing means fix truth upon their memories, so the Lord with loving inventiveness has become the author of many a charming metaphor, type, and allegory, by which he may gain our interest, and through his Holy Spirit enlighten our minds. If he who thunders till the mountains tremble, yet deigns to speak with us in a still small voice, let us gladly sit in Mary's place at his gracious feet, and willingly learn of him. O that God would give to each one a teachable spirit, for this is the greatest step towards understanding the mind of God. He who is willing to learn, in a childlike spirit, is already in a considerable measure taught of God. May we all so study this instructive parable as to be quickened by it to all that is well-pleasing in the sight of God, for after all true learning in godliness may be judged of by its result; upon our lives. If we are holier we are wiser, practical obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus is the surest evidence of an understanding heart.

In order to understand the parable before us we must first direct our attention to the design of the "certain king" here spoken of. He had a grand object in view; he desired to do honor to his son upon the occasion of his marriage. We shall then notice the very generous method by which he proposed to accomplish his purpose; he made a dinner, and bade many: there were other modes of honoring his son, but the great king elected the mode which would best display his bounty. We shall then observe, with sad interest, the serious hindrance which arose to the carrying out of his generous design—those who were bidden would not come. There was nothing to hinder the magnificence of the festival in the riches of the prince—he lavished out his stores for the feast; but here was a hindrance strange and difficult to remove, they would not come. Then our thoughts will linger admiringly over the gracious rejoinder which the king made to the opposers of his design; he sent other servants to repeat the invitation, "Come ye to the marriage." If we shall drink deep into the meaning of these three verses, we shall have more than enough for one meditation.

I. A certain king of wide dominions and great power designed to give a magnificent banquet, with a GRAND OBJECT in view. The crown prince, his well beloved heir, was about to take to himself a fair bride, and therefore the royal father desired to celebrate the event with

extraordinary honors. From earth, look up to heaven. The great object of God the Father is to glorify his Son. It is his will "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." (John 5:23.) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is glorious already in his divine person. He is ineffably blessed, and infinitely beyond needing honor. All the angels of God worship him, and his glory fills all heaven. He has appeared on the stage of action as the Creator and as such his glory is perfect, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." He said, "Light be," and it flamed forth. He bade the mountains lift their heads, and their summits pierced the clouds. He created the water-floods, he bade them seek their channels, and he appointed their bounds. Nothing is lacking to the glory of the Word of God, who was in the beginning with God, who spake and it was done, who commanded, and it stood forth. He is highly exalted also as the preserver, for he is before all things, and by him all things consist. He is that nail fastened in a sure place, upon which all things hang. The keys of heaven, and death, and hell, are fastened to his girdle, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful. He hath a name which is above every name, before which all things shall bow, in heaven, and earth, and under the earth. He is God over all. He is blessed for ever. To him that is, and was, and is to come, the universal song goeth up.

But there is another relation in which the Son of God has graciously been pleased to stand towards us. He has undertaken to be a Savior, in order that he might be a bridegroom. He had enough glory before, but in the greatness of his heart, he would magnify his compassion even above his power, and he therefore condescended to take into union with himself the nature of man, in order that he might redeem the beloved objects of his choice from the penalty due to their sins, and might enter into the nearest conceivable union with them. It is as Savior that the Father seeks to honor the Son, and the gospel feast is not for the honor of his person merely, but for the honor of his person in this new, yet anciently purposed relationship. It is for the honor of Jesus as entering into spiritual union with his church, that the gospel is prepared as a royal entertainment.

Brethren, when I said that here was a grand occasion, it certainly is so in God's esteem, and it should be so in ours; we should delight to glorify the Son of God. To all loyal subjects in any realm, the marriage of one of the royal family is a matter of great interest, and it is usual and fitting to give expression to congratulations and sympathies by suitable rejoicings. In the instance before us the occasion calls for special joy from all the subjects of the great king of kings. For the occasion in itself is a subject for great delight and thankfulness to us personally. The marriage is with whom? With angels? He took not up angels. It is a marriage with our own nature, "he took up the seed of Abraham." Shall we not rejoice when heaven's great Lord is incarnate as a man, and stoops to redeem humanity from the ruin of the fall? Angels rejoice but they have no such share in the joy as we have. It is the highest personal joy to manhood that Jesus Christ who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, was made in the likeness of men that he might be one flesh with his chosen. Arise ye who slumber! If there was ever an occasion when ye should bestir your spirits and cry "wake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp" it is now, when Jesus comes to be affianced to his church, to make himself of one flesh with her, that he may redeem her, and afterwards exalt her to sit with him upon his throne. Here were abundant reasons why the invited guests should come with joyful steps, and count themselves thrice happy to be bidden to such a banquet. There is overwhelming reason why mankind should rejoice in the glorious gospel of Jesus and hasten to avail themselves of it.

Beside that we must consider the royal descent of the Bridegroom. Remember that Jesus Christ our Savior is very God of very God. Are we asked to do him honor? It is right, for to whom else should honor be given? Surely we should glorify our Creator and Preserver! Wilful must be the disobedience which will not pay reverence to one so highly exalted and so worthy of all homage. It is heaven to serve such a Lord. His glory reacheth unto the clouds; let him be adored for ever and ever; O come let us worship and bow down, let us cheerfully obey those commands of God which aim at the honor of his Son.

Remember also the person of Immanuel, and you will desire his glory.

This glorious Son, whose fame is to be spread abroad, is most certainly God—of that we have spoken, but he is also most assuredly man, our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Do we not delight to believe that he, tempted in all points as we are, has never yet submitted to be stained by sin? Never such a man as he, head of the race, the second Adam, the everlasting Father—who among us would not do him reverence? Will we not seek his honor, seeing that now he lifts our race to be next to the throne of God.

Remember, too, his character. Was there ever such a life as his? I will not so much speak of his divine character, though that furnishes abundant reason for worship and adoration, but think of him even as a man. O beloved, what tenderness, what compassion, yet what holy boldness; what love for sinners, and yet what love for truth! Men who have not loved him have nevertheless admired him, and hearts in which we least expected to see such recognition of his excellence have nevertheless been deeply affected as they have studied his life. We must praise him, for He is "chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." It were treason to be silent when the hour has come to speak of him who is peerless among men and matchless among angels. Clap, clap your hands at the thought of the marriage of the King's Son, for whom his bride hath made herself ready.

Think, too, of his achievements. We take into reckoning whenever we do honor to a prince all that he may have done for the nation over which he rules. What, then, has Jesus done for us? Rather let me say what has he not done? Upon his shoulders were laid our sins; he carried them into the wilderness, and they are gone for ever. Against him came forth our foes; he met them in shock of battle, and where are they now? They are cast into the depths of the sea. As for death itself, that last of foes, he has virtually overcome it, and ere long the weakest of us through him shall say "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" He is the hero of heaven. He returned to his Father's throne amidst the acclamations of the universe. Do we not, for whom he fought, for whom he conquered, do we not desire to honor him? I feel I speak with bated breath upon a theme where all our powers of speech should be let loose. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him! Is it not the universal

verdict of all who know him? Ought it not to be the cry of all the sons of men? East and west, and north and south, ought they not to ring the joy bells and hang out streamers on his marriage day, for joy of him? Is the King's Son to be married, is there a festival in his honor? O then let him be great, let him be glorious! Long live the King! Let the maidens go forth with their timbrels, and the sons of music make sweet melody—yea, let all creatures that have breath break forth with his praises. "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

II. Secondly, here is a GENEROUS METHOD of accomplishing the design. A king's son is to be honored on the day of his marriage, in what way shall it be done? Barbarous nations have their great festivals, and alas, that men should have sunk so low; on such occasions rivers of human blood are made to flow. To this very day, on the borders of civilisation, there is found a wretched tyrant whose infernal customs, for I dare not call them by a less severe term, command the murder of hundreds of his fellow creatures in cold blood, on certain high days and festivals. Thus would the monster honor his son by acting like a fiend. No blood is poured forth to honor the Son of heaven's great King. I doubt not Jesus will have honor even in the destruction of men if they reject his mercy, but it is not so that God elects to glorify his Son. Jesus the Savior, on his wedding-day with manhood, is glorified by mercy, not by wrath. If blood be mentioned on such a day, it is his own by which he is glorified. The slaughter of mankind would bring no joy to him, he is meek and lowly, a lover of the sons of men. It has been the custom of most kings to signalise a princely wedding by levying a fresh tax, or demanding an increased subsidy from their subjects. In the case of the anticipated wedding of our beloved Queen's daughter, the dowry sought will be given with greater pleasure than upon any former occasion, and none of us would lift a whisper of complaint; but the parable shows that the King of kings deals with us not after the manner of man. He asks no dowry for his Son; he makes the marriage memorable not by demands but by gifts. Nothing is sought for from the people, but much is prepared for them, gifts are lavishly bestowed, and all that is requested of the subjects is, that they for awhile merge the subject in the more honorable character of the guest, and willingly come to the palace, not to labor or serve at the table, but to feast and to rejoice.

Observe, then, the generous method by which God honors Christ is set forth here under the form of a banquet. I noted Matthew Henry's way of describing the objects of a feast, and with the alliteration of the Puritans, he says, "A feast is for love and for laughter, for fullness and for fellowship." It is even so with the gospel. It is for love; in the gospel, sinner, you are invited to be reconciled to God, you are assured that God forgives your sins, ceases to be angry, and would have you reconciled to him through his Son. Thus love is established between God and the soul. Then it is for laughter, for happiness, for joy. Those who come to God in Christ Jesus, and believe in him, have their hearts filled with overflowing peace, which calm lake of peace often lifts up itself in waves of joy, which clap their hands in exultation.

It is not to sorrow but to joy that the great King invites his subjects, when he glorifies his Son Jesus. It is not that you may be distressed, but that you may be delighted that he bids you believe in the crucified Savior and live. A feast, moreover, is for fullness. The hungry famished soul of man is satisfied with the blessings of grace. The gospel fills the whole capacity of our manhood. There is not a faculty of our nature which is not made to feel its need supplied when the soul accepts the provisions of mercy; our whole manhood is satisfied with good things and our youth is renewed like the eagles. "For I have satisfied the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." To crown all, the gospel brings us into fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. In Christ Jesus we commune with the sacred Trinity. God becomes our Father, and reveals his paternal heart. Jesus manifests himself unto us as he doth not unto the world, and the communion of the Holy Ghost abides with us. Our fellowship is like that of Jonathan with David, or Jesus with John. We feast on the bread of heaven, and drink wines on the lees well refined. We are brought into the heavenly banqueting house where the secret of the Lord is revealed to us, and our heart pours itself out before the Lord. Very near is our communion with God; most intimate love and condescension does he show to us. What say you to this? Is there not here a rich repast worthy of him who prepares it. Here all your capacious powers can wish, O sinner, shall be given to you; all you want for time and for eternity God prepares in the person of his dear Son, and bids you receive it without

money and without price.

I have already told you that all the expense lies with him. It was a very sumptuous festival, there were oxen, and there were fatlings, but none of these were taken from the pastures, or stalls of the guests. The gospel is an expensive business; the very heart of Christ was drained to find the price for this great festival; but it costs the sinner nothing, nothing of money, nothing of merit, nothing of preparation. You rosy come as you are to the gospel feast, for the only wedding dress required is freely provided for you. Just as you are, you are bidden to believe in Jesus. You have nothing to do but to receive of his fullness, for to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." You are not asked to contribute to the provision, but to be a feaster at the divine banquet of infinite compassion.

How honorable, too, is the gospel to those who receive it. An invitation to a regal marriage was a high honor to those who were bidden. I do not suppose that many of us are likely to be invited to the Princess's wedding, and, if we were, we should probably be greatly elated, for we should most of us feel it to be one of the great events of our lives. So was it with these people. A king's son is not married every day, and it is not everybody that is bidden to the monarch's entertainment. All their lives long they would say, "I was at his wedding, and saw all the splendor of the marriage festival." Probably some of them had never before enjoyed such a feast as the luxurious potentate had prepared for that day, and had never before been in such good company. My brethren nothing so honors a man as for him to accept the gospel. While his faith honors Christ, Christ honors him. It is no mean thing to be a king's son, but those who come to the marriage feast of God's own Son shall become King's sons themselves—themselves participators in the glory of the great heir of all things. While I am speaking of this generous method my heart glows with sacred ardor, and my wonder rises that men do not come to the banquet of love which honors all its guests. When the banquet is so costly to the host, so free to the guests, and so honorable to all concerned, how is it that there should be found any so unwise as to refuse the favor. Surely here is an illustration of the folly of the unrenewed heart, and a proof of the deep depravity which sin has caused. If men turn their backs on Moses with his

stony tables, I do not marvel, but to despise the loaded tables of grace, heaped up with oxen and fatlings—this is strange. To resist the justice of God is a crime, but to repel the generosity of heaven, what is this? We must invent a term of infamy with which to brand the base ingratitude. To resist God in majesty of terror is insanity but to spurn him in the majesty of his mercy is something more than madness. Sin reaches its climax when it resolves to starve sooner than owe anything to divine goodness. I feel I must anticipate the period for delivering my message, and as I have described to you the way in which God honors his Son, I must at once proclaim the invitation, and cry to you, "Come to the wedding feast. Come ye, and glorify Jesus by accepting the provisions of grace. Your works will not honor him, if you set them up as a righteousness in competition with his righteousness. Not even your repentance can glorify him, if you think to make it a rival to his precious blood. Come, guilty sinner, as you are, and take the mercy Jesus freely presents to you, and accept the pardon which his blood secures to those who believe in him." Methinks when the messenger went out from the King and first of all marked signs of neglect among those who were bidden, and saw that they would not come, he must have been mute with astonishment. He had seen the oxen, and seen the fatlings, and all the goodly preparations, he knew the King, he knew his Son, he knew what joy it was to be at such a feast; and when the bidden ones began to turn their backs on him, and go their way to their farms, the messenger, repeated his message over and over again with eagerness, wondering all the while at the treason which dared insult so good a Being. I think I see him, at first indignant for his Master's sake, and afterwards melted to pity as he saw what would surely come of such an extravagance of ingratitude, such a superfluity of insolence. We mourned that his fellow-citizens whom he loved should be such fools as to reject so good an offer, and spurn so blessed a proclamation. I, too, am tossed to and fro in soul, with mingled but vehement feelings. O, my God, thou hast provided the gospel, let none in this house reject it, and so slight thy Son and dishonor thee, but may all rejoice in thy generous way of glorifying Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of his church, and may they come, and willingly grace the festival of thy love.

III. We now advance to our third point, and regretfully remember THE

SERIOUS HINDRANCE which for awhile interfered with the joyful event.

The king had thought in his mind, "I will make a great feast, I will invite a large number. They shall enjoy all my kingdom can afford, and I shall thus show how much I love my son, and moreover all the guests will have sweet memories in connection with his marriage." When his messengers went out to intimate to those who had received previously an express invitation that the time was come, it is written, "They would not come;" not they could not, but they "would not come." Some for one reason, some for another, but without exception they would not come. Here was a very serious hindrance to the grand business. Cannot the king drag his guests to the table? Yes, but then it would not accomplish his purpose. He wants not slaves to grace his throne. Persons compelled to sit at a marriage-feast would not adorn it. What credit could it be to a king to force his subjects to feast at his table? No for once, as I have said before, the subject must be merged in the guest. It was essential to the dignity of the festival that the guests should come with cheerfulness to the festival, but they would not come. Why? Why would they not come? The answer shall be such as to answer another question—Why do not you come and believe in Jesus! With many of them it was an indifference to the whole affair. They did not see what concern they had in the king or his son. Royal marriages were high things and concerned high people; they were plain-speaking men, farmers who went hedging and ditching, or tradesmen who made out bills and sold by the yard or pound. What cared they for the court, the palace, the king, the prince, his bride, or his dinner! They did not say quite that, but such was their feeling; it might be a fine thing, but it was altogether out of their line. How many run in the same groove at this hour? We have heard it said, "What has a working man to do with religion?" and we have heard others of another grade in life affirm that persons who are in business cannot afford time for religion, but had better mind the main chance. The Lord have mercy upon your folly! Here is one great obstacle to the gospel, the stolid indifference of the human mind concerning this grandest of all conceptions—God's glorifying his dear Son by having mercy upon sinners.

At the bottom the real reason for the refusal of those in the parable was

that they were disloyal, they would not come to the supper because they saw an opportunity for the loyal to be glad, and not being loyal they did not wish to hear the songs and acclamations of others who were. By staying away they insulted the king, and declared that they cared not whether he was a king or not, whether his son was a prince or not. They determined to disavow their allegiance by refusing the invitation. They said in effect, "Anyhow, if he be a king and his son a prince, we will do him no honor, we will not be numbered with those who surround his board and show forth his splendor. No doubt a feast is worth having, and such a feast as there will be provided t'were well for us to participate in, but for once we will deny our appetites that we may indulge our pride. We proclaim a revolt. We declare we will not go." Ah, ye who believe not in Jesus, at the bottom of it your unbelief is enmity to your Maker, sedition against the great Ruler of the universe, who deserves your homage. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," but ye know not, neither do ye consider; ye are rebels against the Majesty of heaven.

Moreover, the refusal was a slight to the prince as well as to his father, and in some cases the gospel is refused mainly with this intent, because the unbeliever rejects the deity of Christ, or despises his atonement. O sirs, beware of this, I know of no rock more fatal than to dishonor Christ by denying his sonship and his deity. Split not upon it, I beseech you—"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." Indifference covered the refusal in the text, "they made light of it," but if you take off the film you will see that at the bottom there was treason against the majesty of the king, and distaste to the dignity of his son.

No doubt some of them despised the feast itself. They must have known that with such a king it could not be a starveling meal, but they pretended to despise the feast. How many there are who despise the gospel which they do not understand, I say which they do not understand, for almost invariably if you hear a man depreciate the gospel, you will find that he has scarcely even read the New Testament and is a utter stranger to the doctrines of grace. Listen to a man who is voluble in condemnation of the gospel, and you may rest assured that he is fond because he is empty. If he understood the subject better he would find, if he were indeed a man

of candour, that he would be led at least to be silent in admiration if he did not become loyal in acceptance.

Beloved friends, the feast is such as you greatly need, let me tell you what it is. It is pardon for the past, renewal of nature for the present, and glory for the future. Here is God to be our helper, his Son to be our shepherd, the Spirit to be our instructor. Here is the love of the Father to be our delight, the blood of the Son to be our cleansing, the energy of the Holy Spirit to be life from the dead to us. You cannot want anything that you ought to want, but what is provided in the gospel, and Jesus Christ will be glorified if you accept it by faith. But here is the hindrance, men do not accept it, "they would not come." Some of us thought that if we put the gospel in a clear light, and if we were earnest in stating it our hearers must be converted, and God forbid we should ever try to do otherwise than make it plain and be earnest, but for all that the best ministry that ever was, or ever could be, will be unsuccessful in a measure; yea, and altogether so, unless the effectual work of the Spirit be present. Still will the cry go up, "Who hath believed our report?" Still will those who serve their Master best, have reason to mourn that they sow on stony ground, and cast their bread on thankless waters. Even the prince of preachers had to say, "Ye search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, but ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Alas, alas, that mercy should be rejected and heaven spurned.

IV. So now we must close with the most practical matter of consideration, THE GRACIOUS REJOINDER of the king to the impertinence which interfered with his plans. What did he say? You will observe that they had been bidden, and then called; after the Oriental custom, the call intimated that the festival was now approaching, so that they were not taken unawares, but knew what they did. The second invitation they rejected in cold blood, deliberately, and with intent. What did the monarch do? Set their city in a blaze, and at once root out the rebels? No, but in the first place, he winked at their former insolent refusal. He said in himself, "Peradventure they mistook my servants, peradventure they did not understand that the hour was come. Perhaps the message that was delivered to them was too brief, and they missed its meaning. Or, if perchance, they have fallen into some temporary enmity against me, on

reconsideration, they will wish that they had not been so rude, and ungenerous to me. What have I done that they should refuse my dinner? What has my son done that they should not be willing to honor him by feasting at my table. Men lone feasting, my son deserves their honor—why should they not come? I will pass over the past and begin again." My hearers, there are many of you who have rejected Christ after many invitations, and this morning my Lord forgets your former unkindnesses, and sends me again with the same message, again to bid you "come to the wedding." It is no small patience which overlooks the past and perseveres in kindness, honestly desiring your good.

The King sent another invitation—"all things are ready, come ye to the marriage," but you will please to observe that he changed the messenger. "Again he sent forth other servants." Yes, and I will say it, for my soul feels it, if a change of messengers will win you, much as I love the task of speaking in my Master's name, I would gladly die now, where I am, that some other preacher might occupy this platform, if thereby you might be saved. I know my speech to some of you must be monotonous. I seek out images fresh and many, and try to vary my voice and manner, but for all that one man must grow stale to you when heard so often. Perhaps my modes are not the sort to touch your peculiarities of temperament—well, good Master, set thy servant aside, and consider him not. Send other messengers if perchance they may succeed. But to some of you I am another messenger, not a better, but another, since my brethren have failed with you. Oh, then, when my voice cries, "Come unto Jesus, trust in his atonement, believe in him, look to him and live," let the new voice be successful, where former heralds have been disregarded.

You notice, too, that the message was a little changed. At first it was very short. Surely if men's hearts were right, short sermons would be enough. A very brief invitation might suffice if the heart were right, but since hearts are wrong God bids his servants enlarge, expand, and expound. "Come, for all things are ready. I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the marriage." One of the best ways of bringing sinners to Christ is to explain the gospel to them. If we dwell upon its preparations, if we speak of its richness and freeness, some may be attracted whom the short message which merely

tells the plan of salvation might not attract. To some it is enough to say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," for they are asking, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" but others need to be attracted to the wedding feast by the description of the sumptuousness of the repast. We must try to preach the gospel more fully to you, but we shall never tell you of all the richness of the grace of God. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above your thoughts, and his ways above your ways. Forsake your sins and your thoughts and turn to the Lord, for he will abundantly pardon you. He will receive you to his heart of love, and give you the kiss of his affection at this hour, if, like prodigal children, you come back and seek your Father's face. The gospel is a river of love, it is a sea of love, it is a heaven of love, it is a universe of love, it is all love. Words there are none, fully to set forth the amazing love of God to sinners, no sin too big or too black, no crime too crimson or too cursed for pardon. If you do but look to his dear crucified Son all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven you. There is forgiveness. Jesus gives repentance and remission. And then the happiness which will be brought to you here and hereafter are equally beyond description. You shall have heaven on earth and heaven in heaven; God shall be your God, Christ shall be your friend, and eternal bliss shall be your portion.

In this last message the "guests were pressed very delicately, but still in a way which if they had possessed any generosity of heart at all, must have touched them. You see how the evangelist puts it, he does not say, "Come, or else you will miss the feast; come, or else the king will be angry; come, come, or else you will be the losers." No, but—he puts it, as I read it, in a very remarkable way. I venture to say—if I be wrong, the Master forgive me so saying—the king makes himself the object of sympathy, as though he were an embarrassed host. See here, "My dinner is ready, but there is no one to eat it; my oxen and fatlings are all killed, but there are no guests." "Come, come," he seems to say, "for I am a host without guests." So sometimes in the gospel you will see God speaks as if he would represent himself as getting an advantage by our being saved. Now we know that herein he condescends in love to speak after the manner of men. What can he gain by us? If we perish what is he the loser? But he makes himself often in the gospel to be like a father who yearns over his

child, longing for him to come home. He makes himself, the infinite God, turn beggar to his own creatures, and beseeches them to be reconciled. Wondrous stoop; for, like a chapman who sells his wares, he cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, let him come." Do you observe how Christ, as he wept over Jerusalem, seems to weep for himself as well as for them. "How often would I have gathered thy children together." And God, in the prophets, puts it as his own sorrow, "How can I set thee as Admah, how can I make thee as Zeboim," as if it were not the child's loss alone, but the father's loss also, if the sinner died. Do you not feel, as it were, a sympathy with God when you see his gospel rejected? Shall the cross be lifted high, and none look to it? Shall Jesus die, and men not be saved by his death? O blessed Lord, we feel, if nothing else should draw us, we must come when we see, as it were, thyself represented as a host under our embarrassment, for lack of guests. Great God, we come, we come right gladly, we come to participate of the bounties which thou hast provided, and to glorify Jesus Christ by receiving as needy sinners that which thy mercy has provided.

Brethren and sisters since Christ finds many loath to honor him, my exhortation is to you who love him, honor him the more since the world will not. You who have been constrained to come, remember to sing as you sit at his table, and rejoice and bless his name. Next go home and intercede for those who will not come, that the Lord will enlighten their understandings, and change their wills, that they may be yet constrained to believe in Jesus; and as for those of you who feel half inclined this morning by the soft touches of his grace to come and feast, let me bid you come. It is a glorious gospel—the feast is good. He is a glorious king—the Host is good. He is a blessed Savior, he who is married, he is good. It is all good, and you shall be made good too, if your souls accept the invitation of the gospel which is given to you this day. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The Lord send his Spirit to make the call effectual, for his dear Son's sake. Amen.

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A Paradox

When I am weak, then am I strong. - 2 Corinthians 12:10

The expression is paradoxical, and seems somewhat singular; yet it was the experience of the apostle Paul, a man of calm spirit, by no means fanciful, a wise man, and far removed from a fanatic. It was the experience of one who was led of the Spirit of God, and therefore it was a gracious experience: the experience of one who was a father in Israel, who could safely bid us to be imitators of him, even as he imitated the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore it was a safe experience. If we are weak, so was Paul; and if, like him, we are strong in our weakness, we shall be in the best of company. If the same things be seen in us which were wrought in the apostle of the Gentiles, we may join with him in glorying in infirmities, because the power of Christ doth rest upon us, and we may count ourselves happy that with such a saint we can cry, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

I. Perhaps I can expound the text best if I first TURN IT THE OTHER WAY UP, and use it as a warning.

When I am strong, then am I weak. Perhaps, while thinking of the text thus turned inside out, we shall be getting light upon it to be used when we view it with the right side outwards, and see that when we are weak, then we are strong.

I am quite sure that some people think themselves very strong, and are not so. Their proud consciousness of fancied strength is the indication of a terrible weakness. We have among us certain persons who think that they can do all that is needful for their own salvation whenever they please to do so. They can perform all sorts of good works, or at least quite enough to carry them to heaven. Their first idea is that they are to be saved by their own doings; and they really expect to be so saved. They

may admit that they have a few faults and flaws in their character; but these are so trifling as to be hardly worth mentioning, and God Almighty is too merciful to be very particular. Their lives have been excellent, their tempers amiable, their manners courteous, their spirit generous, and they quite believe that by keeping on at the same pace they will win the prize: if they do not, who will? The ship of their character is in fine condition; they have no leaks which the pumps cannot keep down; their sails are not rent, and they hope to sail into the haven of peace with a glorious cargo of merit, having an abundant entrance, and hearing a loud, "Well done!" Ah, my friend! that consciousness of legal strength is a mere delusion, and it will have to be taken out of you. There is no going to heaven that way—by self and the works of self. Your error is a common one, but it is fatal. I have seen many epitaphs of persons, placed by the mistaken kindness of friends upon their tombstones, which I felt sure would have been sufficient to shut them out of heaven if they had been true. These departed worthies do not appear to have been sinners at all: their virtues were superlative, their faults non-existent. Such wonderful people would appear from their epitaphs to have flown up to the gates of heaven upon the wings of their own virtues, and to have entered there without a passport of mercy, as burgesses by their own right of the New Jerusalem. I wonder how they would behave themselves in heaven, if they were really admitted there! All the rest are singing, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; but these needed no washing, and so they would be likely to strike up a little song by themselves, and sing, "Our robes never needed washing; we kept them white as snow." What a discord that would create in the music of the skies! What a division of character and feeling would be found among celestials! I cannot see how there could be any harmony of sentiment amongst sinners saved by grace and righteous ones who owed nothing to mercy, nothing to the atoning sacrifice.

No, my strong and virtuous hearer, you are under a grave delusion. There is a great similarity between your talk and the talk of that religious individual who went up to the temple in our Saviour's days, and, standing before the thrice-holy God, dared to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." He was not justified that day, nor will you be. A poor tax-gatherer, despised by himself, and an off-cast from his own people,

stood in the temple at the same time, and all that he dared to say was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This unworthy sinner when to his house justified, while the other worthy person was not accepted. If you think yourselves strong enough to procure heaven by your own efforts, you are ignorantly insulting the cross of Christ, for you seem to insinuate that your virtues can avail you without Jesus. If you really mean this, there is no more venom of rebellion against God in your self-righteousness than in the outward vice of those who make no pretence to godliness. For you to put your works in the place of Jesus is a blasphemy against the Saviour's blood and righteousness. Why needed Christ to die if men could save themselves? Why need he bleed upon the cross if your merits will suffice to gain you a place among the blessed? There is a fatal weakness in the claim of that man who thinks himself strong enough to force his own passage to the throne of God; that weakness lies in the pride which insults the Crucified, the disloyalty which prefers itself to the royal Saviour.

"Perish the virtue, as it ought—abhorred,
And the fool with it who insults his Lord."

Listen to me a moment, and quit your fancied strength: you, my hearer, cannot keep the law of God, for you have already broken it. How can you preserve a crystal vase entire when you have already dashed it to atoms? You must now be saved by the merits and the strength of another, or not at all; for your own merit is out of the question, through past failure. That strength of yours, upon which you dote so much, is perfect weakness. May the Lord show you this, and make you faint at heart on that account; for then you shall be strong, with real and saving strength! Now your imaginary strength is making you really weak, and that boasted merit of yours is shutting you out from true righteousness. He that is strong in the notion of merit is weak even to utter folly before the God of truth.

"Yes," we hear you reply, "there is a gospel way of salvation. We know that there is, for you preach it continually. You tell us that men must repent, and believe the gospel; that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and must both overcome sin, and follow after holiness." Yes, I do say all that; but what do you say to it? Is it really so that you find here

a ground for your own strength? Do you say, "I feel that I can repent whenever I please, and believe in Jesus when I choose?" Ah! then I must assure you that when you are strong in that way, you are weak. I never yet knew anybody repent who gloried in his power to repent; I never yet knew a man heart-broken for sin who boasted that he could break his own heart when and where he pleased. "What!" cries one, "surely I can believe in Jesus Christ when I please!" I have not denied that statement, have I? But I tell you that your notion of power to believe is your weakness; and I would rather by half hear you cry, with deep solemnity, "Oh, that God would give me faith! Lord, help my unbelief!" Your sense of inability to believe in Christ would be a far better token for good, in my judgment, than your present flippant talk about believing when you like. Men who are in earnest talk not so: whatever their strength may be, they find it little enough in the hour of need. I beg to assure you that I have never known a man believe in Jesus who trusted that he could so believe; for his trust in his own believing kept him from trusting to Jesus; but I have known many a poor, struggling soul lie at the cross-foot, and say, "Lord, help me to look to Jesus, and live;" and God has helped him to give that look in which there is eternal life. While he has been praying, his prayer, yes, his weeping prayer, has had in it that very look to Jesus for which he was pleading. His sense of inability to believe has made him look to Jesus for believing, and he has found it in him.

You say that you can turn your heart towards God whenever you please. I am not going into any dispute with you about your assertion, nor the doctrine, which is supposed to support you in your profession of strength; but I will say this, that your idea of having personal strength, with which to purify and renew your own heart—your idea that you can create in yourself a right spirit—your idea that you can raise yourself from your death in sin— is to me a prophecy of much evil for yourself. where self is conspicuous, I see an omen of mischief, I see no good in this fine opinion of yourself; but if I heard you cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God"—if I heard you say, "Lord, quicken me out of my death in sin"—if I saw you lying down before the Most High, and praying, "Turn me, and I shall be turned"—I should have a far brighter hope of you. In your weakness you would become strong; but in your present strength, I am sure I see a great weakness, which is likely to be your ruin. O dear hearts, your best friend

does not lie within your own doors. Your hope for better things shines yonder at the right hand of God, where the living Saviour has all power given to him in heaven and earth. Sinner, if you grow no sweeter flowers than the dunghill of your own nature can nourish, you will die amid poisonous weeds. If you never drink of better water than the filthy well of your own heart will yield, you will perish of thirst, or of a deadly draught. Another, and a better helper than one born in your house, must come this way. Help must be laid upon one that is mighty, exalted of the Lord out of the people, and endowed with divine power and Godhead, for only such a Saviour, infinitely good and great, can save a soul so lost as yours. When you get down, down, down, into utter weakness, then you will be strong, because then you will rest upon the Lord's salvation; but as you are strong in your thoughts of yourself, you are kept from Jesus, and are weakness itself.

So far I have spoken by way of warning to unconverted people.

I desire now to say a word to those who profess to be Christians, and, let us hope, are so; but they are, in a measure, erring in the same way as those to whom I have spoken. They are remarkably strong: at least in their own esteem they are very Samsons, although others fear that the Philistines will capture them. By this token may they know their own weakness—even by this, that they think themselves strong.

First, many are wonderfully strong as to knowledge. They know almost everything. If in any department they are a little short, they make up for it by knowing so much more in the other direction. If they are too narrow here, they overlap there. They are knowing men, and need no man to tell them so. They are instructed in the faith from pole to pole: they know both that which is afar off, and that which is nigh. An argument is a pleasure to them. They go into company where the eternal verities are denied, and feel a delight in taking sides. They will sit where the vital simplicities of God's word are set up like marks for boys to throw at; and they like the amusement, for it exercises their knowing faculty, and gives them a chance of showing their mental power. They are not children, but quite able to think for themselves. They are not credulous, but amazingly clear-headed and cultured. I have noticed these fine gentlemen have been

the first to deny the faith, and to fall into all manner of heresies. Do you wonder? Those who are so very sure are always the most uncertain. I could instance some that had such confidence in themselves that they would have argued with the very fiend of hell on any question, for they felt that not even Satanic craft could conquer them; but at this present moment the prince of darkness holds them in his power. They hold no controversy with the devil now, for they are very largely agreed with him in assailing the gospel of God's grace. They have gone entirely over to the denial of everything that is gracious and holy and scriptural, and the main cause of their apostasy is their own invincible self-confidence. They were so strong that they became weaker than others. O brethren, when we are very wise in our own esteem, we are bordering upon fools, even if we have not already entered into that company. When we tremblingly sit at Jesus' feet, to learn everything afresh, and fresh from him; when we shudder at anything that questions his Deity, or lowers his sacrifice; when we shut up a book and cast it from us, because we feel that it pollutes us with unbelief—then are we wise and strong. When the Word of the Lord is enough, then are we in the way of wisdom and strength. The man of one book is proverbially a terrible mon; but the man of ten thousand books, who can baffle all adversaries and foil all foes, shall soon lie wounded on the plain, if he be not slain outright. Let us take heed unto ourselves, that we fall not through being headstrong, or strong in the head, which is much the same thing.

Again, I have noticed some professedly Christian people wonderfully strong through experience. Their experience has been very extensive, and the knowledge it has brought them they consider to be specially profound, and, consequently, they are not afraid of temptation, for they feel that they are too wise to be entrapped. They are so experienced now, that things which young people ought not to think of, they can do with impunity—so they foolishly dream. They can go just so far, and then stop, for they are fitted with the patent brakes of prudence. They are such good mountain climbers that they can stand on the edge of a precipice, and look over, and even hang over, without fear of their ever being giddy and falling over. Of course they would not advise other people to go quite so far as they may safely go; but then, what is temptation to other men is no temptation to them. Their vessel is so tight and trim, and they

understand navigation so perfectly, that they rather like a tempest than not, just to show how well their vessel can behave in a storm. Ah me! When you next read the list of wrecks, you may expect to see the name of their ship among the castaways. Old birds may not be caught with chaff, but they can be shot with a gun. No one is out of danger, and no one is more in danger than the man who is carnally secure. Those who feel that their experience, be it what it may, only teaches them that the farther they can keep from temptation the better, these are in a better state. When experience drives us to pray with emphasis the prayer "Lead us not into temptation," then it is working aright. In the idea of strength and wisdom lurks an awfully perilous weakness; but in a sense of personal weakness dwells a real strength. If you are extremely jealous, conscientious, and watchful, many will tell you how weak you are; but you are, in reality, a strong man, because of your fear to encounter evil influences: in that fear lies one essential element of holy strength. While he that rather braves temptation, because he feels so strong, shall find, it may be to his everlasting sorrow, how great his weakness is; he that shuns the appearance of evil, because of conscious weakness, shall find therein his security and strength. Oh, let none of us, because we are getting gray, suppose that we are vulnerable to sin! Let us not dream that because we have been church-members so many years, or even because we have sustained a long and useful ministry, we are therefore beyond gun-shot of the enemy, or without necessity to seek daily strength for daily duty. My brethren, we cannot perform the smallest duty aright apart from the help of God; neither can we be secure against even the grossest sin, apart from the perpetual guard of him that keepeth Israel. If we, in our self-conceit, write ourselves down among the mightiest, and forget our entire dependence upon heavenly grace, we may be left to prove, by unhappy experience, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let us note another point. I have known certain Christian people who thought themselves singularly strong in the matter of wisdom and prudence. They have been gifted with clear insight and a measure of shrewdness, and have, therefore, felt that their judgment on most subjects was that of an umpire. Have you ever noticed that the raw material of a very grossly foolish person is a cautious individual? The

cunning are the readiest dupes when craft is busy in taking its prey. So, too, a wise man is needed if there is to be exhibited the worst form of folly. If we were called upon to select a man who, as to his life as a whole, perpetrated the greatest folly, we should mention Solomon. Yet he was the wisest of man. Yes, the cream of wisdom, when curdled, makes the worst of folly. Was ever man so insanely enthusiastic in vain pursuits as this master of all knowledge? Then, brethren, whenever we feel sure of our own superior intelligence, let us suspect ourselves of weakness. Let the same fear come upon us when we feel sure about our way, so sure that we think we need not pray about it, or in any manner wait for divine direction. Beware of those matters in which you think you cannot err. Men who have been wise in great difficulties have blundered fearfully where all was simple. The Israelites thought that the men who came to them begging for a league of brotherhood could not deceive them. It must be safe to be on good terms with these interesting strangers. Why, look, their shoes are well-nigh worn from their feet, and patched and clouted to the last degree! Their clothes, which we doubt not were new when they left their distant homes, are now threadbare, and their biscuit, which they took fresh from the oven, is stale with age. It is evident, upon the face of it, that they must have come from a very remote part of the world, and therefore a treaty with them will not interfere with the divine command. There can be no need to pray about a case so clear. Thus the Gibeonites overreached them, as we also shall be overreached when we are so exceeding sure of our course. Brethren, let us not be wise as to dispense with our heavenly Counsellor and Guide. Would not that be the height of madness? It is a salutary thing to feel that your case requires you to trust the helm of your ship with the divine Pilot. It is even a blessed thing to feel that you are shut up to faith, and must by absolute trust in God throw the responsibility of your action upon him. I will give you an instance. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed in a peculiar position. God has commanded him to take his son Isaac, and offer him for a sacrifice. Here is a terrible puzzle. Here was enough to stagger any human mind. Surely it could not be right for a father to slay his son! How could it be wise to kill the son in whom all the promises of God were vested? The more you think of the case from a father's standpoint, the more it will perplex you. Abraham could not make any thing out of it by his judgment, but he met it all by faith. All that he could say to Isaac was, "My son, God

will provide himself a Lamb." He was thus saying to himself, "The Lord will get me out of this difficulty." He had no wisdom with which to conjecture how the affair would end: he had to cease from guessing, and just trust in his God. Abraham made no mistake in this. Oh that we could do the same! Observe that same Abraham when he goes down to Egypt. His wife is exceedingly beautiful, and he fears that the king of Egypt will kill him in order to obtain his wife; what will he do? I can see a great many ways in which he might have warded off that evil. He was not called upon to go to Egypt at all, if he thereby risked his wife's honour; or, if he must go, he should have gone boldly, acknowledging his wife, and trusting both her and himself with the Lord. Instead of that, the patriarch begins by inducing Sarah to join with him in equivocation. "Say thou art my sister." She was in some sense his sister; but it was using a word in a double sense for a deceitful purpose, and it was a pitiful thing for Abraham to do. Nor was it a prudent scheme after all: in fact it was the cause of the very trouble which it sought to prevent. Sarah would not have been taken away from Abraham at all if Pharaoh had known that she was his wife; so that the wise was snared by his own craftiness. The Lord graciously delivered him, but in that very act left a root of bitterness behind to be his future plague. Pharaoh gave to him women-servants, and I doubt not among the rest was Hagar, who became the object of sin, and the source of sorrow to the household. In the fancied strength of Abraham, by which he emulated the craft of other Orientals, he displayed his weakness; but in the other case, where no wit or wisdom could assist him, he cast himself upon the Lord, and in his weakness he behaved like the grand man that he really was. Brothers, let us confess ourselves fools, that we may be wise; for otherwise we shall fall into that other condition, of professing ourselves wise, and becoming fools. Let us ignore our wisdom, even if we have any. God alone is wise: he that trusteth either his own heart or head is a fool. Lean not to thine own understanding, but lean wholly upon the Lord; so shalt thou be established.

Further, dear friends, we shall often find that our strength will lie in patience—in extreme weakness which yields itself up to the will of God without the power or will to murmur. We sang in our hymn just now -

"And when it seems no other chance or change

From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And, patient, waits on thee."

I am sure that in reference to power, either to do or to suffer rightly, we are not strong when we compliment ourselves upon our ability; and we are strong when, under a sense of absolute inability, we depend wholly upon God. That sermon preached in the glory of our oratory turned out to be mere husks for swine; while that discourse which we delivered in weakness, with a humble hope that God would use it, proved to be royal meat for the Lord's chosen. That work which you performed in the vigour of your unquestioned talent came to nothing, while that quiet act which you washed with your tears, and perfumed with your prayers, will live and yield you sheaves. Creature strength brings forth nothing which has life in it: only the seed which the Creator puts into the hand of our weakness will produce a harvest. It is well to be nothing: it is better still to be "less than nothing." We ought to dread a sense of capacity, for it will render us incapable; but a sense of utter incapacity apart from God is a fit preparation for being used by the Lord. "Unto them that have no might he increaseth strength."

So it is in bearing as well as acting. If we say concerning sickness, "I shall never be impatient. I can bear it like a stoic." What if that? You will then have done no more than many have done before you, with no great gain to themselves or to others. But if, bowing your head before the Lord, you wait his sovereign will, and say, "Lord help me. If thy left hand shall smite me, let thy right hand sustain me. I am willing to drink this bitter cup, saying, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' Lord, help me!"—you shall bear up triumphantly, and come out of the furnace refined, to the praise and the glory of your God. When you fancy that you are strong to suffer, you will fail; but in conscious weakness you will be enabled to play the man.

I have now done with the text, as I have turned it upside down. May God bless it to any here who feel high and mighty, by causing it to put them in their proper place.

II. Now, let us take our text THE RIGHT WAY UPWARDS. "When I am

weak, then am I strong." "When" and "then" are the two pivots of the text—the hinges upon which it turns.

"When I am weak." What does that mean? It means when the believer is consciously weak, when he painfully feels, and distinctly recognizes that he is weak, then he is strong. In truth, we are always weak, whether we know it or not; but when we not only believe this to be the fact, but see it to be the fact—then it is that we are strong. When it is forced home upon us, that we are less than nothing and vanity—when our very soul echoes and re-echoes that word, "Without me ye can do nothing."—then it is that we are strong.

When he is growingly weak. Yes, for he sees his own weakness more and more clearly as he advances: as he grows stronger in faith he is much more conscious of the weakness of the flesh. I talked about my weakness from this platform five-and- twenty years ago; but I stand here and tremble under it now to a far greater degree than I did in my younger and more vigorous time. I knew it three-and-thirty years ago, when I first spoke to you, but I did not know it as I know it now. I was then weak, and I owned it: but I am now weak, and groan about it almost involuntarily. Yes, and I sometimes sing because of my weakness, learning to glory in my infirmities because the power of Christ doth rest upon me. When we are growingly weak, when we become weaker and weaker, when we seem to faint into a deeper swoon than ever as to our own strength, till death is written upon every power that we once thought we had, and we feel that we can do absolutely nothing apart from the Holy Spirit, then we are strong indeed.

We are strong, too, when we feel painfully weak. It is well when we mourn because we are so weak, and cry out to ourselves, "My weakness, my weakness, woe unto me! When I would do good, evil is present with me. When I would rise to heaven, the body of this death detains me. I would do great things for God, but I have no might. Alas for my weakness!" At such a time we are really rising, and are bringing most glory to God. These are growing pains—agonies such as none know but the truly and growingly spiritual. A painful weakness is strength. It may seem a paradox, but it is true.

We are strong when we are contritely weak. When we confess that much of our weakness is our fault—a weakness which we ought to have overcome—even then we have in that weakness a real strength. The sort of weakness that makes a man say, "I cannot be any stronger, I am doing my best," is not strength but folly; but that weakness which makes you lament your failures and deplore your shortcomings, has in it a holy stimulus and force. That weakness which makes you dissatisfied with all you are and all you do, is goading you on to better and stronger things. If you feel that even when most earnest you have not prayed as you could wish, there is evidently strength in your desires, and your desires are prayers. If after any service you pour forth showers of penitential tears because the service was imperfect, there is evidently a strong soul of obedience within you. When you can neither repent, nor believe, nor love as you wish to do, you are repenting, believing, and loving with a strength which is more true than apparent. It is the will with which we act which is the strength of the action; and when the will is so powerful that it makes us mourn because we cannot find how to perform its bidding, then are we strong according to the divine measurement of strength. Contrite weakness is spiritual strength.

When a man is thoroughly weak—not only partially, but altogether weak—then is he strong. When apart from the Lord Jesus, he is utter weakness, and nothing more—then it is that he is strong. Let me persuade you to make a full confession of weakness to the Lord. Say, "Lord, I cannot do what I ought to do: I cannot do what I want to do: I cannot do what I used to do: I cannot do what other people do: I cannot do what I mean to do: I cannot do what I am sure I shall do: I cannot do what I feel impelled to do; and over this sinful weakness I mourn." Then add, "Lord, I long to serve thee perfectly, yet I cannot do it. Unless thou help me I can do nothing aright. There will be no good in my actions, my words, my feelings, or my desires, unless thou continue to fill me with thine own holy energy. Lord, help me! Lord, help me!" Brother, you are strong while you plead in that fashion. You can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you; and he will strengthen you, now that you are emptied of self. How true it is, "When I am weak, then am I strong!"

I have brought out the "when." Now lend me your ears and hearts for just a minute, while I bring out the "then." "Then am I strong." When is that?

Why, a man is strong when he is consciously weak, because now he has reached the truth. He really is weak; and if he does not know that he is so, he is under the influence of a falsehood. Now a lie is a thing of weakness. Lying strength is all fluff and foam: a mere appearance, a mockery, a delusion. Nothing hinders from getting the reality like contentment with a mere appearance. The true heart is heartily sick of shows and shams, and it cries, "Lord, help me to get rid of these shadows! Help me to come at the truth! Help me to deal with realities!" When you are made to feel your utter weakness you are on sure ground of truth— unpleasant truth, no doubt, yet sure truth. You are now on safe ground touching fundamentals, and making sure work. What you now do will be soundly done. All the while that we keep building on a sandy made-up foundation, we are piling up that which will, in all probability, come down even faster than we put it up. While the rotten rubbish remains on the spot, you cannot do anything worth doing; but if that accumulation can be carted away, there will seem to be a great hole, but you will get down to the real bottom, and get a foundation; and then what you build will be worth putting up, because it will stand. Therefore, a man becomes strong when he is consciously weak, because he is on the truth, and is not being flattered by false hopes.

Next, he will be strong because he will only go with a commission to support him. He will not be eager to run without being sent. He says within himself, when he proposes a service to himself, "No, I am too weak to undertake anything of my own head." He will wait for a call. This is not the kind of man that will climb up into a pulpit, and from a dizzy brain pour out nonsense. He will not crave to lead, for he feels that he needs much help even to follow. He feels himself too weak to set up for a master in Israel. This is not the kind of man that will venture into argument with sceptics for the fun or for the glory of the thing. Oh, no; he is too weak for that. He says, "If I am called to defend the faith, I will do it in God's strength, hoping that it will be given me in the same hour what I shall speak. If I am called to preach, I will preach, and nobody shall stop me; for the Lord will be with my mouth. But, you see, until the man is

conscious of his own weakness, he will run without being sent; and there is nobody so weak as that man. No one so weak as the man who has no commission from God, and no promise of help from him. Such a man will be thinking of this, and thinking of that, and running for this, that, and the other, because he has a lot of waste energy which he wants to use somewhere or somehow. Could we once see him consciously weak we should hear him say, "Here am I, send me!" in answer to the question, "Whom shall I send?" Then he would not go a warfare at his own charges, but he would draw upon the all-sufficiency of God, and find himself equal to every emergency.

The man who is consciously weak is strong, next, because of the holy caution that he will be sure to use. He will be on his guard, because he does not feel able to cope with adversaries. He will ask for a convoy for his little barque, for he is aware of pirates. If this weak man has to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, depend upon it he will carry in his hand the weapon of All-prayer, like a drawn sword. The man that has strength goes hurrying on over hedge and ditch, and soon comes into mischief; but the consciously weak pilgrim keeps to the high-road, and travels carefully; and hence he is strong. Fear is a notably good housekeeper: she may not keep a luxurious table, but she always locks the doors at night, and takes care of all under her charge. Holy caution begets prudence; and prudence, by fostering vigour, and crying for heavenly aid, becomes strength.

Moreover, when a man is weak, then is he strong, because he is sure to pray, and prayer is power. The man who laments his weakness is sure to cry to the strong for strength. The more his weakness presses on him, the more he will pray. While he can do without his God he will do without his God; but when his own weakness becomes utter and entire, and he is ready to perish, then he turns unto his Lord, and is made strong. The utterly weak cry out unto God as nobody else does. He is too weak to play at praying: he groans, he sighs, he weeps. In his abject weakness he prevails, as Jacob did. He wrestled all night; but now at last the angel has touched the hollow of his thigh, and made his sinew shrink, and he cannot wrestle any longer. What will he do now? He falls; and as he falls he grasps his antagonist, and holds him fast, crying, "I will not let thee go

except thou bless me." As much to say, "I cannot wrestle with thee, I cannot try another fall; but I can and will hold thee fast. The dead weight of my weakness makes me hold thee as an anchor holds a ship. I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

The weaker a man is in himself the stronger he is in prayer, if he makes use of his weakness as an appealing argument—"Lord, if I were strong, thou mightest leave me. Do not leave me, for I am weakness itself. I am the feeblest child in all thy family, leave me not, neither forsake me. If thou leavest any, leave not thy poor dying infant, that can hardly wail out its griefs." Weakness, as a plea with God in prayer, becomes a source of strength.

When we are weak we are strong, again, because then we are driven away from self to God. All strength is in God, and it is well to come to the one solitary storehouse and source of might. There is no power apart from God. As long as you and I look to the creature, we are looking to a cracked, broken cistern, that holds no water; but when we know that it is broken, and that there is not a drop of water in it, then we hasten to the great fountain and well-head. While we rest in any measure upon self, or the creature, we are standing with one foot on the sand; but when we get the right away from human nature because we are too weak to have the least reliance upon self whatever, then we have both feet on the rock, and this is safe standing. If thou believest in the living God, and if all thine own existence is by believing, thou livest at a mighty rate. But if thou believest in God in a measure, and if, at the same time, thou trustest thyself in a measure, thou art living at a dying rate, and half the joy which is possible to thee is lost. Thou art taking in bread with one hand, and poison with the other: thou art feeding thy soul with substance and with shadow, and that makes a sorry mixture. When the shadow is clean taken away, and thou hast nothing but the substance, then art thou a strong man, fed upon substantial meat.

Last of all, dear friends, I believe that, when a man is weak, he becomes strong to a large extent, because his weakness compels him to concentrate all his faculties.

A sense of weakness brings out all the forces of a resolute spirit, and leads him to call in all the energy within his reach. When I have preached to you in extreme weakness, as I have often done, when I have afterwards read the sermon, I have been much more satisfied with it than I have been with others in which I felt more pleasure at the time.

God helps us most when we most need his help; and, besides that, the man himself is, by his weakness, forced to use himself right up. When a man feels himself to be rather a large vessel, he puts in the tap somewhere near the top, and only a small supply flows out to the people; but when he is, in his own feelings, like a poor little cask with only a small supply in it, he puts the tap right down at the bottom, and permits all that is in the barrel to flow forth. Many a poor, weak brother, who says all the little that he knows, give forth more instruction than the learned divine who only favours his people with a small portion of his vast stores. When a man, in serving God, spends himself to the last farthing, he will often far more enrich his hearers than the man of ten talents who uses his resources with a prudent parsimony. Dear brother, it will often be a good thing for you to feel, "Now, God helping me, I must do my very utmost at this time. I have so little ability that every faculty within me must be wide awake, and serve God at its best." Thus your weakness will arouse you, and set you on fire, and, by the blessing of God, it will be the means of gaining you strength.

Very well, then, let us pick up our tools and go to our work rejoicing, feeling—Well, I may be weaker, or I may be stronger in myself, but my strength is in my God. If I should ever become stronger, then I must pray for a deeper sense of weakness, lest I become weak through my strength. And if I should ever become weaker than I am, then I must hope and believe that I am really becoming stronger in the Lord. Whether I am weak or strong, what matters it? He who never fails and never changes will perfect his strength in my weakness, and this is glory to me. Amen.

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Particular Election

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. - 2 Peter 1:10-11

It is exceedingly desirable that in the hours of worship and in the house of prayer our minds should be as much as possible divested of every worldly thought. Although the business of the week will very naturally struggle with us to encroach upon the Sabbath, it is our business to guard the Sabbath from the intrusion of our worldly cares, as we would guard an oasis from the overwhelming irruption of the sand. I have felt, however, that to-day we should be surrounded with circumstances of peculiar difficulty in endeavoring to bring our minds to spiritual matters; for of all times perhaps the most unlikely for getting any good in the sanctuary, if that depends upon mental abstraction, election times are the worst. So important in the minds of most men are political matters, that very naturally after the hurry of the week, combined with the engrossing pursuit of elections, we are apt to bring the same thoughts and the same feelings into the house of prayer, and peculate, perhaps, even in the place of worship, whether a conservative or a liberal shall be returned for our borough, or whether for the City of London there shall be returned Lord John Russell, Baron Rothschild, or Mr. Currie. I thought, this morning, Well, it is of no use my trying to stop this great train in its progress. People are just now going on at an express rate on these matters; I think I will be wise, and instead of endeavoring to turn them off the line, I will turn the points, so that they may still continue their pursuits with the same swiftness as ever, but in a new direction. It shall be the same line; they shall still be travelling in earnest towards election, but perhaps I may have some skill to turn the points, so that they shall be enabled to consider election in a rather different manner.

When Mr Whitfield was once applied to use his influence at a general

election, he returned answer to his lordship who requested him, that he knew very little about general elections, but that if his lordship took his advice he would make his own particular "calling and election sure;" which was a very proper remark. I would not, however, say to any persons here present, despise the privilege which you have as citizens. Far be it from me to do it. When we become Christians we do not leave off being Englishmen; when we become professors of religion we do not cease to have the rights and privileges which citizenship has bestowed on us. Let us whenever we shall have the opportunity of using the right of voting, use it as in the sight of Almighty God, knowing that for everything we shall be brought into account, and for that amongst the rest, seeing that we are entrusted with it. And let us remember that we are our own governors, to a great degree, and that if at the next election we should choose wrong governors we shall have nobody to blame but ourselves, however wrongly they may afterwards act, unless we exercise all prudence and prayer to Almighty God to direct our hearts to a right choice in this matter. May God so help us, and may the result be for his glory, however unexpected that result may be to any of us!

Having said so much, let me, then, turn the points, and draw you to a consideration of your own particular calling and election, bidding you in the words of the apostle, "the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We have here, first of all, two fundamental points in religion -- "calling and election;" we have here, secondly, some good advice -- "to make your calling and election sure," or, rather, to assure ourselves that we are called and elected; and then, in the third place, we have some reasons given us why we should use this diligence to be assured of our election -- because, on the one hand, we shall so be kept from falling, and on the other hand, we shall attain unto "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

I. First of all, then, there are the TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS IN RELIGION - secrets, both of them, to the world -- only to be understood by those who have been quickened by divine grace: "CALLING AND

ELECTION." By the word "calling" in Scripture, we understand two things -- one, the general call, which in the preaching of the gospel is given to every creature under heaven, the second call (that which is here intended) is the special call -- which we call the effectual call, whereby God secretly, in the use of means, by the irresistible power of his Holy Spirit, calls out of mankind a certain number, whom he himself hath before elected, calling them from their sins to become righteous, from their death in trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men, and from their worldly pursuits to become the lovers of Jesus Christ. The two callings differ very much. As Bunyan puts it, very prettily, "By his common call, he gives nothing; by his special call, he always has something to give; he has also a brooding voice, for them that are under his wing; and he has an outcry, to give the alarm when he seeth the enemy come." What we have to obtain, as absolutely necessary to our salvation, is a special calling, made in us, not to our ears but to our hearts, not to our mere fleshly understanding, but to the inner man, by the power of the Spirit. And then the other important thing is election. As without calling there is no salvation, so without election there is no calling. Holy Scripture teaches us that God hath from the beginning chosen us who are saved unto holiness through Jesus Christ. We are told that as many as are ordained unto eternal life believe, and that their believing is the effect of their being ordained to eternal life from before all worlds. However much this may be disputed, as it frequently is, you must first deny the authenticity and full inspiration of the Holy Scripture before you can legitimately and truly deny it. And since, without doubt, I have many here who are members of the Episcopal church, allow me to say to them what I have often said before, "You, of all men, are the most inconsistent in the world, unless you believe the doctrine of election, for if it be not taught in Scripture there is this one thing for an absolute certainty, it is taught in your Articles." Nothing can be more forcibly expressed, nothing more definitely laid down, than the doctrine of predestination in the Book of Common Prayer; although we are told what we already know, that that doctrine is a high mystery, and is only to be handled carefully by men who are enlightened. However, without doubt, it is the doctrine of Scripture, that those who are saved are saved because God chose them to be saved, and are called as the effect of that first choice of God. If any of you dispute this, I stand upon the authority of

Holy Scripture, ay, and if it were necessary to appeal to tradition, which I am sure it is not, and no Christian man would ever do it, yet I would take you upon that point; for I can trace this doctrine through the lips of a succession of holy men, from this present moment to the days of Calvin, thence to Augustine, and thence on to Paul himself, and even to the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine is without doubt, taught in Scripture, and were not men too proud to humble themselves to it, it would universally be believed and received as being no other than manifest truth. Why, sirs, do you not believe that God loves his children? and do you not know that God is unchangeable? therefore, if he loves them now he must always have loved them. Do you not believe that if men be saved God saves them? And if so, can you see any difficulty in admitting that because he saves them there must have been a purpose to save them -- a purpose which existed before all worlds? Will you not grant me that? If you will not, I must leave you to the Scriptures themselves; and if they will not convince you on the point, then I must leave you unconvinced.

It will be asked however, why is calling here put before election seeing election is eternal, and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to us. The first thing which you and I can know is our calling: we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called. We must, first of all, prove our calling, and then our election is sure most certainly. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Calling comes first in our apprehension. We are by God's Spirit called from our evil estate, regenerated and made new creatures, and then, looking backward, we behold ourselves as being most assuredly elect because we were called.

Here, then, I think I have explained the text. There are the two things which you and I are to prove to be sure to ourselves -- whether we are called and whether we are elected. And oh, dear friends, this is a matter about which you and I should be very anxious. For consider what an honorable thing it is to be elected. In this world it is thought a mighty thing to be elected to the House of Parliament; but how much more honorable to be elected to eternal life; to be elected to "the Church of the

first born, whose names are written in heaven;" to be elected to be a compeer of angels, to be a favorite of the living God, to dwell with the Most High, amongst the fairest of the sons of light, nearest the eternal throne! Election in this world is but a short-lived thing, but God's election is eternal. Let a man be elected to a seat in the House: seven years must be the longest period that he can hold his election; but if you and I be elected according to the Divine purpose, we shall hold our seats when the day-star shall have ceased to burn when the sun shall have grown dim with age, and when the eternal hills shall have bowed themselves with weakness. If we be chosen of God and precious, then are we chosen for ever, for God changeth not in the objects of his election. Those whom he hath ordained he hath ordained to eternal life, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand." It is worth while to know ourselves elect, for nothing in this world can make a man more happy or more valiant than the knowledge of his election. "Nevertheless," said Christ to his apostles, "rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven" -- that being the sweetest comfort, the honeycomb that droppeth with the most precious drops of all, the knowledge of our being chosen by God. And this, too, beloved, makes a man valiant. When a man by diligence has attained to the assurance of his election, you cannot make him a coward, you can never make him cry craven even in the thickest battle, he holds the standard test and firm, and cleaves his foes with the scimitar of truth. "Was not I ordained by God to be the standard bearer of this truth? I must, I will stand by it, despite you all." He saith to every enemy, "Am I not a chosen king? Can floods of water wash out the sacred unction from a king's bright brow? No, never! And if God hath chosen me to be a king and a priest unto God for ever and ever, come what may or come what will -- the lion's teeth, the fiery furnace, the spear, the rack, the stake, all these things are less than nothing, seeing I am chosen of God unto salvation." It has been said that the doctrine of necessity makes men weak. It is a lie. It may seem so in theory, but in practice it has always been found to be the reverse. The men who have believed in destiny, and have held fast and firm by it, have always done the most valiant deeds. There is one point in which this is akin even with Mahomet's faith. The deeds that were done by him were chiefly done from a firm confidence that God had ordained him to his work. Never had Cromwell driven his foes before him if it had

not been in the stern strength of this almost omnipotent truth, and there shall scarcely be found a man strong to do great and valiant deeds unless, confident in the God of Providence, he looks upon the accidents of life as being steered by God, and gives himself up to God's firm predestination, to be borne along by the current of his will, contrary to all the wills and all the wishes of the world. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

II. Come, then, here is the second point GOOD ADVICE. "Make your calling and election sure." Not towards God, for they are sure to him: make them sure to yourself. Be quite certain of them be fully satisfied about them. In many of our dissenting places of worship very great encouragement is held out to doubting. A person comes before the pastor, and says, "Oh! sir, I am so afraid I am not converted; I tremble lest I should not be a child of God. Oh! I fear I am not one of the Lord's elect." The pastor will put out his hands to him, and say, "Dear brother, you are all right so long as you can doubt." Now, I hold, that is altogether wrong. Scripture never says, "He that doubteth shall be saved," but "He that believeth." It may be true that the man is in a good state; it may be true that he wants a little comfort; but his doubts are not good things, nor ought we to encourage him in his doubts. Our business is to encourage him out of his doubts, and by the grace of God to urge him to "give all diligence to make his calling and election sure," not to doubt it, but to be sure of it. Ah! I have heard some hypocritical doubters say, "Oh! I have had such doubts whether I am the Lord's," and I have thought to myself, "And so have I very great doubts about you." I have heard some say they do tremble so because they are afraid they are not the Lord's people, and the lazy fellows sit in their pews on the Sunday, and just listen to the sermon, but they never think of giving diligence, they never do good, perhaps are inconsistent in their lives, and then talk about doubting. It is quite right they should doubt, it is well they should, and if they did not doubt we might begin to doubt for them. Idle men have no right to assurance. The Scripture says, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Full assurance is an excellent attainment. It is profitable for a man to be certain in this life, and absolutely sure of his own calling and election. But

how can he be sure? Now, many of our more ignorant hearers imagine that the only way they have of being assured of their election is by some revelation, some dream, and some mystery. I have enjoyed very hearty laughs at the expense of some people who have trusted in their visions. Really, if you had passed among so many shades of ignorant professing Christians as I have, and had to resolve so many doubts and fears, you would be so infinitely sick of dreams and visions that you would say, as soon as a person began to speak about them, "Now, do just hold your tongue." "Sir," said a woman, "I saw blue lights in the front parlour when I was in prayer, and I thought I saw the Savior in the corner, and I said to myself I am safe." (Mr. Spurgeon here narrated a remarkable story of a poor woman who was possessed with a singular delusion.) And yet there are tens of thousands of people in every part of the country, and members too of Christian bodies, who have no better ground for their belief that they are called and elected, than some vision equally ridiculous, or the equally absurd hearing of a voice. A young woman came to me some time ago, she wanted to join the church, and when I asked her how she knew herself to be converted, she said she was down at the bottom of the garden, and she thought she heard a voice, and she thought she saw something up in the clouds that said to her so-and so. "Well," I said to her, "that thing may have been the means of doing good to you, but if you put any trust in it, it is all over with you." A dream, ay, and a vision, may often bring men to Christ; I have known many who have been brought to him by them, beyond a doubt, though it has been mysterious to me how it was, but when men bring these forward as a proof of their conversion, there is the mistake, because you may see fifty thousand dreams and fifty thousand visions, and you may be a fool for all that, and all the bigger sinner for having seen them. There is better evidence to be had than all this: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

"How, then," says one, "am I to make my calling and election sure?" Why, thus: -- If thou wouldest get out of a doubting state, get out of an idle state; if thou wouldest get out of a trembling state, get out of an indifferent lukewarm state; for lukewarmness and doubting, and laziness and trembling, very naturally go hand in hand. If thou wouldest enjoy the eminent grace of the full assurance of faith under the blessed Spirit's influence and assistance, do what the Scripture tells thee -- "Give

diligence to make your calling and election sure." Wherein shalt thou be diligent? Note how the Scripture has given us a list. Be diligent in your faith. Take care that your faith is of the right kind -- that it is not a creed but a credence -- that it is not a mere belief of doctrine, but a reception of doctrine into your heart, and the practical light of the doctrine in your soul. Take care that your faith results from necessity -- that you believe in Christ because you have nothing else to believe in. Take care it is simple faith, hanging alone on Christ, without any other dependence but Jesus Christ and him crucified. And when thou hast given diligence about that, give diligence next to thy courage. Labour to get virtue; plead with God that he would give thee the face of a lion, that thou mayest never be afraid of any enemy, however much he may jeer or threaten thee, but that thou mayest with a consciousness of right, go on, boldly trusting in God. And having, by the help of the Holy Spirit, obtained that, study well the Scriptures, and get knowledge; for a knowledge of doctrine will tend very much to confirm your faith. Try to understand God's Word; get a sensible, spiritual idea of it. Get, if you can, a system of divinity out of God's Bible. Put the doctrines together. Get real, theological knowledge, founded upon the infallible word. Get a knowledge of that science which is most despised, but which is the most necessary of all, the science of Christ and of him crucified, and of the great doctrines of grace. And when thou hast done this, "Add to thy knowledge temperance." Take heed to thy body: be temperate there. Take heed to thy soul: be temperate there. Be not drunken with pride; be not lifted up with self-confidence. Be temperate. Be not harsh towards thy friends, nor bitter to thine enemies. Get temperance of lip, temperance of life, temperance of heart, temperance of thought. Be not passionate: be not carried away by every wind of doctrine. Get temperance, and then add to it by God's Holy Spirit patience; ask him to give thee that patience which endureth affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. Array yourself with patience, that you may not murmur in your sicknesses; that you may not curse God in your losses, nor be depressed in your afflictions. Pray, without ceasing, until the Holy Ghost has nerved you with patience to endure unto the end. And when you have that, get godliness. Godliness is something more than religion. The most religious men may be the most godless men, and sometimes a godly man may seem to be irreligious. Let me just explain that seeming paradox. A real religious man is a man who

sighs after sacraments, attends churches and chapels, and is outwardly good, but goes not farther. A godly man is a man who does not look so much to the dress as to the person: he looks not to the outward form, but to the inward and spiritual grace, he is a godly man, as well as attentive to religion. Some men, however, are godly, and to a great extent despise form; they may be godly, without some degree of religion; but a man cannot be fully righteous without being godly in the true meaning of each of these words, though not in the general vulgar sense of them. Add to thy patience an eye to God; live in his sight, dwell close to him; seek for fellowship with him, and thou hast got godliness. And then to that add brotherly love. Be loving towards all the members of Christ's church; have a love to all the saints, of every denomination. And then add to that charity, which openeth its arms to all men, and loves them; and when you have got all these, then you will know your calling and election, and just in proportion as you practice these heavenly rules of life, in this heavenly manner, will you come to know that you are called and that you are elect. But by no other means can you attain to a knowledge of that, except by the witness of the Spirit, bearing witness with your spirit that you are born of God, and then witnessing in your conscience that you are not what you were, but are a new man in Christ Jesus, and are therefore called and therefore elected.

A man over there says he is elect. He gets drunk. Ay, you are elect by the devil, sir; that is about your only election. Another man says, "Blessed be God, I don't care about evidences a bit; I am not so legal as you are!" No, I dare say you are not; but you have no great reason to bless God about it, for, my dear friend, unless you have these evidences of a new birth take heed to yourself. "God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Well," says another, "but I think that doctrine of election a very licentious doctrine." Think on as long as you please, but please to bear me witness that as I have preached it to-day there is nothing licentious about it. Very likely you are licentious, and you would make the doctrine licentious, if you believed it; but "to the pure all things are pure." He who receiveth God's truth in his heart doth not often pervert it and turn aside from it unto wicked ways. No man, let me repeat, has any right to believe himself elect of God, unless he has been renewed by God; no man has any right to believe himself called, unless

his life be in the main consistent with his vocation, and he walk worthy of that whereunto he is called. Out upon an election that lets you live in sin! Away with it! away with it! That was never the design of God's Word, and it never was the doctrine of Calvinists either. Though we have been lied against and our teachings perverted, we have always stood by this -- that good works, though they do not procure nor in any degree merit salvation, yet are the necessary evidences of salvation; and unless they be in men the soul is still dead, uncalled and unrenewed. The nearer you live to Christ, the more you imitate him, the more your life is conformed to him, and the more simply you hang upon him by faith, the more certain you may be of your election in Christ and of your calling by his Holy Spirit, May the Holy One of Israel give you the sweet assurance of grace, by affording you "tokens for good" in the graces which he enables you to manifest.

III. And now I shall close up by giving you THE APOSTLE'S REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. I put in one of my own to begin with. It is because, as I have said, it will make you so happy. Men who doubt their calling and election cannot be full of joy, but the happiest saints are those who know and believe it. You know our friends say this is a howling wilderness, and you know my reply to it is, that they make all the howling themselves: there would not be much howling, if they were to look up a little more and look down a little less, for by faith they would make it blossom like the rose, and give to it the excellence and glory of Carmel and Sharon. But why they howl so much is because they do not believe. Our happiness and our faith are to a great degree proportionate; they are Siamese twins to the Christian; they must flourish or decay together.

"When I can say my God is mine,
Then I can all my griefs resign;
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great"

But ah

"When gloomy doubts prevail,

I fear to call him mine;
The streams of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline"
Only faith can make a Christian lead a happy life.

But now for Peter's reasons. First, because "if ye do these things ye shall never fall." "Perhaps," says one, "in attention to election we may forget our daily walk, and like the old philosopher who looked up to the stars we may walk on and tumble into the ditch!" "Nay, nay," says Peter, "if you take care of your calling and election, you shall not trip, but, with your eyes up there, looking for your calling and election, God will take care of your feet, and you shall never fall. Is it not very notable, that, in many churches and chapels, you do not often hear a sermon about to-day; it is always either about old eternity, or else about the millennium; either about what God did before men was made, or else about what God will do when all are dead and buried? Pity they do not tell us something about what we are to do to-day, now, in our daily walk and conversation! Peter removes this difficulty. He says, "This point is a practical point; for you can only answer your election for yourself by taking care of your practice; and whilst you are so taking care of your practice and assuring yourself of your election, you are doing the best possible thing to keep you from falling." And is it not desirable that a true Christian should be kept from falling? Mark the difference between falling and falling away. The true believer can never fall away and perish; but he may fall and injure himself. He shall not fall and break his neck; but a broken leg is bad enough, without a broken neck. "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down;" but that is no reason why he should dash himself against a stone. His desire is, that day by day he may grow more holy; that hour by hour he may be more thoroughly renewed, until conformed to the image of Christ, he may enter into bliss eternal. If, then, you take care of your calling and election, you are doing the best thing in the world to prevent you from falling, for in so doing you shall never fall.

And now, the other reason, and then I shall have almost concluded. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." An "abundant entrance" has sometimes been illustrated in this way. You see yonder

ship. After a long voyage, it has neared the haven, but is much injured, the sails are rent to ribbons, and it is in such a forlorn condition that it cannot come up to the harbour: a steam-tug is pulling it in with the greatest possible difficulty. That is like the righteous being "scarcely saved." But do you see that other ship? It has made a prosperous voyage, and now, laden to the water's edge, with the sails all up and with the white canvass filled with the wind, it rides into the harbour joyously and nobly. That is an "abundant entrance;" and if you and I are helped by God's Spirit to add to our faith virtue, and so on, we shall have at the last "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a man who is a Christian; but, alas! there are many inconsistencies in his life for which he has to mourn. He lies there, dying on his bed. The thought of his past life rushes upon him. He cries, "O Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner," and the prayer is answered; his faith is in Christ, and he shall be saved. But oh! what griefs he has upon his bed. "Oh if I had served my God better! And these children of mine -- if I had but trained them up better, 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!' I am saved," says he; "but alas, alas! though it be a great salvation, I cannot enjoy it yet. I am dying in gloom, and clouds, and darkness. I trust, I hope I shall be gathered to my fathers, but I have no works to follow me -- or very few indeed, for though I am saved, I am but just saved -- saved `so as by fire.'" Here is another one; he too is dying. Ask him what his dependence is: he tells you, "I rest in none else but Jesus." But mark him as he looks back to his past life. "In such a place," says he, "I preached the gospel, and God helped me." And though with no pride about him -- he will not congratulate himself upon what he has done - yet doth he lift his hands to heaven, and he blesses God that throughout a long life he has been able to keep his garments white; that he has served his Master; and now, like a shock of corn fully ripe, he is about to be gathered into his Master's garner. Hark to him! It is not the feeble lisp of the trembler; but with "victory, victory, victory!" for his dying shout, he shuts his eyes, and dies like a warrior in his glory. That is the "abundant entrance." Now, the man that "gives diligence to make his calling and election sure," shall ensure for himself "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What a terrible picture is hinted at in these words of the apostle -- "Saved

so as by fire!" Let me try and present it to you. The man has come to the edge of Jordan, the time has arrived for him to die. He is a believer -- just a believer; but his life has not been what he could wish; not all that he now desires that it had been. And now stern death is at him, and he has to take his first step into the Jordan. Judge of his horror, when the flames surround his foot. He treads upon the hot sand of the stream, and the next step he takes, with his hair well nigh on end, with his eye fixed on heaven on the other side of the shore, his face is yet marked with horror. He takes another step, and he is all bathing in fire. Another step, and he is up to his very loins in flames -- "saved, so as by fire." A strong hand has grasped him, that drags him onward through the stream. But how dreadful must be the death even of the Christian, when he is saved "so as by fire!" There on the river's brink, astonished he looks back and sees the liquid flames, through which he has been called to walk, as a consequence of his indifference in this life. Saved he is -- thanks to God; and his heaven shall be great, and his crown shall be golden, and his harp shall be sweet, and his hymns shall be eternal, and his bliss unfading; -- but his dying moment, the last article of death, wee blackened by sin; and he was saved "so as by fire!" Mark the other man; he too has to die. He has often feared death. He dips the first foot in Jordan; and his body trembles, his pulse waxes faint, and even his eyes are well nigh closed, His lips can scarcely speak, but still he says, "Jesus, thou art with me, thou art with me, passing through the stream!" He takes another step, and the waters now begin to refresh him. He dips his hand and tastes the stream, and tells those who are watching him in tears, that to die is blessed. "The stream is sweet," he says, "it is not bitter: it is blessed to die." Then he takes another step, and when he is well nigh submerged in the stream, and lost to vision, he says --

"And when ye hear my eyestrings break,
How sweet my minutes roll! --
A mortal paleness on my cheek
But glory in my soul!"

That is the "abundant entrance" of the man who has manfully served his God -- who, by divine grace, has had a path unclouded and serene -- who, by diligence, has "made his calling and election sure," and therefore, as a

reward, not of debt, but of grace, hath entered heaven with higher honors and with greater ease than others equally saved, but not saved in so splendid a manner.

Just one thought more. It is said that the entrance is to be "ministered to us." That gives me a sweet hint that, I find, is dwelt upon by Doddridge. Christ will open the gates of heaven, but the heavenly train of virtues -- the works which follow us -- will go up with us and minister an entrance to us. I sometimes think, if God should enable me to live and die for the good of these congregations, so that many of them shall be saved, how sweet it will be to enter heaven, and when I shall come there, to have an entrance ministered to me not by Christ alone, but by some of you for whom I have ministered. One shall meet me at the gate, and say, "Minister thou wast the cause of my salvation!" And another, and another, and another shall all exclaim the same. When Whitfield entered heaven -- that highly honored servant of the Lord -- I think I can see the hosts rushing to the gate to meet him. There are thousands there that have been brought to God by him. Oh how they open wide the gates; and how they praise God that he has been the means of bringing them to heaven; and how do they minister unto him an abundant entrance? There will be some of you, perhaps, in heaven, with starless crowns: for you never did good to your fellow-creatures, you never were the means of saving souls, you are to have crowns without stars. But "they that turn many to righteousness," shall "shine as the stars, for ever and ever;" and an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to them. I do want to get a heavy crown in heaven -- not to wear, but to have all the more costly gift to give to Christ. And you ought to desire the same, that you may have all the more honors, and so have the more to cast at his feet, with - Not unto us, but unto thy name, O Christ, be the glory!" "Rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

And now, to conclude. There are some of you with whom this text has nothing to do. You cannot "make your calling and election sure", for you have not been called; and you have no right to believe that you are elected, if you have never been called. To such of you, let me say, do not ask whether you are elected first, but ask whether you are called. And go to God's house, and bend your knee in prayer; and may God, in his

infinite mercy, call you! And mark this -- If any of you can say --

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

if any of you, abjuring your self-righteousness, can now come to Christ and take him to be your all in all: you are called, you are elect. "Make your calling and election sure," and go on your way rejoicing! May God bless you; and to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory for evermore! Amen.

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Particular Redemption

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. - Matthew 20:28

When first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit, and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. 'Twas then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the Gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place; and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenance of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months; and I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers. And observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me, but now we are bound together by the ties of love; through association we have grown to love and respect each other, and now you have become the sheep of my pasture, and members of my flock; and I have now the

privilege of assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labour in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person, that as both the congregation and office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the Gospel; I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word. But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of faith, or the teaching of believer's baptism; I shall not stay upon the surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty; I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints; I shall not withhold that undoubted truth of Scripture, the effectual calling of God's elect; I shall endeavour, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we will endeavour to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of Redemption. "He gave his life a ransom for many."

The doctrine of Redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of Redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach

the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement, and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when He died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person; and they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life; consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and speciality in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in Hell as for Peter who mounted to Heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was a true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the throne of the Most High. Now, we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when He died, had an object in view, and that object will most assuredly, and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If any one asks us, "What did Christ design to do by His death?" we answer that question by asking him another - "What has Christ done, or what will Christ do by His death?" For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love, is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement, can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold - we are not afraid to say that we believe - that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number;" and we believe that as the result of this, every person for whom He died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin, and stand, washed in blood, before the Father's throne. We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are for ever damned; we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved, and some of whom were even in Hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption, and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing church. It shall be now my endeavour to show the greatness of the

redemption of Christ Jesus; and by so doing, I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit, to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption, so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind, that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert; but you will remember that this is nothing to me; I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places, and to preach your own views in your own assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully, and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus "gave his life a ransom for many;" and by that ransom He wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavour to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of all from the heinousness of our own guilt, from which He has delivered us; secondly, we shall measure His redemption by the sternness of divine justice; thirdly, we shall measure it by the price which He paid, the pangs which He endured; then we shall endeavour to magnify it, by noting the deliverance which He actually wrought out; and we shall close by noticing the vast number for whom this redemption is made, who in our text are described as "many."

I. First, then we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first by OUR OWN SINS. My brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and the quarry whence you were hewn. Ye, who have been washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, pause for a moment, and look back at the former state of your ignorance; the sins in which you indulged, the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul for ever; it is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that slumbereth in the bowels of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of Heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it. But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? Nay, my brethren, our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head; they have mightily

prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea-shore, or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean, as attempt to count the transgressions which have marked our lives. Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents, and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood, how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way, and burst through all restraint which godly parents put upon us. Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We became leaders in iniquity; we not only sinned ourselves, but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, ye that have entered upon the prime of life, ye may be more outwardly sober, ye may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth; but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God hath renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began; and even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust, and cast ashes on our head, and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" And oh! ye that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have ye not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmears the skirts of your robe, and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years, during which God hath spared your lives; and can ye for a moment think it possible, that ye can number up your innumerable transgressions, or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O ye stars of Heaven! the astronomers may measure your distance and tell your height, but O ye sins of mankind! ye surpass all thought. O ye lofty mountains! the home of the tempest, the birthplace of the storm! man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows; but ye hills of sin! ye tower higher than our thoughts; ye chasms of transgressions! ye are deeper than our imagination dares to dive. Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not. If God had once manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness, that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil. Oh! if we could each of us look into our hearts today - if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the

point of the diamond upon our stony hearts, we should then say to the minister, that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when He saved us from all these sins! The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are justified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest, and which human nature could perform, yet once believing, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin hath become of double dye; but in one moment of faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. Nay, more, if it were possible for all the sins that men have done, in thought, or word, or deed, since worlds were made, or time began, to meet on one poor head - the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away, and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow.

Oh! who shall measure the heights of the Saviour's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin, and, then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In Heaven's courts there are today men that once were murderers, and thieves, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and blasphemers, and persecutors; but they have been washed - they have been sanctified. Ask them whence the brightness of their robes hath come, and where their purity hath been achieved, and they, with united breath, tell you that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O ye troubled consciences! O ye weary and heavy-laden ones! O ye that are groaning on account of sin! the great redemption now proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants; and though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all - a river which can overflow the whole of them, and carry them away from you for ever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement - the greatness of our guilt.

II. Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. "God is love," always loving; but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. God is sternly just, inflexibly severe in His dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, Who thinks so little of sin that He passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of Heaven winks at them, and suffers them to die forgotten. No; Jehovah, Israel's God, hath declared concerning Himself, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." It is His own declaration, "I will by no means clear the guilty." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Learn ye, my friends, to look upon God as being as severe in His justice as if He were not loving, and yet as loving as if He were not severe. His love does not diminish His justice, nor does His justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon His love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But, mark, we can never understand the fullness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural truth of God's immense justice. There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done, for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ, you must for ever lie paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery; for as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, and stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it; it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible; and though we repeat it is true that He is love, it is no more true that He is love than that He is full of justice, for every good thing meets in God, and is carried to perfection, whilst love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in Him. He has no bend, no warp in His character; no attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love hath its full sway, and justice hath no narrower limit than His love. Oh! then, beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ, when it satisfied God for all the sins of His people. For man's sin God demands eternal punishment; and God hath prepared a Hell into which He casts those who die impenitent. Oh! my brethren, can ye think

what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if He had not poured it upon Christ. Look! look! look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits, and see that house of misery which men call Hell! Ye cannot endure the spectacle. Remember that in that place there are spirits for ever paying their debt to divine justice; but though some of them have been for these four thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began; and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now. And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness of your Saviour's mediation when He paid your debt, and paid it all at once; so that there now remaineth not one farthing of debt owing from Christ's people to their God, except a debt of love. To justice the believer oweth nothing; though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet, in one moment Christ did pay it all, so that the man who believeth is entirely justified from all guilt, and set free from all punishment, through what Jesus hath done. Think ye, then, how great His atonement if He hath done all this.

I must just pause here, and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of justice in their own consciences. There is a man here today who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none; but now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart, and he has come under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. I see him today, he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The Negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruel ties of his master and reach another land where he may be free; but this man feels that if he were to wander the wide world over he could not escape from guilt. He that hath been bound by many irons, can yet find a file that can unbind him and set him at liberty; but this man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot escape the gyves from his wrist; he feels as a lost sinner still, and emancipation, do what he may, seems to him impossible. The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body; through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps, and flies to the stars,

free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts; he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him; the iron has entered into his spirit, and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in sleep, but this man cannot sleep; by night he dreams of hell, by day he seems to feel it; he bears a burning furnace of flame within his heart, and do what he may he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptized, he takes the sacrament, he attends a church or he frequents a chapel, he regards every rubric and obeys every canon, but the fire burns still. He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned, he feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked, but the fire burns still, and do what he may he cannot quench it. O, ye sons of weariness and woe, this that you feel is God's justice in full pursuit of you, and happy are you that you feel this, for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died; for you He has satisfied stern justice; and now all you have to do to obtain peace of conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you, "Look you there! Christ died for me; my good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you: look you there! There stands the cross; there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to His death-shriek! See Him die! Art thou not satisfied now?" And when thou hast done that, thou shalt have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ thy Lord; and then shalt thou know the greatness of His atonement.

III. In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's Redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID. It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Saviour; but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price He paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe thine agony?

"Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things,
That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,

Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

O Jesus! thou wast a sufferer from thy birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Thy sufferings fell on thee in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief, thine agonies did dash upon thee. See Him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold; but He is all abroad. It is night; He sleeps not, but He is in prayer. Hark to His groans! Did ever man wrestle as He wrestles? Go and look in His face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear His own words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He rises: He is seized by traitors and is dragged away. Let us step to the place when just now He was engaged in agony. O God! and what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! Whence came it? Had He some wound which oozed afresh through His dire struggle? Ah! no. "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in language! What could ye be that thus could work upon the Saviour's blessed frame, and force a bloody sweat to fall from His entire body? This is the beginning; this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow Him mournfully, thou sorrowing church, to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets; He is dragged first to one bar and then to another; He is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrin; He is mocked by Herod; He is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced - "Let Him be crucified!" And now the tragedy cometh to its height. His back is bared; He is tied to the low Roman column; the bloody scourge ploughs furrows on His back, and with one stream of blood His back is red - a crimson robe that proclaims Him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room; His eyes are bound, and then they buffet Him, and say, "Prophecy who it was that smote thee?" They spit into His face; they plait a crown of thorns, and press His temples with it; they array Him in a purple robe; they bow their knees, and mock Him. All silently He sits; He answers not a word. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again," but committed Himself unto Him whom He came to serve. And now they take Him, and with many a jeer and jibe they drive Him from the place, and hurry Him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fastings, and

depressed with agony of spirit He stumbles beneath His cross. Daughters of Jerusalem! He faints in your streets. They raise Him up; they put His cross upon another's shoulders, and they urge Him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last He reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize Him, and hurl Him on His back; the transverse wood is laid beneath Him; His arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance; the nails are grasped; four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the tenderest parts of His body; and there He lies upon His own place of execution dying on His cross. It is not done yet. The cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place: they fill up the place with earth; and there it stands.

But see the Saviour's limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the cross in that socket! How He weeps! How He sighs! How He sobs! Nay, more hark how at last He shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O sun, no wonder thou didst shut thine eye, and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! no wonder that ye did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this man suffered, Even death itself relented, and many of those who had been in their graves arose and came into the city. This, however, is but the outward. Believe me, brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Saviour suffered in His body was nothing compared to what He endured in His soul. You cannot guess, and I cannot help you to guess, what He endured within. Suppose for one moment - to repeat a sentence I have often used - suppose a man who has passed into Hell - suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour; and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God's people, if they had been punished through all eternity? And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the hells of all His redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft-repeated words: it seemed as if Hell were put into His cup; He seized it, and, "At one tremendous draught of love, He drank damnation dry." So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of Hell for His people ever to endure. I say not that He suffered the same, but He did endure an equivalent for all this, and gave God the

satisfaction for all the sins of all His people, and consequently gave Him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can ye dream, can ye guess the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Saviour's agonies is this: we must compute them by THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.

Rise up, believer; stand up in thy place, and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord hath done for thee! Let me tell it for thee. I will tell thy experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin; I had revolted against God, and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the law gat hold upon me; the pangs of conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to Heaven, and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me; I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning Hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience; but all in vain, I endeavoured by attending to the ceremonies of religion to appease the pangs that I felt within; but all without effect. My soul was exceeding sorrowful, almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." This was the great question that always perplexed me: "I have sinned; God must punish me; how can He be just if He does not? Then, since He is just, what is to become of me?" At last mine eyes turned to that sweet word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." I took that text to my chamber; I sat there and meditated. I saw one hanging on a cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the thorn-crown, and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery. I looked upon Him, and my thoughts recalled that word which says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this man die for sinners? I am a sinner; then He died for me. Those He died for He will save. He died for sinners; I am a sinner; He died for me; He will save me." My soul relied upon that truth. I looked to Him, and as I "viewed the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to this cross I cling;

Naked look to Him for dress;
Helpless come to Him for grace!
Black, I to this fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!"

And now, believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder, and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light; for the garments of heaviness you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell your joy since then? You have sung on earth hymns of Heaven, and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it the wide world over; they that believe, by Jesus' death are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the law. Tell it in Heaven, that none can lay anything to the charge of Gods' elect. Tell it upon earth, that God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in Hell, that God's elect can never come there; for Christ hath died for them, and who is he that shall condemn them?

V. I have hurried over that, to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world "to give his life a ransom for many." The greatness of Christ's redemption may be measured by the **EXTENT OF THE DESIGN OF IT**. He gave His life "a ransom for many." I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly nicknamed by the title of Calvinists - and we are not very much ashamed of that; we think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the Gospel than almost any man who has ever lived, uninspired), we are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question - Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer "No." They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say, "No; Christ has died that any man may be saved if" - and then follow certain conditions of

salvation. We say, then, we will go back to the old statement - Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did He? You must say "No;" you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace, and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, "No, my dear sir, it is you that do it." We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

Now, beloved, when you hear any one laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell him this. General atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half an arch; it does not go across the stream: it only professes to go half way; it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford, which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that all men have been redeemed, and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it - "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Now, that looks like a very, very great argument indeed on the other side of the question. For instance, look here. "The whole world is gone after Him." Did all the world go after Christ? "Then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan." Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem baptized in Jordan? "Ye are of God, little children," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Does "the whole world" there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were "of God?" The words "world" and "all" are used in seven or eight senses in Scripture; and it is very rarely that "all" means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts - some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me,

then, sir, whom did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two, and I will tell you whether He died for you. Do you want a Saviour? Do you feel that you need a Saviour? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God's justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees, "Lord, save, or I perish"? Christ died for you. If you are saying this morning, "I am as good as I ought to be; I can get to Heaven by my own good works," then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So long as you are in that state I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt, and are ready to take Christ to be your only Saviour, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you will be saved. When you are stripped of everything, but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all, and to be yourself nothing at all, then you may look up to Christ, and you may say, "Thou dear, Thou bleeding Lamb of God! thy griefs were endured for me; by thy stripes I am healed, and by thy sufferings I am pardoned." And then see what peace of mind you will have; for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, He will never punish you. "Payment, God's justice cannot demand, first, at the bleeding surety's hand, and then again at mine." We can today, if we believe in Christ, march to the very throne of God, stand there, and if it is said, "Art thou guilty?" we can say, "Yes, guilty." But if the question is put, "What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt?" We can answer, "Great God, Thy justice and Thy love are both guarantees that Thou wilt not punish us for sin; for didst Thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst Thou, then, be just - how canst Thou be God at all, if Thou dost punish Christ the substitute, and then punish man himself afterwards?" Your only question is, "Did Christ die for me?" And the only answer we can give is - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." Can you write your name down among the sinners - not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan

it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed, you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner; and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable rock, and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The Pastor's Parting Blessing

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. - Romans 16:24

The Christian is a man of generous actions, but his wishes go far beyond his deeds. Where he cannot be beneficent he is benevolent. If he cannot actually accomplish good for all, yet he anxiously desires it. If it be not in his power to confer grace upon any, yet he prays that God would give his grace to all the brotherhood. His heart entertains thousands, though his house might be overfull with ten; his liberal desires feed nations, even though his purse be so scant that he cannot afford more than a penny for a poor child. God, whose providence limits our ability, has set no measure to our willingness. Our wishes may be boundless though our powers are contracted, and this will be good for ourselves and not useless to others.

Christianity never came into the world to make individual professors of it isolated, like the icebergs which float away on the wide sea in solitary terribleness; neither is it intended that we should be so anxious for our own salvation as to be indifferent to the welfare of others. True religion is not a separating and repelling force, but rather, like attraction, it draws individual atoms into one body and holds them together. It does not shiver to fragments, but welds into one. It is a loadstone, not a whirlwind. God in his grace gathers together in one body in Christ Jesus all his scattered ones, and the same Spirit who constrains us to love God leads us to love our brother also.

A loving spirit, when it can actually do no more, naturally seizes upon the ever open outlet of good wishes, benedictions, and intercessions. Thus the great heart of the apostle relieved itself; though he would have been willing to lay down his life for the brethren, yet he did not think it idle to give them his blessing, nor did they reject it as worthless because it cost him nothing. It was meet that he who had in so many ways proved his sincere love to the saints should in his letter give utterance to it by pronouncing inspired blessings upon them Thus wrote the apostle of the Gentiles to those he longed to serve; "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

We have dropped, to a great extent, the custom of having the benediction pronounced by the minister upon the people. The minister, as a rule, rather turns it into a prayer than pronounces it as his own personal blessing. I am not certain that it is a great improvement. The dread of anything like priestism has led us to this custom. It may be, however, that in avoiding an evil we have missed a good. Are benedictions sinful or vain? Are the blessings of good men of no value? Can we no more say, "Peace be to this house," and hope that our peace shall rest upon it? May no Jacob nowadays bless the two sons of a beloved Joseph? Will it be a mere form if an Isaac should invoke a blessing on his descendants, or a departing servant of God, like Moses, pronounce a benediction on his people? I confess I would not treat lightly my father's blessing or the benediction of my mother; and though neither father nor mother can by their mere wish confer anything upon us, yet who would wish them to depart this life without having bequeathed us the legacy of their blessing? Like Joseph, you may bring your lads to receive their grandsire's blessing if the old man be yet alive, nor need you suspect yourself of being superstitious. Many there are who have had no other heritage than a father's blessing, and have counted themselves rich therein. Now, if the blessing of a natural father and mother may be considered valuable without attributing too much to men, so I think may the blessing of those spiritual parents who have been made useful to our souls. I was reading in the life of Caesar Malan an incident which touched my heart, and I feel no scruple in quoting it in this connection. In travelling through one of the valleys of Switzerland he met with a woman who told him that her father was dying, but that he was comforted and cheered by reading a

little book. Being unknown by any one in the village, Malan stepped into the room and sat by the dying man's bed, and was delighted to find that the book which had led to the man's conversion was written by himself. His son, who was his companion, thus describes the scene:—"The old man exclaimed, 'Ah! had I not been aged and infirm, I should long ago have gone there to see the good Mr. Malan. Look here, sir, you cannot think how earnestly I have entreated the Lord that I might see him before I died. For a long time I thought he would grant my desire, but I'm afraid I shall have to give it up.' I stole a glance at my father, who was sitting silently looking at his hands. 'What is the name of the book you refer to?' he suddenly enquired as he raised his head. 'Stay,' was the reply, 'here it is, it's always by me,' and he drew from under his pillow a well-worn copy of one of the earliest editions of my father's hymns, and handed it to my father. 'Do you sing any of these, then?' asked my father as he turned over the leaves. 'Oh, Jeannette knows some of them; she often sings them to me, and I derive pleasure and profit whenever I hear them,' adding, as though speaking to himself, 'If I could only see the dear gentleman who wrote those beautiful hymns; he must be a good Christian.' 'Listen, brother,' said my father, 'this young gentleman and I have just come from Geneva.' 'You have come from Geneva? then perhaps you have seen Mr. Malan?' 'Certainly, I have; we all know him well and I can assure you that if he were here he would remind you that he has only been a feeble and imperfect instrument of good to you; and he would speak to you, above all, not of himself, a poor sinner as you are, but of the eternal grace and perfection of our blessed Lord.' The conversation lasted a few moments longer; my father prayed; then, when we had sung together one of the hymns which Jeannette knew, he prepared to leave, telling her that he was to preach the next day, Sunday, at Motiers. When he had got to the door, however, he stopped; and returning once more to the bed where the old man was lying with folded hands, said to him with emotion, 'My Father, God himself, to whom you will so soon depart, has granted your prayer. I am Malan of Geneva; your brother in the faith of the blessed Savior.' The poor old man, fixing his streaming eyes upon him in a long and ardent gaze, and slowly raising his trembling hands, exclaimed, 'Bless me, bless me before I die! You, whom I have so long prayed God to send to me, bless me now that I have had the joy of seeing you.' Falling on his knees at the bedside, my father replied, in tones which betrayed his

deep feeling, 'You ought rather to bless me, for you are old enough to be my father; but all blessing comes from God alone; let us once more ask it of him together.' And folding in his arms the lowly brother, whom he felt he should never see again till they met in the better country, he invoked upon him 'the peace which Jesus gives,' and we left the hamlet."

I am ready to confess that there are those to whom I fool: with the same respect; without the slightest worship of men or care about mental attainments, or mere office, I recognize those from whom I would fain receive a blessing. Priestcraft assumes to be the divinely appointed channel of communicating with heaven, and this monstrous presence is so abominable that we would sooner have the curse than the blessing of a man hardened to such imposture; but men who live near to God, and have power with him in prayer, do, without assuming it, become by their prayers and fervent wishes the means of procuring many blessings for those whom they bear upon their hearts. I have even now ringing in my ears the fervent benediction of a venerable minister whose daily prayers for me, and reading of my sermons, constrained him to make a considerable journey that he might in person pronounce a blessing upon my head. Job thought it no little thing that the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and that when the eye saw him then it blessed him. Good men in their benedictions are moved to give us something more than words, for they mean what they say; and they appeal to heaven to make true their wishes, and their wishes being prayers minted in another form become current coin of the realm, and greatly enrich us, for they bear the approving stamp of heaven upon them.

I look upon the apostle's words, though they are venerable with years, as dropping heaven's own dew upon us to-night. I hear their mellow tones ringing all along the centuries and scattering blessings right through the ages. Their music is not silent, nor is it impotent at this hour: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" is Paul's present and ever new blessing; he being dead yet sneaketh, and his Lord yet hears his holy prayer. Long has the benediction lain in the epistle like the wheat in the Egyptian catacomb, but there is a vitality in it yet.; lo, it buds and brings forth good to us after the lapse of eighteen centuries. May every one of us

feel an unction from the Lord attending these words. May the apostle bless us now, yea, better may the apostle and High Priest of our profession pronounce anew this benediction over us.

Let us now analyse the text itself. The first thing we will speak upon is this,—what is meant by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? secondly, with whom is it to be?—the apostle says, "Be with you all;" and thirdly, and what will be the effect if it be with us all?

I. Let us first enquire **WHAT IS THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WHICH THE APOSTLE WOULD HAVE TO BE WITH US ALL?** He repeats the expression verbatim in his epistles to the Corinthians, and to the Philippians, and also in his second letter to the Thessalonians. He closes each of these epistles with precisely the same benediction, therefore he felt it to be fitting and weighty. Does he mean by this "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," the grace which was revealed in Christ the Savior; that grace of God which shone in the gift of a Savior to the sons of men, that grace which was displayed in the coming of Christ to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, which was manifested in the whole life of Christ on earth, was revealed especially in the death of Christ, and which is still to be seen since his resurrection and ascension in his intercession, and in his standing as our representative before the Father's throne? Grace was gloriously revealed in the person of Christ when he became the incarnate God, and none can consider him as uniting in one person God and man without discerning much love, and perceiving that it was meant to make way for still more clear displays of mercy. Does not the benediction desire for us a part in the blessing which lies couched in the Messiah's person, in whom all nations are blessed?

Does the apostle mean the grace which comes to us through Christ as well as that which is shown to us in Christ? Our Lord, as it were, took out of the river-bed of grace the great rock which blocked up the water courses, and now along the wide and open channel—

"Immortal joys come streaming down,
Joys like his griefs, immense, unknown."

Christ did not create the Father's love to us, the elect were loved of God before all worlds, and Christ is the gift of that love, not the cause of it. Calvary did not procure the Father's love to us, but the love of God towards us could not, by reason of our sins, and the penalty due thereto, come to us so as to be enjoyed by us. It could not bring to us the blessings which we now possess until Jesus had finished transgression, and made an end of sin. Both the grace implied in the sending of the Messiah, and the grace which flows to us through him, are here intended.

Does the apostle also mean the grace which comes to us WITH Christ?—by which I mean those peculiar blessings which come to souls who abide in Christ, who commune with him, walk with him, work for him, and are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in him; who are not only saved, but something more; who are not drowning men barely landed on the shore, and hardly possessed of life, but who have life abundantly, walk in the light of God's countenance, and go from strength to strength. If so, there is an exquisite sweetness of meaning in his benediction. May it be richly fulfilled in each of us. May our union to Jesus be so clearly apprehended that we may experience no stinted measure of vital energy, but the rather may be filled with all the fullness of God. Surely Paul means nothing less than this.

But he intended more yet, for his is no niggardly invocation. Grace in Christ, grace through Christ, and grace with Christ—put these together, and even then you have not grasped the whole. He desires for us all the grace that is in anyway connected with Christ; for you will have remarked that in the close of the second of Corinthians, where he gives the same benediction, he extends it, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Here he gives it the shorter form, but he doubtless intended it to comprehend all the rest. He really wishes that the one comprehensive blessing of the divine unity, even all the triple blessing of the sacred Trinity, may abide with all those who by faith were one with Christ, and therefore were beloved of the apostolic soul. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" then includes all the grace secured to us in the eternal covenant. In many of his epistles, the apostle sums up with a shorter word than our text, and yet in some respects a fuller one, "grace be with you all." You have this in the

Colossians, in the first epistle to Timothy, in Titus, and in the Hebrews. He says, "Grace be with you all," without mentioning any person of the Godhead. So that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is synonymous with grace as such; and comprehends all the various displays of grace which are in other passages of Scripture referred to the various persons of the Godhead. He wishes the saints all the grace they need, all the grace they can desire; all the grace the Infinite God can give. How truly do I echo his great prayer that all grace may be with you all.

Coming to particulars more closely. When it is the desire of our heart that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you all, we mean, first, may the love of Jesus Christ be with you, and may you know that you have it. May it be so with you that you may distinctly and beyond all doubt know that Jesus loves you, and the fact being ascertained, may you drink deep into the fullness of its meaning. May you be ravished with the assurance that the ever-blessed Son of God has set his affection upon you, has loved you from before the foundation of the world, loves you now even as the Father loves him, and will love you when heaven and earth shall, like a scroll, be rolled up, and like an outworn vesture be put away. O that you all might be in such a condition, that the love of Christ might shine full into your souls, a noon-tide without a solitary cloud, a summer without a single blight. May you know of a surety, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, that you have passed from death unto life, and that the love of God is shed abroad within your souls. What a happy church would it be were all the members in such a condition! But, alas, we see one fearful, another doubting, and a third declining; here is one living at a distance from Christ, and another saying,, "O that I knew where I might find him!" May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sense of a conscious enjoyment of his love be the habitual possession of your hearts and minds.

Paul intends also as much as this,—may the mercy as well as the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! May that mercy be shown to you by the full pardon of all your sins, and your knowledge that they are pardoned. May your conscience be purged from dead works, and not merely cleansed, but cleansed so that you may know it to be clean. The great mercy is to have no suspicion that sin is left upon you, but to be

certain that every transgression of every sort has been for ever put away through the precious blood which cleanses from all sin. Alas! there are many Christians who even in their prayers do not appear to understand or distinguish between themselves and the unconverted. I believe it to be our duty to ask for pardon every day. Our Lord in the model prayer teaches us to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us;" but we should not confound that petition of a child to its father with the first supplication for pardon which befitted us as aliens before we were brought nigh. As guilty sinners we stood before the judge, but now we are no longer criminals, for there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. We need not say with Peter in his enthusiastic folly, "Wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," for the Master tells us that we have been washed and are clean, and therefore we need only to wash our feet, for we are, in him, clean every whit. May you not, therefore, come before him with what is too often used as a mere parrot cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." If you believers are miserable sinners you ought not to be. You are sinners, but you ought not to be miserable. You have been forgiven; you are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. Is all this nothing? How can you ignore it, and speak of yourself still as you would have spoken before you were saved? Is the Lord's pardon nothing that you complain still of being condemned? Do you despise the divine forgiveness? You are a child of God, and do you still use the language of a slave, and feel no liberty in your soul? I fear that what is imagined to be humility is a mangle-mangle of hypocrisy and unbelief. If you are saved it is sheer cant to call yourself a miserable sinner; you ought to be one of the happiest of beings, and rejoice that the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ abides with you.

Furthermore, beloved, may you be the subjects of Christ's work constantly. That will give yet another meaning to this benediction. The Lord Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, is carrying on in believers daily a purifying work; for he sits as a refiner and he purifies the sons of Levi. He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. Let us pray that, however trying it may be to us, and whatever rough providences it may involve, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us all in this respect. May our prayer be, "Refining fire, go through my heart!" Let the winnowing fan be used; let our chaff be driven away, there is not a particle of it we

would wish to retain. We desire to be sanctified—spirit, soul, and body—through him who leads his people without the camp that they may be separated unto himself. May we walk in the light as he is in the light, and so have fellowship one with another, and may the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanse us from all sin.

May the benediction rest upon you also in another manner. May you brethren, be possessors of Christ's peace. One of the benedictions frequently used by the apostle expressly mentions peace. "Grace, mercy, and peace be with you." Where Christ is, peace reigns within; he is the peacemaker, yea, peace itself. Conscience is quieted, the heart rests in God, the whole man casts anchor, the barque has reached its haven when it has come to the Well-beloved. O that you may enjoy this grace of Christ, for it was his prerogative to say, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." It was his delight to pronounce upon his disciples the word, "Peace be unto you." May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. If you are troubled with family concerns, may you roll your burden upon the Lord and find rest; or if you are vexed about your past transgressions, may you confess the sin unto the Lord and hear his blood speak peace to your soul. Whatever it is that troubles you, may he comfort you and give you his peace, the deep, unruffled calm which reigns in his own bosom. If there be one gem of grace which beyond all others especially belongs to the Lord Jesus, it is the lovely pearl of peace. He is the Lord and giver of peace, the Prince of Peace, and the messenger of the covenant of peace. Brethren, may we live in peace with God, with men, and with ourselves. We all say "Amen" to that prayer.

Would not Paul also desire for us that we may exhibit in ourselves the grace which shone so brightly in Christ, and was seen by men and angels to the glory of God the Father? You will never have grace, dear friends, in the same measure as the Lord Jesus had it (rather let me correct myself, for he had grace without measure), but you may receive and exhibit the same grace in your measure. O that you and I may have a high degree of it! Grace displayed itself in the Lord Jesus in a character absolutely perfect, in which not one of the virtues was absent or exaggerated, and in which not a single fault could be found. You can depict the character of

John, for a prominent excellence is visible; you can describe the characteristics of Peter; you can give an idea of Paul for each of these is like a separate gem, and each one has its own especial brightness and color, and I may add each one has its own peculiar flaw; but when you come to the altogether lovely One your descriptive powers fail you, for he is like the high priest's breastplate in which all the jewels met in harmony. The excellences of all the excellent are in him, and none of the flaws. In him all perfections meet to make up one perfection. All the spices, the myrrh, the aloes, the cassia, the sweet cinnamon, and whatever else may be grateful to God and to holy men—all these divinely compounded with the art of the apothecary, and well-balanced as to the proportions are to be found in one rare anointing oil upon the person of our Well-beloved. O may that grace be with you which was poured upon our glorious Head and continues to distil to the skirts of his priestly garments. May his sacred unction anoint and perfume us all! It was poured on Jesus that it might drop on us. He received this fullness that we might receive out of him grace for grace. He does not possess grace that he may store it up for himself, for he needs it not; but he has all fullness in himself on purpose for us, that we may partake thereof both now and for ever. O that we may manifest it in our lives both public and private, in the emotions of our hearts, and the words of our mouths. May men in all the actions of our lives observe that we are heirs of grace by our gracious conversation, knowing us as a tree is known by its fruit. May this grace be in you, and abound that you may not be barren nor unprofitable.

I am far from having brought out all the various shades of meaning which lie within this ancient benediction; for as the Holy Spirit, like the sun, shines on this crystal text, it flashes with all the colors of the rainbow. It is a very full, rich, and large benediction. Even Aaron himself could not pronounce a fuller blessing. The Lord fulfill it to every one of you, according to the riches of his glory by Christ Jesus!

II. Secondly, WITH WHOM IS THIS GRACE TO BE? "With you all." The apostle meant with all the saints. He did not actually limit it in words to the saints, but he evidently intended to be so understood; for he was writing "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," and to them he said, "grace be with you all." We will not go beyond the apostolic

wish, neither will we stop short of it. This moment I say to you, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all"—with all the members of this church, and all my fellow-servants in Christ Jesus. The like grace be with all the churches, with all the chosen of God in every land; but at this present I may be permitted to utter this as my personal and especial wish for you my beloved flock at this time, when for a season I shall be absent from you. The demands of health call me away, and what shall I leave with you, my dear companions, my own children, my reverend elder brethren, my beloved fellow soldiers? What better word shall be the last to salute your ear from my lips till I return to you? How can my affection frame a fitter utterance than that which fell from Paul's pen, when he added to the apostolic benediction his own personal love, and wrote to the Corinthians, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you; my love be with you all in Christ Jesus?"

Now, why with you all? Is it not because you all need it? There is not one among you who can do without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You experienced Christians are greatly in danger when you think your mountain stands firm and will never be moved. You wise and intelligent believers are in sore peril when you dream that you can battle with error apart from your Master. Conscious weakness is our true strength. "When I am weak then am I strong." The boldest, bravest, wisest, most judicious, and most experienced among you, need the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and certainly the babes in grace and the weaklings of the flock require it no less.

More delightful still, is it to remember that you all may have it. You all, having believed in Jesus, have him to be your own, and you may surely have his grace. He who gave you Christ has virtually given you all the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Indeed we know from the best authority that grace was given us in Christ Jesus ere the world began.

And, beloved, there is no grace which you may not have, no grace which you ought to be content to go without. If a line should be drawn in Christian experience, and a decree should be passed that such and such a Christian should never advance beyond that mark, you might feel very unhappy, and yet some of you have drawn such a line for yourselves, and

you are not unhappy. It is grievous to see how we stunt and dwarf ourselves, and appear to be content with a very poor and feeble form of spiritual life. May the Holy Spirit breathe into your hearts a higher ambition, for rest assured if you do not possess the whole land of Canaan, it is because you are too idle to drive out the Hivites and Jebusites, for there is not one of all the clan but what you may conquer, though they have chariots of iron. There is not a brook that crows with milk and honey but you may drink of it, if you have but faith and prayer enough to win it for yourselves. He giveth more grace; seek to enjoy it.

My dear brethren in office, my esteemed deacons and elders, I pray that you may have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abundantly, so that you may walk before us as becometh fathers in Israel, that you may be ensamples to the flock, that none of the weaker sort may see in you any occasion of stumbling, but much that may lead them forward in the divine life. You who are especially the workers among us, you Sabbath-school teachers, you who have the conduct of our adult classes, you who preach for the Master in the streets, or go from house to house with your tracts, I pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all. Whatever your form of work may be, it will come to nought without his grace; but you may have it, and I pray you be not content unless you possess it abundantly.

Among you there are members of the church who are very poor; there are in proportion probably more poor among us than in another church of our order and standing, and for this I devoutly thank God, for I can hardly conceive a church to be rich in grace which has not in it many of the Lord's poor. But this I pray, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you, who are the sons and daughters of poverty, to enable you to be patient, to sanctify your trials, to make your homes bright with the presence of the Lord, and to keep you from envy and murmuring. May your rooms be palaces to you, because the King visits you and feast you with his love.

May that same grace, however, be with the few among us who may be said to be rich, for how much grace do the wealthy require, that they may be kept from the temptations which beset their position, and may be

delivered from the cankering influence of riches! May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, my brethren and sisters, that, consecrating your substance habitually to Christ, it may bring with it many comforts to your souls as well as to your bodies.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, dear brethren and sisters, who are ripening for heaven; may it be light with you at eventide, and may your rest be glorious. Though near to glory, you know right well that you are still dependent upon grace, and I trust you will abundantly enjoy it. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, young beginners, who have just put on the harness. May you live long in the Christian Church, and serve your Master well. Amidst the temptations of youth, and the trials of manhood, may you stand fast and glorify your Lord.

Some of you are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you to keep you strong. If you have trodden down strength, and have had the hind's feet with which you have stood upon your high places, may you never lose your position, but maintain your joy. And as for you who are doubting and fearing, the timid ones of the flock, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you too, for he carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young. A bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench.

While I make the benediction thus as large as the apostle did, let me remind you very affectionately that there is a limit to it. He is speaking to the saints, and to none else. Have you noticed the form this benediction takes in the epistle to Philemon, and in the epistle to the Galatians? There the apostle puts it thus, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." It is only meant, then, for spiritual-minded men, for such as have been born again of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ cannot be with the carnal. He will not give the blessing of his presence to those who mind earthly things. When ye have been born again ye can understand the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but not till then. May that gracious work of regeneration be wrought in every soul here. The apostle limits it again in his Epistle to the Ephesians. He there utters a desire that the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ may be with "all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." You cannot expect the blessing of Christ to abide with you if you are hypocritical, or formal, or self-deceived. Sincerity is a needful index of the grace of Christ being with you. Do you, dear hearer, in sincerity love Jesus Christ? If you do, may his grace be with you.

One other limit the apostle gives. Let me read it to you. I can never read these words either in public or in private without a conscious shudder, but they demand an attentive consideration by us all. You will find them at the close of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." What a limitation is this! He pronounces a solemn curse upon those whom he feels he cannot bless, because they are so base as not to love the infinitely loving Jesus. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh," for that is the meaning of the words, "Anathema Maran-atha," "cursed when the Lord cometh," or "As surely cursed as the Lord cometh." Whoever, then, loves not Christ is cursed. Oh! God, save us all from a curse so well deserved; for not to love such a generous Savior, not to love one so lovely and so gracious, not to love one who loved his enemies, and laid down his life for sinners, is in itself to be accursed. That spirit is withered already, Savior, that loves not thee! To be able to withhold its affections from so lovely an object is in itself a doom. God save you from it! May there not be one among you here upon whom that curse may come, but "may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

III. And now as this must serve for my parting word for some little time, let me explain, in the third place, what will be **THE RESULT TO YOU IF THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL.**

First, there will be a blessed consequence to you Godward. As you have this grace of Christ in you you will love God better, you will seek his face oftener; you will pray with more confidence, and more vehemence. You could not have the grace of Christ without being much in prayer, for this eminently distinguished his character. If you have the grace of Christ you will walk with God, even as he did. Your communion with the Father will

be closer then heretofore; it will be less interrupted; it will become thorough. O that I might see a church made up wholly of saints who live in habitual intercourse with God! I know it is not so with all in this church. I know there are many out of our four thousand members who walk with God, but I mourn that there are others who follow afar off. May this affectionately-intended remark raise in each heart the personal enquiry, "Lord, is it I?" And if your hearts condemn any of you, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you most effectually, that you may amend your ways.

The next beneficial effect will extend to your fellow church-members. If you have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with you, you will love each other with a pure heart fervently. You will have compassion one towards another. No one will seek his own, but every man his brother's benefit. Suspicion, harsh judgment, envy, and jealousy will cease. Gossiping and foolish talking will come to an end. Alas! how much these things abound, and what sorrow they cause. When the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us our speech will be to edification. We shall esteem others better than ourselves. We shall rather see their excellences than their faults, while we shall each strive which can be of most service to the rest. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" By this shall all men know that ye are Christ's disciples, if ye have love one towards another. May we be mutually enriched in all spiritual gifts and graces by loving communion in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Eighteen years and more have we now dwelt together in union and prosperity, and that this same grace may continue with us through twice another eighteen years, if the Lord spare us so long, is my soul's most fervent prayer.

Another admirable result will follow towards your families and yourselves. If the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, you will personally be much the happier. Your troubles will sit lightly upon you when grace is fully within you. Your joys will have a mellow taste in them than now when they are seasoned with grace. The family altar will become a reality. The servants will find the house a home, and the children will become children of God, when the master and mistress are filled with the grace of our Lord Jesus. Gracious men are a sure blessing

to the neighbourhoods in which they live; the sweet perfume of their family piety will blow out at the doors and windows, and spread a balmy influence around. As trades of an ill savor make a whole district nauseous, so saints, who have the sweet savor of Christ in them, render a region fragrant.

Thus a blessing will flow out to the world which lieth in darkness. If the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, we shall have all our thoughts and feelings towards sinners materially changed. We shall mourn over them with intense compassion. Parents, you will not be able to look upon your unconverted children as you now do, holy sorrow will mingle with natural pleasure. Ah! he is a fine young man; he is growing up, and is quite his mother's joy. Mother, if his soul is unsaved, do not so much as look at him without a tear. "Ah!" says the father, "there is my girl—what a lovely creature she is!" Is she converted? If not, think what a fallen creature she is. Employers, if you have grace you will not go into your factories as you have done, and think of the "hands," but you will have pity on the "souls" therein. Many sensations pass through a man's mind if he stands at a window in Cheapside and sees the rush of the living river. It strikes me that the flow of our crowded streets is one of the most wonderful sights in the whole world. There go the thousands, tramp, tramp, tramp, on, on, on, without a pause. Thoughtful men watch the stream and calculate this and that, according to the manner of statistics; but the right-minded Christian, contemplating the scene, has this consideration uppermost, "All these are immortal. How many, or how few of them, are on the road to bliss, and how many are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath." Then will he breathe the prayer involuntarily, "Lord, have mercy upon this guilty city; save the myriads of this modern Nineveh, and let transgressors learn thy ways." Oh! if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ were with us, we should, like the Savior, often burst into tears over London, as he did over Jerusalem. We should not trifle, as we now do, with opportunities of doing good. We should speak to ones and twos if we could reach no more, and Jesus' love would be our theme.

Time compels me to cease, but ere I leave you, my beloved flock, I solemnly pronounce this benediction upon you:—"The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." And my heart says, Amen, Amen, Amen.

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Paul's Desire To Depart

Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. -
Philippians 1:23

WE KNOW THAT DEATH is not the end of our being. By a confident faith we are persuaded that better things await us in another state. We are speeding onwards through our brief life like an arrow shot from a bow, and we feel that we shall not drop down at the end of our flight into the dreariness of annihilation, but we shall find a heavenly target far across the flood of death. The force which impels us onwards is too mighty to be restrained by death. We have that within us which is not to be accounted for, if there be not a world to come, and especially, as believers, we have hopes, and desires, and aspirations, which cannot be fulfilled, and which must have been given us purposely to make us miserable, and to tantalize us, if there be not a state in which every one of these shall be satisfied and filled to the brim with Joy. We know, too, that the world into which we shall soon be ushered is one which shall never pass away. We have learned full well by experience that all things here are but for a season. They are things which shall be shaken, and, therefore, will not remain in the day when God shall shake both heaven and earth. But equally certain are we that the inheritance which awaits us in the world to come is eternal and unfailing, that the cycles of ages shall never move it; that the onflowing of eternity itself shall not diminish its duration. We know that the world to which we go is not to be measured by leagues, nor is the life thereof to be calculated by centuries. Well does it become every one of us, then, professing the Christian name, to be questioning ourselves as to the view which we take of the world to come. It may be there are some of you now present who call yourselves believers, who look into a future state with shuddering and awe. Possibly there may be but few here who have attained to the position of the apostle, when he could say, that he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ. I take it that our view of our own death is one of the readiest

tokens by which we may judge of our own spiritual condition. When men fear death it is not certain that they are wicked, but it is quite certain that if they have faith it is in a very weak and sickly condition. When men desire death we may not rest assured that they are therefore righteous, for they may desire it for wrong reasons; but if for right reasons they are panting to enter into another state, we may gather from this, not only that their minds are right with God, but that their faith is sanctified and that their love is fervent.

I hope that the service of this morning may have the effect of leading every one of us to self-examination. I shall endeavor while preaching to search myself, and I pray that each one of you may be led to hear for himself, and I beseech you to put home each pertinent and personal question to your own souls, while in a quiet, but I hope in a forcible manner, I shall endeavor to describe the apostle's feelings in prospect of departure.

Three things I shall observe this morning. First of all, *the apostle's description of death*; secondly, *his desire for it*, and thirdly, *the reasons which justified such a desire*.

I. THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION OF DEATH. We are to understand this of course as being a description not of the death of the wicked, but of the death of the righteous. And you will remark the apostle does not call it an *arrest*. In the death of the wicked, the sheriff's officer of justice doth lay his clay-cold hand upon the man's shoulder, and he is his prisoner for ever. The sergeant-at-arms in the name of the justice which has been incensed, puts the fetters about his wrists, and conducts him to the prison-house of despair and everlasting torment. In the Christian's case, however, there is no such thing as an arrest, for there is no one that can arrest him. We sometimes talk of death arresting the believer in the midst of his career, but we misuse terms. Who shall arrest a man against whom there is neither conviction nor accusation? Who is he that condemneth the man for whom Christ has died? Nay, further, who shall so much as lay anything to the charge of God's elect? How then can the Christian be arrested? It is no such thing; it is an arrest of the ungodly, but not of the believer.

Nor does Paul speak of the believer's death as being a sudden *plunge*. This is a proper description of the death of the ungodly. He stands upon the brink of a precipice, and beneath him there is a yawning and bottomless gulf. Through thick darkness he must descend, and into it his unwilling spirit must take a desperate leap. Not so the believer. His is no leap downwards: it is a climbing upwards. He has his foot upon the first round of the ladder, and joyful is the hour when his Master saith unto him, "Come up higher; ascend to another guest-chamber, and here feast upon richer dainties than those I have given thee below." Aye! 'tis no leap in the dark. 'Tis no plunge into a cold sea; 'tis simply a departure.

Let me describe what I think the apostle means by the figure of a *departure*. Many deaths are preceded by a long season of sickness, and then I think we might picture them by the departure of a ship from its moorings. There lies the ship in its haven. there is a friend of yours about to journey away to some distant clime. You will never see his face again in the flesh. He is going to emigrate; he will find a home in another and he hopes a happier land. You stand upon the shore; you have given him the last embrace. The mother has given to her son the last kiss, the friend has shaken him by the hand for the last time, and now the signal is given; the anchor is taken up; the rope which held the ship to the shore is loosed, and lo, the ship is moving and she floats outward towards the sea. You look, you still wave your hand as you see the ship departing. Your friend stands on some prominent spot on the deck, and there he waves his handkerchief to the last. But the most sharpsighted of friends in such scenes must lose sight of one another. The ship floats on; you just now catch a sight of the sails, but with the strongest telescope you cannot discover your friend. He is gone: it is his departure. Weep as you may, you cannot bring him back again. Your sorrowful tears may mingle with the flood that has carried him away, but they cannot entice a single wave to restore him to you. Now even so is the death of many a believer. His ship is quietly moored in its haven. He is calmly lying upon his bed. You visit him in his chamber. Without perturbation of spirit he bids you farewell. His grip is just as hearty as he shakes your hand, as ever it was in the best hour of his health. His voice is still firm, and his eye is still bright. He tells you he is going to another and a better land. You say to

him, "Shall I sing to you" -
"Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near?"

"Oh! no" says he, "sing me no such a hymn as that; sing me -
"Jerusalem my happy home,
Name ever dear to me,
When shall my labors have an end
In joy, and peace, and thee."

He bids you a last farewell. You see him for a little season even after that, although he is too far gone again to address you. It may be a partial insensibility seizes hold of him; he is like a ship that is just going out of sight; you look at his lips, and as you bow down your ear, you can catch some faint syllables of praise. He is talking to himself of that precious Jesus who is still his joy and hope. You watch him till the last heaving breath has left the body, and you retire with the sweet reflection that his Spirit on a glassy sea has floated joyously to its post. Thus the believer's death is a departure. There is no sinking in the wave; there is no destruction of the vessel: it is a departure. He has gone; he has sailed over a calm and quiet sea, and he is gone to a better land.

At other times deaths are more sudden, and are not heralded by protracted sickness. The man is in health, and he is suddenly snatched away, and the place which knew him once knows him no more for ever. I am about to use a figure which will seem to you extremely homely, and certainly could not be classical. I remember to have been once a spectator in a sorrowful scene. A company of villagers, the younger branches of a family, were about to emigrate to another land. The aged mother who had not for some years left her cottage and her fireside, came to the railway station from which they must start on their departure. I stood among the sorrowful group as a friend and minister I think I see the many embraces which the fond mother gave to her son and daughter, and the little ones, her grand-children. I see them even now folding their arms about her aged neck, and then bidding farewell to all the friends in the village who had come to bid them adieu. And well I remember her, who was about to lose the props of her household. A shrill sound is heard, as if it were the messenger of death, it sends a pang through all hearts. In great haste at

the small village station the passengers are hurried to their seats They thrust their heads out of the carriage window. The aged parent stands on the very edge of the platform that she may take the last look. There is a sound from the engine, and away goes the train. I remember well the instant when that poor woman leaning on her staff sprang up from the chair with which she had been accommodated, and jumping from the platform, rushed alone the railway with all her might, crying, "My children! My children! My children! They are gone and I shall never see them again." The figure may not be classical, but nevertheless I have been reminded of it by many a death. When I have seen the godly suddenly snatched away - no time to watch them - they are gone, swift as the wind itself could bear them, as if the hasty waves of the sea had buried them out of sight. It is our affliction and our trouble, but we must stand behind and weep, for they are gone beyond recall. Notwithstanding, there is something pleasant in the picture. It is but a departure; they are not destroyed; they are not blown to atoms, they are not taken away to prison. 'Tis but a departure from one place to another. They still live; they still are blessed. While we weep they are rejoicing. While we mourn they are singing psalms of praise. Remember this my brethren in the apparel of mourning, and, if you have lost friends of late, this may tend to console your spirits. Death to a believer is but a departure, yet what a departure it is! Can you and I think calmly of it? The time must come when I must depart from wife and children, and from house and home, when I must depart from everything that is dear to me on earth. The time is coming to thee, oh rich Christian, when thou must depart from all the comforts of thine estate, from all the luxuries of thine household, from all the enjoyments which thy rank confers upon thee. And oh, poor Christian, lover of thy home, the time is coming when thou must depart from thy cot, homely though it be, still dear unto thee; thou must leave the place of thy toil, and the sanctuary of thy rest. We must mount as on eagle's wings far from this world. We must bid adieu to its green fields as well as its dreary streets. We must say farewell to its blue skies and to its dusky clouds; farewell to foe and friend: farewell to all we have, alike to trial and to joy. But blessed be God it is not the last look of a criminal condemned to die, it is the farewell of one who departs to another and a happier land.

The apostle's description of death, however, is not finished. He has here

only pictured that which is visible. We now come to notice his description of the invisible part of death -

"In vain the fancy strives to paint
The moment after death;
The glories which surround the saint
When yielding up his breath.
This much - and this is all we know,
They are supremely blest;
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Saviour rest."

This is precisely the apostle's description of the state of the believer after death. They depart; yes, but whither? To be with Christ. Just observe how quickly these scenes follow each other. The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail ere it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How often shall that soul be tossed upon the waves before it comes to the sea that knows no storm. Oh tell it, tell it everywhere; yon ship that has just departed is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail and it was there. Like the old ship on the lake of Galilee, there was a storm that tossed it, but Jesus said, "Peace, be still," and immediately it came to land. Yes, think not that there is a long period between the instant of death and the eternity of glory. There is not so much as space for the intervening of a lightning's flash. One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks, we scarce can say it is gone before the ransomed spirit takes its mansion near the throne. We depart, we are with Christ; more quickly than I can say the words, swifter than speech can express them they become true. They depart, and they are with Christ; the selfsame instant they have closed their eyes on earth they have opened them in heaven. And what is this invisible part of death? *"To be with Christ."* Who can comprehend this but the Christian? It is a heaven which the worldling cares not for, if he could have it, he would not pawn his meanest lust to gain it. To be with Christ is to him a thing of nought, as gold and silver are of no more value to little children than the pieces of platter with which they will amuse themselves. So heaven and being with Christ is of no value to the childish sons of earthly mirth. They know not what a mass of glory is crowded into that one sentence. "To be with Christ." To the

believer who understands it, it means, first, *vision*. "Thine eyes shall see him." I have heard of *him*, and though I have not seen his face, unceasingly I have adored him. But I shall *see* him. Yes, we shall actually gaze upon the exalted Redeemer. Realize the thought. Is there not a young heaven within it? Thou shalt see the hand that was nailed for thee; thou shalt kiss the very lips that said, "I thirst;" thou shalt see the thorn-crowned head, and bow with all the blood-washed throng, thou, the chief of sinners, shalt adore him who washed thee in his blood; when thou shalt have a vision of his glory. Faith is precious but what must sight be? To view Jesus as the Lamb of God through the glass of faith makes the soul rejoice with joy unspeakable; but oh! to see him face to face, to look into those dear eyes; to be embraced by those divine arms rapture begins at the very mention of it! While I speak of him, my soul is like the chariots of Aminadab, and I desire to depart and to be with him. But what must the vision be when the veil is taken from his face, and the dimness from our eyes, and when we shall talk with him even as a man talketh with his friend. But it is not only vision, it is *communion*. We shall walk with him, he shall walk with us, he shall speak to us, and we shall speak to him. All that the spouse desired in Solomon's Song, we shall have, and ten thousand times more. Then will the prayer be fulfilled "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips, for his love is better than wine." Then we shall be able to say "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." Then will he tell us his love; then will rehearse the ancient story of the ever-lasting covenant, of his election of us by his own true love, of his betrothal of us through his boundless affection, of his purchase of us by his rich compassion, of his preservation of us by his omnipotence, and of his bringing us safe at last to glory as the result of his promise and his blood. And then will we tell to him our love, then into his ear will we pour out the song of gratitude, a song such as we have never sung on earth, unmixed and pure, full of serenity and joy, no groans to mar its melody; a song rapt and seraphic, like the flaming sonnets which flash from burning tongues above. Happy, happy, happy day, when vision and communion shall be ours in fullness!" To be with Christ which is far better."

Nor is this all, it means *fruition* of Christ. Here we look and long to taste or if we taste it is but a sip, and we long to drink to the full. *Here* we are

like Israel in the wilderness, who had but one cluster from Eschol, *there* we shall be in the vineyard. Here do we have the manna falling small, like coriander seed, but there shall we eat the bread of heaven and the old corn of the kingdom. We have sometimes on earth, lusts, ungratified desires, that lack satisfaction, but there the lust shall be slain and the desire shall be satiated. There shall be nothing we can want; every power shall find the sweetest employment in that eternal world of joy. There will be a full and lasting fruition of Christ, and last of all upon this point there shall be a sharing with Christ in his glory, and that for ever. "We shall see him," yes, and let us have the next sentence, and "shall be like him when we shall see him as he is." Oh Christian, antedate heaven for a few years. Within a very little time thou shalt be rid of all thy trials and thy troubles; thine aching head shall be girt with a crown of glory, thy poor panting heart shall find its rest and shall be satisfied with fullness as it beats upon the breast of Christ. Thy hands that now toil shall know no harder labor than harp-strings can afford. Thine eyes now suffused with tears shall weep no longer. Thou shalt gaze in ineffable rapture upon the splendor of him who sits upon the throne. Nay more, upon his throne shalt thou sit. He is King of kings, but thou shalt reign with him. He is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, but thou shalt be a priest with him. Oh rejoice! The triumph of his glory thou be shared by thee; his crown, his joy, his paradise, these shall be thine, and thou shalt be co-heir with him who is the heir of all things. Doth not this very description of the unseen part of death stir up in the heart of the believer a longing "to depart and to be with Christ which is far better."

II. I have thus, as well as I was able, spoken upon the first part. And now my friends, let us consider THE APOSTLE'S DESIRE. How differently do men regard death. We have seen men shriek at the prospect of it. I have seen the man driven to madness when the skeleton king has stared him in the face. Pacing up and down his chamber he has declared with many a curse and imprecation that he would not and could not die - shrieking so that you could scarcely bear his company. He has looked forward to death as the concentration of all despair and agony, and he has vainly striven, with all his might, not to die. When he felt at last that death was stronger than he, and that he must get a desperate fall in the struggle, then has he began to shriek and to cry in such a strain that scarce demons themselves

could excel the despair concentrated in each shriek. Others have we seen who have met death somewhat more calmly. Biting their lips, and setting fast their teeth, they have endeavored to keep up appearances, even in the last moment, but they have endured the inward suffering, betrayed to us most plainly by the staring eye, and the awful look. Others, too, we have seen, who, callous through sin, totally deserted by God's Spirit and given up to a seared conscience have gone to their death with idiot resignation. They have even played the madman yet more fully, and have tried to brag and bully even in the jaws of hell. Many Christians, have we met - true believers - who can go so far as to say they were willing to die. Please God, whenever the solemn hour should come, they were prepared to go up to their chamber and stretch themselves upon their bed, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." But the apostle had gone further than they. He said he had a desire to depart, and the desire was a strong one. The Greek word has much force in it. He panteth, he longeth to be gone. I might paraphrase it by one of the verses of an old hymn -
"To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone."

He desired not to get away from earth for he loved to serve his Master, but he desired to be with Christ, which he declared to be far better. I ask you if you were in Paul's condition would not such a desire contain the very fullness of wisdom. There is a ship at sea, Fully laden. It has a precious cargo of gold on board. Happy is the kingdom that shall receive the wealth which is contained within its hold. Would you not if you were a possessor of such a vessel long to be safe in port. The empty ship needs scarcely fear the water for what hath she to lose. If it casts its ballast into the sea, what is it the poorer? But when the ship is full of treasure well may the captain long to see it safely moored. Now Paul was full of faith and love. He could say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And what wonder therefore that he was longing to be safely anchored at home. So the soldier, who in the midst of battle has smitten down foe after foe, knows that a high reward awaits him. He has charged upon the enemy, and driven them back in many a desperate struggle. He has already been victor. Do you wonder he wishes the fight now were over, that his laurels may be safe? If he had played the coward he might long that the campaign should be protracted, that he might redeem his

disgrace. But having so far fought with honor he may well desire that the garment rolled in blood, may be rolled up for ever. Ay! and so was it with the apostle. He had fought a good fight, and knew that the crown was laid up for him in heaven, and he anticipated the triumph which Christ would give him, and what marvel that panting and longing, he said, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better?" Upon this point I am constrained to be brief, because the next division involves the whole matter, and upon this, I would be somewhat longer. And may God grant that what I shall say upon it may be impressive.

III. PAUL'S REASONS FOR LONGING TO DEPART. There have been - it is the part of candour to admit it - there have been other men besides Christians who have longed to die. There is the suicide who, mad, from life's history hangs to be hurled, even though hell receive him. Tired of all life's troubles he thinks he sees a way to escape from his toil and from his sorrow through the grim gate of death. He stains his hand with his own blood, and red with his own gore appears before his Maker. Ah fool, to leap from *one* evil to a myriad! Ah madman, to plunge from little streams of woe into an unfathomable gulf of agony! There can be no more absurd, revolting, and insensible act, than for a man to take away his life. Setting aside the horrors of crime that surround it, how foolish is the attempt to escape by rushing into the very midst of danger! The ostrich who buries her head in the sand, and when she cannot see the hunter thinks the hunter cannot see her, is sensible and wise compared with such a man, who rushing into the very thick of the battle hopes in this way to escape from his enemy. How can it be thou foolish man? Is the stream too deep for thee already, and instead of seeking to find a shore by faith in God dost thou seek the center of the stream that thou mayest get a firmer footing there? Oh foolish generation and unwise, "Put up thy sword into thy scabbard and do thyself no harm," for harm thou wilt do if thou rush into a greater evil to escape the less.

There have been other men, who with a so called philosophic spirit, have desired to die. Some men are sick altogether of mankind. They have met with so many ungrateful and deceitful wretches that they say, "Let me get rid of them all.

'Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,

Where rumor of oppression never more
May reach mine ear."

And they have thought to find this lodge in the wilderness of death; and so they long for the wings of a dove to flee away from the degenerate race of men. Not so this apostle. He was no such coward as to fly from evils; he sought to better them. The apostle loved his race; he was no man-hater. He could say that he loved them all, and thus he had prayed for them all, and had carried them in the bowels of Christ continually to the throne of mercy. Others, too, have thought by getting out of the world they should get rid of their disappointments. They have struggled very hard to get rich, or they have striven for fame, and they have not succeeded, in their ambitious designs, and then they have said, "Let me die." Now the apostle was never disappointed in seeking wealth for he never cared for it. He had no desires whatever beyond food and raiment. He wished for nothing more, and as for rank that he utterly despised. He did tread beneath his feet as the mire of the streets all the honors that man could give him. Nor was the apostle in any sense a disappointed man. He had sought to spread his Master's fame and he had done it. He had a standard to plant and right well had he planted it. He had a gospel to preach and he did preach it everywhere with all his might. He was a singularly happy man, and therefore he had no such cowardly reasons for desiring to depart.

Others, too, have said that they wished to depart because of their great suffering. Now the apostle thought of no such dastard flight. He was ready for all weathers. He had been beaten with rods; he had been stoned; he had been shipwrecked; but he could say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me." He did not wish to escape from persecution. He rejoiced therein. He had often sung a hymn in prison, besides that hymn which he had sung with Silas for his companion. He had often shouted in the prospect of the block or the flames. Nor did he wish to die because of old age, for he was not an aged man when he wrote this epistle. He was just then, I suppose, in full vigorous health, and though in prison I do think that an angel might have ransacked the whole world before he could have found a happier man than the apostle Paul, for a man's happiness consisteth not in the wealth which he possesses. In the bare dungeons of Rome, Paul, the tent maker,

had a glory about him which Nero never had in all his palaces; and there was a happiness there to which Solomon in all his glory never had attained. So then, the desire of Paul to depart is for these reasons far superior to the desire of the mere philosopher, or of the disappointed worldling.

What then made Paul wish to depart? I shall put it thus - the same reasons prompt the desires of every true believer; but they can have no power whatever with many here, who have no desire to depart, because for you to die would be not happiness and bliss, but an eternal weight of misery.

First, the apostle felt a desire to depart because he knew that in departing and being with Christ he should be clean rid of sin. Paul hated sin; every true believer does the same. There have been times with us brethren and sisters when we could say, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Sin has been our plague. Like righteous Lot in Sodom, the sins of others have vexed us; but, alas! we have had to bear a Sodom in our own hearts, which has vexed us still more. As to the trials and troubles of this world, they are nothing at all to the believer, compared with the annoyance of sin. Could he get rid of his unbelief, of his murmuring disposition, of his hasty temper - could he get rid of the various temptations of Satan, could he be clean, and pure, and perfect, he would be thoroughly satisfied. And this made the apostle long to depart. "Oh," saith he to himself, one baptism in the stream of death and I am perfect - but to pass the chill and dreary stream and I shall stand without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the throne of God." The dog of hell shall follow us to the very edge of Jordan, but he cannot swim that stream. The arrows of temptation will be shot at us as long as we are here, but on the other side of Jordan these darts can never wound us more. Rejoice, then, believer, in the prospect of death, because in dying thou art once for all clean rid of sin. When I lay down this body I have laid down every infirmity, and every lust, and every temptation, and when clothed upon with that house which is from heaven, I have girt about my loins perfection and unsullied purity. But oh! ye that believe not in Christ, ye do not desire to die for such a reason as this. For you there is no such a prospect. For you to die will be but to plunge deeper into sin.

You sin now, and when you die your spirit will descend to hell, where, in the midst of fit companions, whose guilt is ripened, you shall spend an eternity in oaths, and curses, and blasphemies. O sinner! to-day you sow your sins in the furrows, and when you die you shall reap the harvest. To-day you break the clods, to-day you work in the husbandry of iniquity, then there shall be a shouting of an awful harvest home. When pressed down with the sheaves of your sins, divine justice shall bring forth the harvest of misery and torment to you. You have reason enough to long to live, because for you to die is to reap the reward of your iniquities.

Again, Paul longed to die for another reason, because he knew that as soon as he should depart he could meet his brethren in faith who had gone before. This desire also prompts you and me. I long to see, though it is but a few hours since we have lost their society, those two sisters, and the dear brother who during this week have departed in Christ. Worshipping among us but a few days ago, it seems a strange thing to talk of them as being in heaven. But there they are, far from the reach of mortal vision. At our departure we shall see them. It was our happiness to see them not long before their departure, and to mark it down as one of the notabilia of our life, that these three, all of them alike died in quiet peace singing themselves into heaven, never staying their song, so long as memory and breath held out. We shall see them. But we have others we are longing for. Some of you may remember the departed wife, scarce cold within her grave. Many of you look back to dear little ones taken away in their infancy, carried off to their father's God. Many of you remember aged parents; those that taught you in the way of God; the mother from whose lips you learned the first verse of Scripture, and the father upon whose arms you were carried for the first time up to the house of God. They are gone; but the joyous reflection remains that we are going in the same direction, and that we shall meet them soon. Some of us can look back through generations and trace our pedigree through the saints, and we are longing for the time when the whole band of us, those who have gone in olden time, and those who remain may sing together that new song of praise to our common God. Beloved, we have high joys in prospect: we shall soon join the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Our companions now are but poor and despised, but we shall soon be brethren with

princes. Moses who was king in Jeshuron, and David who ruled over Israel, shall not be ashamed to call us brethren, for the Highest himself shall acknowledge us, and he that on the throne doth sit shall lead us unto living fountains of waters, and in his gracious fellowship shall wipe away all tears from off our faces. I think that the company of apostles, and prophets, and holy martyrs and confessors, who have gone before, will be a very sweet part of the bliss of the redeemed. And all this may make us pant to depart. But, O ye ungodly ones! ye who have never been converted, and who fear not God, this hope is not for you. You must go to your own place. And whither must you go? To your drunken companions damned before you? Must you go down to the pit with harlots and with the profane? Whither away, whither away, thou careless man, thou lover of sin? Whither art thou going when thou diest? Thine answer might well be this doleful ditty: "I am going to be the guest of devils; I am going to feast with fiends; I am going to abide with murderers, and whoremongers, and adulterers, and with such as God hath condemned. These must be my companions for ever." Methinks I see the wheat of God standing in the valley every year, about to be gathered into the garner of heaven in its own place, and yonder I see the tares, and what is the message for them? "Gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them." And who knows in what bundle you may be? You may be bound up in the same bundle with murderers and suicides. Yes, the men that you despise may be your companions in the bundle of the wicked. The drunkard and the swearer, whom some of you pretendedly good people look down upon with scorn, may be your bundle companions, your bed-fellows for ever when you make your bed in hell and abide in everlasting torment.

But last of all, Paul's grand reason for desiring to depart was to be with Christ. Again I say, simple though the words be - to be with Christ, have all heaven condensed in them. Like the sounding of the silver trumpet of jubilee rings this precious sentence, "to be with Christ." Like the harps of the glorified - like the singing of the redeemed, like the hallelujahs of paradise, does this ring upon mine ears, "To be with Christ." Lift up your voices, ye seraphim! Tune your hearts anew, ye seraphs! Shout for joy ye blood-washed, but your loudest strains cannot excel the thundering glory of this magnificent but brief sentence, "to be with Christ, which is far

better." This, my beloved - this shall well repay the tiresome pilgrimage of life. This reward shall be sufficient for all our contests with temptation, for all the shame we have endured in following Christ, in the midst of a wicked generation. This, this shall be all the heaven that our largest desires shall crave. This immensity of bliss shall stretch across eternity.

But O unbeliever, what hast thou to do with such a hope as this? Thou canst not desire to depart and to be with Christ, for what is Christ to thee? To-day thou despisest him. The man of sorrow thou esteemed not. Jesus of Nazareth thou dost not regard. He is preached to thee every Sabbath day, but thou despisest him. With many tears have I presented him to thee, but thou hast shut thine heart against him; he has knocked at thy door and there he stands shivering even now, but thou wilt not admit him. Beware ye that despise Jesus, for in another world ye shall see him after another fashion. Ye too shall be with him, but it shall be but for an instant. Summoned before his bar, dragged reluctantly to his dread tribunal, ye shall see him whom you despise; ye shall see him and not another. But oh, with what astonishment will ye behold him, and what amazement shall seize upon you! Ye shall see him, but no longer as the humble man! his eyes shall be as flames of fire. Out of his mouth shall go a two-edged sword. About him shall be wrapped "the rainbow wreath, and robes of storm," and he shall speak in louder tones than the noise of many waters, and in great thunderings shall he address thee, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." Oh, go to your houses; may God the Spirit draw you to your chambers, and may you there be led to fall upon your knees, confess your guilt, and humbly seek for pardon, through that precious blood which flows freely this day, and which will freely give pardon to you if with all your heart you seek it. May God's Spirit lead you so to seek that you may find, and may you and I, and all of us, in the day of our departure, see the land before us - the happy shore of heaven. May we know that as our vessel sails from earth it shall only take a hasty voyage "to be with Christ which is far better." God the Spirit visit you now, God the Son bless you, God the Father remember you, through Jesus. Amen.

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Paul's First Prayer

For behold, he prayeth - Acts 9:11

God has many methods of quenching persecution. He will not suffer his church to be injured by its enemies, or overwhelmed by its foes; and he is not short of means for turning aside the way of the wicked, or of turning it upside down. In two ways he usually accomplishes his end; sometimes by the confusion of the persecutor, and at others in a more blessed manner, by his conversion. Sometimes, he confuses and confounds his enemies; he makes the diviner mad; he lets the man who comes against him be utterly destroyed, suffers him to drive on to his own destruction, and then at last turns round in triumphant derision upon the man who hoped to have said aha! aha! To the church of God. But at other times, as in this case, he converts the persecutor. Thus, he transforms the foe into a friend; he makes the man who was a warrior against the gospel a soldier for it. Out of darkness he bringeth forth light; out of the eater he getteth honey; yea, out of stony hearts he raiseth up children unto Abraham. Such was the case with Saul. A more furious bigot it is impossible to conceive. He had been bespattered with the blood of Stephen, when they stoned him to death; so officious was he in his cruelty, that the men left their clothes in the charge of a young man named Saul. Living at Jerusalem, in the college of Gamaliel, he constantly came in contact with the disciples of the Man of Nazareth; he laughed at them, he reviled them as they passed along the street; he procured enactments against them, and put them to death; and now, as a crowning point, this were-wolf, having tasted blood, becomes exceeding mad, determines to go to Damascus, that he may glut himself with the gore of men and women; that he may bind the Christians, and bring them to Jerusalem, there to suffer what he considered to be a just punishment for their heresy, and departure from their ancient religion. But oh, how marvelous was the

power of God! Jesus stays this man in his mad career; just as with his lance in rest he was dashing against Christ. Christ met him, unhorsed him, threw him on the ground, and questioned him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He then graciously removed his rebellious heart - gave him a new heart and a right spirit - turned his aim and object - led him to Damascus - laid him prostrate for three days and nights - spoke to him - made mystic sounds go murmuring through his ears - set his whole soul on fire; and when at last he started up from that three days' trance, and began to pray, then it was that Jesus from heaven descended, came in a vision to Ananias, and said, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth."

First, our text was *an announcement*; "Behold, he prayeth." Secondly, it was *an argument*; "For, behold, he prayeth." Then, to conclude, we will try to make *an application* of our text to your hearts. Though application is the work of God alone, we will trust that he will be pleased to make that application while the word is preached this morning.

I. First, here was AN ANNOUNCEMENT; "Go to the house of Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth." Without any preface, let me say, that this was the announcement of a fact which was noticed in heaven; which was joyous to the angels; which was astonishing to Ananias, and which was a novelty to Saul himself.

It was the announcement of *a fact which was noticed in heaven*. Poor Saul had been led to cry for mercy, and the moment he began to pray, God began to hear. Do you not notice, in reading the chapter, what attention God paid to Saul? He knew the street where he lived; "Go to the street that is called *Straight*." He knew the house where he resided; "inquire at the *house of Judas*." He knew his name; it was *Saul*. He knew the place where he came from; "Inquire for Saul of *Tarsus*." And he knew that he had prayed. "Behold, *he prayeth*." Oh! It is a glorious fact, that prayers are noticed in heaven. The poor broken-hearted sinner, climbing up to his chamber, bends his knee, but can only utter his wailing in the language of sighs and tears. Lo! That groan has made all the harps of heaven thrill with music; that tear has been caught by God, and put into

the lachrymatory of heaven, to be perpetually preserved. The supplicant, whose fears prevent his words, will be well understood by the Most High. He may only shed one hasty tear; but "prayer is the falling of a tear." Tears are the diamonds of heaven; sighs are a part of the music of Jehovah's throne; for though prayers be

"The simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;"

so are they likewise the

"Sublimest strains that reach
The majesty on high."

Let me dilate on this thought a moment. Prayers are noticed in heaven. Oh! I know what is the case with many of you. You think, "If I turn to God, if I seek him, surely I am so inconsiderable a being, so guilty and vile, that it cannot be imagined he would take any notice of me." My friends, harbor no such heathenish ideas. Our God is no god who sits in one perpetual dream; nor doth he clothe himself in such thick darkness that he cannot see; he is not like Baal who heareth not. True, he may not regard battles; he cares not for the pomp and pageantry of kings; he listens not to the swell of martial music; he regards not the triumph and the pride of man; but wherever there is a heart big with sorrow, wherever there is an eye suffused with tears, wherever there is a lip quivering with agony, wherever there is a deep groan, or a penitential sigh, the ear of Jehovah is wide open; he marks it down in the registry of his memory; he puts our prayers, like rose leaves, between the pages of his book of remembrance, and when the volume is opened at last there shall be a precious fragrance springing up therefrom. Oh! Poor sinner, of the blackest and vilest character, thy prayers are heard, and even now God hath said of thee, "Behold, he prayeth." Where was it - in a barn? Where was it - in the closet? Was it at thy bedside this morning, or in this hall? Art thou now glancing thine eye to heaven? Speak, poor heart; did I hear thy lips just now mutter out, "God have mercy upon me, a sinner?" I tell thee, sinner, there is one thing which doth outstrip the telegraph. You know we can now send a message and receive an answer in a few

moments; but I read of something in the Bible more swift than the electric fluid. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are speaking I will hear." So, then, poor sinner, thou art noticed; yea, thou art heard by him that sitteth on the throne.

Again; this was the announcement of *a fact joyous to heaven*. Our text is prefaced with "Behold," for doubtless, our Saviour himself regarded it with joy. Once only do we read of a smile resting upon the countenance of Jesus, when, lifting up his eye to heaven, he exclaimed, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." The shepherd of our souls rejoices in the vision of his sheep securely folded, he triumphs in spirit when he brings a wanderer home. I conceive that when he spoke these words to Ananias, one of the smiles of Paradise must have shone from his eyes. "Behold," I have won the heart of my enemy, I have saved my persecutor, even now he is bending the knee at my footstool, "behold, he prayeth." Jesus himself led the song, rejoicing over the new convert with singing. Jesus Christ was glad, and rejoiced more over that lost sheep than over ninety and nine that went not astray. And angels rejoiced too. Why, when one of God's elect is born, angels stand around his cradle. He grows up, and runs into sin: angels follow him, tracking him all his way; they gaze with sorrow upon his many wanderings; the fair Peri drops a tear whene'er that loved one sins. Presently the man is brought under the sound of the gospel. The angel says, "Behold, he begins to hear." He waits a little while, the word sinks into his heart, a tear runs down his cheek, and at last he cries from his inmost soul, "God have mercy upon me!" See! The angel claps his wings, up he flies to heaven, and says, "Brethren angels, list to me, 'Behold, he prayeth.'" Then they set heaven's bells ringing; they have a jubilee in glory; again they shout with gladsome voices, for verily I tell you, "there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." They watch us till we pray, and when we pray, they say, "Behold, he prayeth."

Moreover, my dear friends, there may be other spirits in heaven that rejoice, besides the angels. Those persons are our friends who have gone before us. I have not many relations in heaven, but I have one whom I

dearly love, who, I doubt not, often prayed for me, for she nursed me when I was a child and brought me up during part of my infancy, and now she sits before the throne in glory - suddenly snatched away. I fancy she looked upon her darling grandson, and as she saw him in the ways of sin, and vice, and folly, she could not look with sorrow, for there are no tears in the eyes of glorified ones; she could not look with regret, because they cannot know such a feeling before the throne of God; but ah! That moment when, by sovereign grace, I was constrained to pray, when all alone I bent my knee and wrestled, methinks I see her as she said, "Behold, he prayeth; behold, he prayeth." Oh! I can picture her countenance. She seemed to have two heavens for a moment, a double bliss, a heaven in me as well as in herself - when she could say, "Behold, he prayeth." Ah! young man, there is your mother walking the golden streets. She is looking down upon you this hour. She nursed you; on her breast you lay when but a child, and she consecrated you to Jesus Christ. From heaven, she has been watching you with that intense anxiety which is compatible with happiness; this morning she is looking upon you. What sayest thou, young man? Does Christ by his Spirit say in thine heart, "Come unto me?" Dost thou drop the tear of repentance? Methinks I see thy mother as she cries, "Behold, he prayeth." Once more she bends before the throne of God and says, "I thank thee, O thou ever gracious One, that he who was my child on earth, has now become *thy* child in light."

But, if there is one in heaven who has more joy than another over the conversion of a sinner, it is a minister, one of God's true ministers. O, my hearers, ye little think how God's true ministers do love your souls. Perhaps ye think it is easy work to stand here and preach to you. God knows, if that were all, it were easy work; but when we think that when we speak to you, your salvation or damnation, in some measure, depends upon what we say - when we reflect that if we are unfaithful watchmen, your blood will God require at our hands - O, good God! When I reflect that I have preached to thousands in my lifetime, many thousands and have perhaps said many things I ought not to have said, it startles me, it makes me shake and tremble. Luther said he could face his enemies, but could not go up his pulpit stairs without his knees knocking together. Preaching is not child's play; it is not a thing to be done without labor and

anxiety; it is solemn work; it is awful work, if you view it in its relation to eternity. Ah! How God's minister prays for you! If you might have listened under the eaves of his chamber window, you would have heard him groaning every Sunday night over his sermons because he had not spoken with more effect; you would have heard him pleading with God, "Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Ah, when he observes you from his rest in heaven - when he sees you praying, how will he clap his hands and say, "Behold the child thou hast given me! Behold, he prays." I am sure when we see one brought to know the Lord, we feel very much like one who has saved a fellow-creature from being drowned. There is a poor man in the flood; he is going down, he is sinking, he must be drowned; but I spring in, grasp him firmly, lift him on the shore, and lay him on the ground; the physician comes; he looks at him, he puts his hand upon him, and says, "I am afraid he is dead." We apply all the means in our power, we do what we can to restore life. I feel that I have been that man's deliverer, and oh, how I stoop down and put my ear beside his mouth! At last I say, "He breathes! He breathes!" What pleasure there is in that thought! He breathes; there is life still. So when we find a man praying, we shout - he breathes; he is not dead, he is alive; for while a man prays he is not dead in trespasses and sins, but is brought to life, is quickened by the power of the Spirit. "Behold, he prayeth." This was joyful news in heaven, as well as being noticed by God.

Then, in the next place, this was *an event most astonishing to men*. Ananias lifted up both his hands in amazement. "O my Lord, I should have thought anybody would pray but that man! Is it possible?" I do not know how it is with other ministers, but sometimes I look upon such-and-such individuals in the congregation, and I say, "Well, they are very hopeful; I think I shall have them. I trust there is a work going on, and hope soon to hear them tell what the Lord has done for their souls." Soon, perhaps, I see nothing of them, and miss them altogether; but instead thereof, my good Master sends me one of whom I had no hope - an outcast, a drunkard, a reprobate, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Then I lift up my hands in astonishment, thinking "I should have thought of anybody rather than you." I remember a circumstance which occurred a little while ago. There was a poor man about sixty years old; he had

been a rough sailor, one of the worst men in the village; it was his custom to drink, and he seemed to be delighted when he was cursing and swearing. He came into the chapel, however, one Sabbath day, when one nearly related to me was preaching from the text concerning Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. And the poor man thought, "What! did Jesus Christ ever weep over such a wretch as I am?" He thought he was too bad for Christ to care for him. At last he came to the minister, and said, "Sir, sixty years have I been sailing under the standard of the devil; it is time I should have a new owner; I want to scuttle the old ship and sink her altogether! then I shall have a new one, and I shall sail under the colors of Prince Immanuel." Ever since that moment that man has been a praying character, walking before God in all sincerity. Yet, he was the very last man you would have thought of. Somehow God does choose the last men; he does not care for the diamond, but he picks up the pebble-stones, for he is able, out of "stones, to raise up children unto Abraham." God is more wise than the chemist: he not only refines gold, but he transmutes base metal into precious jewels; he takes the filthiest and the vilest, and fashions them into glorious beings, makes them saints, whereas they have been sinners, and sanctifies them, whereas they have been unholy.

The conversion of Saul was a strange thing; but, beloved, was it stranger than that you and I should have been Christians? Let me ask you if anybody had told you, a few years ago, that you would belong to a church and be numbered with the children of God what would you have said? "Stuff and nonsense! I am not one of your canting Methodists; I am not going to have any religion; I love to think and do as I like." Did not you and I say so? And how on earth did we get here? When we look at the change that has passed over us, it appears like a dream. God has left many in our families who were better than we were, and why has he chosen us? Oh! Is it not strange? Might we not lift up our hands in astonishment, as Ananias did, and say, "Behold, behold, behold: it is a miracle on earth, a wonder in heaven?"

The last thing I have to say here, is this - *this fact was a novelty to Saul himself*. "Behold he prayeth." What is there novel in that? Saul used to go up to the temple twice a day, at the hour of prayer. If you could have accompanied him, you would have heard him speak beautifully, in words

like these: "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men are; I am not an extortioner, nor a publican; I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all I possess;" and so on. Oh! You might have found him pouring out a fine oration before the throne of God. And yet it saith, "Behold, he prayeth." What! Had he never prayed before? No, never. All he had ever done before went for nothing; it was not prayer. I have heard of an old gentleman, who was taught when a child to pray, "Pray God bless my father and mother," and he kept on praying the same thing for seventy years, when his parents were both dead. After that it pleased God, in his infinite mercy, to touch his heart, and he was led to see that notwithstanding his constancy to his forms, he had not been praying at all; he often said his prayers, but never prayed. So it was with Saul. He had pronounced his magniloquent orations, but they were all good-for-nothing. He had prayed his long prayers for a pretense; it had all been a failure. Now comes a true petition, and it is said, "Behold, he prayeth." Do you see that man trying to obtain a hearing from his Maker? How he stands! He speaks Latin and blank verse before the Almighty's throne; but God sits in calm indifference, paying no attention. Then the man tries a different style; procures a book, and bending his knee again, prays in a delightful form the best old prayer that could ever be put together; but the Most High disregards his empty formalities. At last the poor creature throws the book away, forgets his blank verse, and says, "O Lord, hear, for Christ's sake." "Hear him," says God, "I have heard him." There is the mercy thou hast sought. One hearty prayer is better than ten thousand forms. One prayer coming from the soul is better than a myriad cold readings. As for prayers that spring from the mouth and head only, God abhors them; he loves those that come deep from the heart. Perhaps I should be impudent if I were to say that there are hundreds here this morning who never prayed once in their lives. There are some of you who never did. There is one young man over there, who told his parents when he left them, that he should always go through his form of prayer every morning and night. But he is ashamed, and he has left it off. Well, young man, what will you do when you come to die? Will you have "the watchword at the gates of death?" Will you "enter heaven by prayer?" No, you will not; you will be driven from his presence, and be cast away.

II. Secondly, we have here AN ARGUMENT. "*For*, behold he prayeth." It

was an argument, first of all, *for Ananias' safety*. Poor Ananias was afraid to go to Saul; he thought it was very much like stepping into a lion's den. "If I go to his house," he thought, "the moment he sees me, he will take me to Jerusalem at once, for I am one of Christ's disciples; I dare not go." God says, "Behold, he prayeth." "Well," says Ananias, "that is enough for me. If he is a praying man, he will not hurt me; if he is a man of real devotion, I am safe." Be sure you may always trust a praying man. I do not know how it is, but even ungodly men always pay a reverence to a sincere Christian. A master likes to have a praying servant after all; if he does not regard religion himself, he likes to have a pious servant, and he will trust him rather than any other. True, there are some of your professedly praying people that have not a bit of prayer in them. But whenever you find a really praying man, trust him with untold gold; for if he really prays, you need not be afraid of him. He who communes with God in secret, may be trusted in public. I always feel safe with a man who is a visitor at the mercy-seat. I have heard an anecdote of two gentlemen traveling together, somewhere in Switzerland. Presently they came into the midst of the forests; and you know the gloomy tales the people tell about the inns there, how dangerous it is to lodge in them. One of them, an infidel, said to the other, who was a Christian, "I don't like stopping here at all; it is very dangerous indeed." "Well," said the other, "let us try." So they went into a house; but it looked so suspicious that neither of them liked it; and they thought they would prefer being at home in England. Presently the landlord said, "Gentlemen, I always read and pray with my family before going to bed; will you allow me to do so to-night?" "Yes," they said, "with the greatest pleasure." When they went up-stairs, the infidel said, "I am not at all afraid now." "Why?" said the Christian. "Because our host has prayed." "Oh!" said the other, "then it seems, after all, you think something of religion; because a man prays, you can go to sleep in his house." And it was marvelous how both of them did sleep. Sweet dreams they had, for they felt that where the house had been roofed by prayer, and walled with devotion, there could not be found a man living that would commit an injury to them. This, then, was an argument to Ananias, that he might go with safety to Saul's house.

But more than this. Here was *an argument for Paul's sincerity*. Secret prayer is one of the best tests of sincere religion. If Jesus had said to

Ananias, "Behold, he preacheth," Ananias would have said, "*that* he may do, and yet be a deceiver." If he had said, "He has gone to a meeting of the church," Ananias would have said, "He may enter there as a wolf in sheep's clothing." But when he said, "Behold, he prays," that was argument enough. A young person comes and tells me about what he has felt and what he has been doing. At last I say, "kneel down and pray." "I would much rather not." "Never mind, you shall." Down he falls on his knees, he has hardly a word to say; he begins groaning and crying, and there he stays on his knees till at last he stammers out, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner; I am the greatest of sinners; have mercy upon me!" Then I am a little more satisfied, and I say, "I did not mind all your talk, I wanted your prayers." But oh! If I could trace him home; if I could see him go and pray alone, then I should feel sure; for he who prays in private is a real Christian. The mere reading of a book of daily devotion will not prove you a child of God; if you pray in private, then you have a sincere religion; a little religion, if sincere, is better than mountains of pretense. Home piety is the best piety. Praying will make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off praying. Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion. A man may be sincere, but sincerely wrong. Paul was sincerely right. "Behold, he prayeth," was the best argument that his religion was right. If any one should ask me for an epitome of the Christian religion, I should say it is in that one word - "prayer." If I should be asked, "What will take in the whole Christian experience?" I should answer, "prayer." A man must have been convinced of sin before he could pray; he must have had some hope that there was mercy for him before he could pray. In fact, all the Christian virtues are locked up in that word, *prayer*. Do but tell me you are a man of prayer, and I will reply at once, "Sir, I have no doubt of the reality, as well as the sincerity, of your religion."

But one more thought, and I will leave this subject. *It was a proof of this man's election*, for you read directly afterwards, "Behold, he is a chosen vessel." I often find people troubling themselves about the doctrine of election. Every now and then I get a letter from somebody or other taking me to task for preaching election. All the answer I can give is, "There it is in the Bible; go and ask my Master why he put it there. I cannot help it. I am only a serving man, and I tell you the message from above. If I were a

footman, I should not alter my master's message at the door. I happen to be an ambassador of heaven, and I dare not alter the message I have received. If it is wrong, send up to head-quarters. There it is, and I cannot alter it." This much let me say in explanation. Some say, "How can I discover whether I am God's elect? I am afraid I am not God's elect." Do you pray? If it can be said, "Behold, he prayeth," it can also be said, "Behold, he is a chosen vessel." Have you faith? If so, you are elect. Those are the marks of election. If you have none of these, you have no grounds for concluding that you belong to the peculiar people of God. Have you a desire to believe? Have you a wish to love Christ? Have you the millionth part of a desire to come to Christ? And is it a practical desire? Does it lead you to offer earnest, tearful supplication? If so, never be afraid of non-election; for whoever prays with sincerity, is ordained of God before the foundation of the world, that he should be holy and without blame before Christ in love.

III. Now for the APPLICATION. A word or two with you, my dear friends, before I send you away this morning. I regret that I cannot better enter into the subject; but my glorious Master requires of each of us according to what we have, not according to what we have not. I am deeply conscious that I fail in urging home the truth so solemnly as I ought; Nevertheless, "my work is with God and my judgement with my God," and the last day shall reveal that my error lay in judgment, but not in sincere affection for souls.

First, allow me to address the children of God. Do you not see, my dear brethren, that the best mark of our being sons of God is to be found in our devotion? "Behold, he prayeth." Well, then, does it not follow, as a natural consequence, that the more we are found in prayer the brighter will our evidences be? Perhaps you have lost your evidence this morning; you do not know whether you are a child of God or not; I will tell you where you lost your confidence - you lost it in your closet. I speak what I have felt. I have often gone back from God - never so as to fall finally, I know, but I have often lost that sweet savor of his love which I once enjoyed. I have had to cry,

"Those peaceful hours I once enjoyed,

How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill."

I have gone up to God's house to preach, without either fire or energy; I have read the Bible, and there has been no light upon it; I have tried to have communion with God, but all has been a failure. Shall I tell where that commenced! It commenced in my closet. I had ceased, in a measure, to pray. Here I stand, and do confess my faults; I do acknowledge that whenever I depart from God it is there it doth begin. O Christians, would you be happy? Be much in prayer. Would ye be victorious? Be much in prayer.

"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight,
Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright."

Mrs. Berry used to say, "I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds." Mr. Jay said, "If the twelve apostles were living near you, and you had access to them, if this intercourse drew you from the closet, they would prove a real injury to your souls." Prayer is the ship which bringeth home the richest freight. It is the soil which yields the most abundant harvest. Brother, when you rise in the morning your business so presses, that with a hurried word or two, down you go into the world, and at night, jaded and tired, you give God the fag end of the day. The consequence is, that you have no communion with him. The reason we have not more true religion now, is because we have not more prayer. Sirs, I have no opinion of the churches of the present day that do not pray. I go from chapel to chapel in this metropolis and I see pretty good congregations; but I go to their prayer-meetings on a week evening, and I see a dozen persons. Can God bless us, can he pour out his Spirit upon us, while such things as these exist? He could, but it would not be according to the order of his dispensations, for he says, "When Zion travails she brings forth children." Go to your churches and chapels with this thought, that you want more prayer. Many of you have no business here this morning. You ought to be in your own places of worship. I do not want to steal away the people from other chapels; there are enough to hear me without them. But though you have sinned this morning, hear

while you are here, as much to your profit as possible. Go home and say to your minister, "Sir, we must have more prayer." Urge the people to more prayer. Have a prayer-meeting, even if you have it all to yourself; and if you are asked how many were present, you can say, "Four." "Four! How so?" "Why, there was myself, and God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and we have had a rich and real communion together." We must have an outpouring of real devotion, or else what is to become of many of our churches? O! May God awaken us all, and stir us up to pray, for when we pray we shall be victorious. I should like to take you this morning, as Samson did the foxes, tie the firebrands of prayer to you, and send you in among the shocks of corn till you burn the whole up. I should like to make a conflagration by my words, and to set all the churches on fire, till the whole has smoked like a sacrifice to God's throne. If you pray, you have a proof that you are a Christian; the less you pray, the less reason have you to believe your Christianity; and if you have neglected to pray altogether, then you have ceased to breathe, and you may be afraid that you never did breathe at all.

And now, my last word is to the ungodly. O, sirs! I could fain wish myself anywhere but here; for if it be solemn work to address the godly, how much more when I come to deal with you. We fear lest, on the one hand, we should so speak to you as to make you trust in your own strength; while, on the other hand, we tremble lest we should lull you into the sleep of sloth and security. I believe most of us feel some difficulty as to the most fit manner to preach to you - not that we doubt but that the gospel is to be preached - but our desire is so to do it, that we may win your souls. I feel like a watchman, who, while guarding a city, is oppressed with sleep; how earnestly does he strive to arouse himself, while infirmity would overcome him. The remembrance of his responsibility bestirs him. His is no lack of *will*, but of power; and so I hope all the watchmen of the Lord are anxious to be faithful, while, at the same time, they know their imperfection. Truly, the minister of Christ will feel like the old keeper of Eddystone lighthouse; life was failing fast, but, summoning all his strength, he crept round once more to trim the lights before he died. O may the Holy Spirit enable us to keep the beacon-fire blazing, to warn you of the rocks, shoals, and quicksands, which surround you, and may we ever guide you to Jesus, and not to free-will or creature merit. If my

friends knew how anxiously I have sought divine direction in the important matter of preaching to sinners, they would not feel as some of them do, when they fancy I address them wrongly. I want to do as God bids me, and if he tells me to speak to the dry bones and they shall live, I must do it, even if it does not please others; otherwise I should be condemned in my own conscience, and condemned of God. Now, with all the solemnity that man can summon, let me say that a prayerless soul is a Christless soul. As the Lord liveth, you who never prayed are without God, without hope, and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel. You who never know what a groan is, or a falling tear, are destitute of vital godliness. Let me ask you, sirs, whether you have ever thought in what an awful state you are? You are far from God, and therefore God is angry with you; for "God is angry with the wicked every day." O, sinner! Lift thine eyes and behold the frowning countenance of God, for he is angry with you. And I beseech you, as you love yourselves, just for one moment contemplate what will become of you, if living as you are, ye should at last die without prayer. Don't think that one prayer on your deathbed will save you. Deathbed prayer is a deathbed farce generally, and passes for nothing; it is a coin that will not ring in heaven, but is stamped by hypocrisy, and made of base metal. Take heed sirs. Let me ask you, if you have never prayed, what will you do? It were a good thing for you, if death were an eternal sleep; but it is not. If you find yourself in hell, oh, the racks and pains! But I will not harrow up your feelings by attempting to describe them. May God grant you never may feel the torments of the lost. Only conceive that poor wretch in the flames who is saying, "O for one drop of water, to cool my parched tongue!" See how his tongue hangs from between his blistered lips! How it excoriates and burns the roof of his mouth, as if it were a firebrand. Behold him crying for a drop of water. I will not picture the scene. Suffice it for me to close up by saying, that the hell of hells will be to thee, poor sinner, the thought that it is to be *forever*. Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written "forever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments, they shall say "forever!" When they howl, echo cries "forever!"

"Forever' is written on their racks,
'Forever' on their chains;
'Forever' burneth in the fire,

'Forever' ever reigns."

Doleful thought! "If I could but get out, then I should be happy. If there were a hope of deliverance, then I might be peaceful; but I am here forever!" Sirs, if ye would escape eternal torments, if ye would be found amongst the numbers of the blessed, the road to heaven can only be found by prayer - by prayer to Jesus, by prayer for the Spirit, by supplication at his mercy seat. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." Let us go unto him and say, "He shall heal our backslidings, he shall love us freely and forgive us graciously, for his Son's name's sake." Oh! If I may but win one soul to-day, I will go home contented. If I may but gain twenty, then I will rejoice. The more I have, the more crowns I shall wear. Wear! No, I will take them all at once, and cast them at Jesus' feet, and say, "Not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory, forever."

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings god designs to give;
Long as they live, should Christians pray,
For only while they pray, they live.

"And wilt thou still in silence lie,
When Christ stands waiting for thy prayer?
My soul, thou hast a friend on high,
Arise, and try thine interest there.

"'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak,
Though thought be broken, language lame;
Pray, if thou canst, or canst not speak,
And pray with faith in Jesus' name."

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Paul's Sermon Before Felix

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. - Acts 24:25

The power of the gospel appears in marvelous grandeur when we see its hold upon hearts devoted to it, when subjected to trouble, persecution, and sorrow. How mighty must that gospel be, which, when it gained an entrance into the heart of Paul, could never be driven out of it! For it he suffered the loss of all things, and as for them, he counted them but dung, that he might win Christ. To spread the truth, he encountered hardships, shipwrecks, perils on the land, and perils by sea; but none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear unto him, that he might win Christ and be found in him. Persecution followed persecution; of the Jews was he beaten with rods; he was dragged from one tribunal to another; scarce in any city did he find anything but bonds and imprisonment awaiting him. Attacked in his own country - he is accused at Jerusalem, and arraigned at Cesarea; he is taken from one tribunal to another to be tried for his life. But mark how he always maintains the prominent passion of his soul. Put him where you may, he seems to be like John Bunyan, who says, "If you let me out of prison to-day, I will preach the gospel again to-morrow, by the grace of God." Nay, more than that, he preached it in prison, before his judges he proclaimed it. Standing up before the Sanhedrim, he cries, "As touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question." When brought to stand before Agrippa, he tells out his conversion, and so sweetly speaks of the grace of God, that the king himself cries, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and here in our text when he stands before the Roman Procurator, to be tried for life or death, instead of entering into a defence of himself, he reasons "of righteousness, continence, and judgment to come," until his judge trembles, and he that sits upon the throne takes the prisoner's place, while the prisoner judges him, in anticipation of that time when the saints shall judge the angels, as assessors with Christ Jesus. Why, once let a man believe the gospel, and determine to spread it, and it makes him a

grand man. If he be a man destitute of power, intellect, and talent, it makes him grandly earnest in his arduous desire to serve Christ, in the little measure in which he can do it; but if he be a gifted man, it sets his whole soul on fire, brings out all his powers, develops everything that lies hidden, digs up every talent that had been buried in its napkin, and spreads out all the gold and silver of man's intellectual wealth, displaying it all to the honor of that Christ who has bought it all with his blood.

We might stay a little while and dilate on this thought, and show you how, in all ages, this has been the truth, that the power of the gospel has been eminently proved in its influence over men's hearts, proving the truth of that utterance of Paul, when he said, that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ their Lord. But instead of so doing, I invite you to contemplate the text more closely. We have before us a picture containing three characters: Felix and Drusilla, sitting side by side upon the judgment-seat; Paul, the prisoner, brought in bound in chains, to explain to Drusilla and Felix the doctrines of the Christian religion, in order that he might either be acquitted or condemned to die. You have a judge extremely willing to put the prisoner to death, because he desired to please the Jews; you have, on the other hand, a prisoner, unabashed, who comes before the judge, and without any debate, begins to unfold the gospel, selecting a certain part of it, described in our text as reasoning concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The Judge trembles, dismisses the prisoner in haste; and promises to attend to him at a convenient season.

Note, first then, *the appropriate sermon*; secondly, *the affected audience* - for the audience was certainly moved - "Felix trembled!" Note, then, thirdly, the *lamentable disappointment*. Instead of attending to the message, "Go thy way" was all that Paul had.

I. First, then, we have an APPROPRIATE SERMON. Just hear for a moment or two the history of Felix. Felix was originally a slave; he was freed by Claudius, and became one of the infamous favorites of the emperor. Of course in that capacity he pandered to his master's vices, and was at all times prepared to indulge the Emperor in every lustful wish of

his abominable heart. Through this he became promoted, and ran through the stages of Roman preferment, until he obtained the Governorship of Judea. Whilst he was Governor there, he committed every act of extortion which it was possible for him to commit, and went so far at last, that the Emperor Nero was obliged to recall him, and he would have been severely punished for his crimes, had it not been for the influence of his brother Pallas, another freedman, with the Emperor, through whom he obtained a release, after a sharp rebuke. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says, "He exercised, in Judea, the imperial functions with a mercenary soul." You may easily see, then, how appropriate was the discourse, when the apostle Paul reasoned concerning righteousness. Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse. By the side of Felix sat Drusilla; in the verse preceding our text she is called his wife. It is said she was a Jewess. This Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, the great - a woman noted in that age for her superlative charms, and for her unbridled voluptuousness. She had been once affianced to Antioch who, upon the death of Herod, refused to marry her. She was afterward married to Azizus, the king of the Amesenians, who, although a heathen, was so fond of her, that he submitted to the most rigorous rites of the Jewish religion in order to obtain her in marriage. His love was but ill-requited, for in a little time she deserted him at the instigation of Felix, and was, at the time of Paul's address, living as the wife of the lascivious Felix. We may easily understand then, why the apostle Paul, fixing his stern eye on Drusilla, reasoned concerning continence, and publicly rebuked both Felix and Drusilla for the shameless lust in which they were publicly living. And then you may imagine since there was now a court sitting, and Felix himself was the judge, and Paul the prisoner, how strikingly appropriate was the last theme - "judgment to come."

I think, my brethren, it would not be very hard for us to imagine how well the apostle handled this subject. I can conceive that Felix expected to have a grand disquisition upon some recondite themes of the gospel. Possibly he expected that the apostle Paul would reason concerning the resurrection of the dead. He thought perhaps that predestination, election, and free will would be the topics of the apostle's discourse. "Surely," thought he, "he will tell me those deep and hidden matters in

which the gospel of Jesus differs from Judaism." Not so. In another place, on Mar's Hill, the apostle would speak of resurrection; in another place he could speak of election, and declare that God was the potter, and man was but the clay. This was not the place for that; and this was not the time for such subjects; this was the time for preaching the plain precepts of the gospel, and for dealing sternly with a wicked man who sat in eminent power. Conceive then, the pointed manner of his opening discourse - How he would address Felix concerning righteousness. I can imagine how he would bring before the mind of Felix, the widow who had been defrauded of inheritance, the fatherless children, who, cast from affluence, were led to beg their bread. I can suppose how he brought before the mind of that base man the many bribes that he had taken, when he sat upon his judgment-seat. He would recall to him the false decisions that he had given; he would remind him how the Jews, as a nation had been oppressed - how by taxation, they had been ground to the earth; he would bring before him one scene after another, where avarice had overridden equity, boldly and sternly depicting the exact character of the man; and then, at the end, declaring that such men could have no inheritance in the kingdom of God - bidding him repent of this his wickedness, that his sins might be forgiven him. Then gently and delicately turning to the other subject, I can imagine how he would fix his eyes upon Drusilla, and remind her that she had lost everything for which a woman ought to live, and solemnly bring the most powerful motives to bear upon her lascivious heart; and then turning to Felix, would remind him that adulterers, fornicators, and unclean persons, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God - reminding him how the vices of a ruler would tend to pollute a nation, and how the iniquities of the nation of the Jews must, in a great measure, be laid to his charge. I can conceive how, for a moment, Felix would bite his lips. Paul gave him no time for anger and passion; for in a moment, in a fury of impassioned eloquence, he introduced the "judgment to come." He made Felix think he saw the great white throne, the books opened, and himself arraigned before his judge: he made him hear the voices of the trumpet - the "Come ye blessed" - the "Depart ye cursed." He petrified him, nailed him to his seat, opened his ears, and made them listen, while with stern and impassioned earnestness, though his hands were bound with chains, he used the liberty of the gospel in upbraiding him. Well do I conceive that then Felix

began to tremble. He that had been base, and mean, and perfidious, trembled like a coward slave, as he really was; and though sitting on throne, he pictured himself already damned. What he next would have done we can not tell, if the devil had not then suggested to him that it was time to rise; for in hot haste he and Drusilla left the throne. "Go thy way for this time; when I have convenient season, I will call for thee."

Hear me, then, brethren! What the apostle Paul did, every minister ought to do. He selected a topic appropriate to his audience. It is ours ever to do the same. But are there not to be found many ministers who, if they addressed kings and princes, would pour out before them the vilest adulation and flattery that ever came from mortal lips? Are there not many who, when they are aware the great and mighty ones are listening to them, trim their doctrine, cut the edges of their speech, and endeavor in some way or other to make themselves pleasing to their audience? Can there not be found many ministers who, if addressing an Antinomian audience, would confine themselves strictly to predestination and reprobation? and ministers who, if they addressed an audience of philosophers, would just talk about morality but never mention such words as the covenant of grace and salvation by blood? Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel that we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment, or cause us happiness when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might. I hope I may never preach *before* a congregation - I desire always to preach to you; nor do I wish to exhibit powers of eloquence, nor would I even pretend to exhibit any depth of learning. I would simply say, "Hear me, my fellow men, for God doth send me unto you. There are some things that concern you; I will tell you of them. You are dying; many of you when you die must perish for ever; it is not for me to be amusing you with some deep things that may instruct your intellect but do not enter your hearts; it is for me to fit the arrow to the string and send it home - to unsheathe the sword - be the scabbard never so glittering, to

cast it aside, and let the majesty of naked truth smite at your hearts; for in the day of judgment aught beside personal home-speaking will be consumed as wood, and hay, and stubble; but these shall abide, like the gold and silver and precious stones that can not be consumed.

But some men will say, "Sir, ministers ought not to be personal." Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are. I admire John Knox for going, Bible in hand, to Queen Mary, and sternly upbraiding her. I admit I do not exactly love the way in which he did it; but the thing itself I love. The woman had been a sinner, and he told her so flat to her face. But now we poor graven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; we are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove. There are none of you, however connected with me by ties of profession or in any other respect, that I would blush to speak personally to, as to the things of the kingdom of God; and it is only by being bold, courageous, and sending home the truth, that we shall at last be free from the blood of our hearers. May God grant us the power of Paul, that we may reason on appropriate subjects, and not select generalities, when we ought to be pushing home truths to the consciences of our hearers. After all, the apostle Paul needs no eulogy. The best eulogy that could be passed on the apostle was the fact that "Felix trembled." And that brings us to the second part of our subject.

II. "FELIX TREMBLED." Yes, the poor prisoner, having nought wherewith to assist him in the delivery of the truth but having everything to his disadvantage - the chain, the prison dress, the character of one that had stirred up sedition in a nation - this poor prisoner, with believing hand, laid hold on the sword of truth, and with this he did divide in sunder the joints and marrow. He did beard the lion in his den. Even now I see him look the governor sternly in the face, attack him in his heart, drive him from his excuses, push the word home at the point of the bayonet of truth, drive him from every refuge of lies, and make him tremble! O marvellous power of a preached gospel! O mighty truth that God is with the ministry, when the kings of the earth that take counsel together are yet dismayed by it. Who is he that doth not see here

something more than human eloquence, when prisoner becomes the judge and the prince upon the throne becomes the criminal? "Felix trembled." Have I not some here who have experienced the same feelings as Felix? Some plain-spoken minister has told you something that was rather too plain for you. At first you were angry; on second thoughts, and as the man moved on in his discourse, you became chagrined that you gave him the opportunity of thus exposing you, as you imagined. A better thought struck you and you saw at once that the man could have no intention personally to insult you; and then your feelings changed. Thunderbolt after thunderbolt fell from his lips; he seemed a very Jupiter Tonans sitting upon his throne, casting lightnings from his lips. Ye began to tremble. "Verily here is a man that has told me all things that ever I did; is not this man sent from Christ?" Ah! and thus you have borne your witness to the truth of the gospel. Though you have not felt its power to your salvation, yet you have been an unwilling witness that the gospel has been true; for you have felt its power when it made your knees knock together, and your eyes run down with tears.

But what is it that makes men tremble under the sound of the Gospel? Some say it is their conscience. Yes, and doubtless it is in some sense. The poet said, "Conscience makes cowards of us all;" and certainly, when the minister's exposition is faithful and pertinent to our own case, conscience, if it be not thoroughly seared and dead, will make the blush mantle on our cheeks. But I take it that conscience of itself is so thoroughly corrupt, together with all the other powers of manhood, that it would never even make a man go so far as trembling, if there were not something at work upon the conscience, besides being left to its own natural force. My brethren, I believe that what some people call natural conviction is, after all, the work of the Spirit. Some very profound divines are so fond of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit always works efficaciously, that they think that the Spirit never can work a transitory emotion in a man's soul; they impute such things to conscience. And if they see a man like Felix trembling, they say 'tis all natural conscience! Now, do they not see that they are in this touching on another doctrine equally dear to them - the doctrine of total depravity? - for if men be totally depraved by nature, then as trembling is a good thing, they are not capable even of that without some influence of the Holy Spirit. The fact is, my hearers,

the Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men's hearts he works with restraining Grace only, and the restraining Grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit. Now, there was in Felix some little portion of this restraining Grace; and when the Apostle laid the Gospel open to him, this restraining Grace quickened the conscience, and compelled Felix to tremble. Mark you, this Grace man may resist and does resist; for albeit that the Holy Spirit is Omnipotent and never can be resisted when he works Omnipotently, yet as a strong man may sometimes not put out all his strength, but work with his finger, for instance, so that he may permit even a gnat or an ant to overcome him, even so the Holy Spirit sometimes works but temporarily and but for good and excellent purposes, which he always accomplishes; but he allows men to quench and resist his influences, so that salvation is not so much as approached thereby. God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany sure salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But he does not work Omnipotently to save, except in the persons of his own elect, whom he assuredly bringeth to himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit quickening his conscience and making him tremble.

But what shall be said of some of you who never tremble? Thou hast come hither this morning with thy brazen face, and with thine impudent and arrogant heart. Thou hast been mouthing high heaven with thy blasphemies; and now thou standest all unmoved and unabashed in the house of God. Though a Baxter should rise from the dead, and with moving sighs and tears should preach the Gospel, you would laugh and scoff; though Boanerges with a tongue of thunder should come and preach to you, you would turn up your lip and find some fault with his oratory, and his words would never reach your heart. O ungodly generation! how hath God given you up, and how hath hell bewitched you? O race of evil doers! children that are corrupters! how are ye seared. My soul reads with prophetic glance the handwriting on the wall! You are condemned already; you are past hope, "trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead." For in the fact that ye tremble not, there is proof not only of

your death but of your positive corruption. Ye shall die as ye are, without hope, without trust or refuge; for he that hath lost feeling hath lost hope; he that is past conscience, God the Holy Spirit hath given up, and he will no more strive with him for ever.

III. And now, passing rapidly over this point of the trembling audience, we come in the next place to the LAMENTABLE DISAPPOINTMENT which Paul experienced, when he saw Felix rise in haste, and dismiss him from his presence. "It is wonderful," said a good man once to a minister, "it is wonderful to see a whole congregation moved to tears by the preaching of the Word." "Yes," said that minister, "it is wonderful; but I know a wonder ten times greater than that: the wonder is, that those people should so soon wipe away their tears and forget what they have heard. 'Tis wonderful that Felix trembled before Paul; 'tis more wonderful that Felix should say, "Go thy way." "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange," that when the word touches the conscience, even then sin hath such power over men, that the truth can be repulsed and driven out of the heart. Felix, unhappy Felix! why is it that thou dost rise from thy judgment-seat? Is it that thou hast much business to do? Stop, Felix; let Paul speak to thee a minute longer. Thou hast business: but hast thou no business for thy soul? Stop, unhappy man! Art thou about again to be extortionate, again to make thy personal riches greater! Oh! stop: canst thou not spare another minute for thy poor soul? It is to live for ever: hast thou naught laid up for it - no hope in heaven, no blood of Christ, no pardon of sin, no sanctifying Spirit, no imputed righteousness? Ah! man there will be a time when the business that seems so important to thee will prove to have been but a day-dream, a poor substitute for the solid realities thou hast forgotten. Dost thou reply, "Nay, the king has sent me an urgent commission; I must attend to Caesar." Ah! Felix, but thou hast a greater monarch than Caesar: there is one who is Emperor of heaven and Lord of earth; canst thou spare no time to attend to his commands? Before his presence Caesar is but a worm. Man! wilt thou obey the one, and wilt thou despise the other? Ah! no; I know what thou durst not say. Felix, thou art turning aside again to indulge in thy lascivious pleasures. Go, and Drusilla with thee! But stop! Darest thou do that, with that last word ringing in thy ears, "Judgment to come." What! wilt thou repeat that wanton dalliance that hath damned thee already, and wilt thou go

again to imbrue thy hands in lust, and doubly damn thy spirit, after warnings heard and felt? O man! I could weep o'er thee, to think that as the bullock goeth to the slaughter, and as the lamb licks the knife, so dost thou go back to the sin that destroys thee, and to the lust that ruins thee. You, too, many of you, have often been impressed under the ministry. I know what you have said on the Monday morning, after deep searchings of heart on the Sabbath: you have said, "I must attend to business, I must see after the things of this world." Ah! you will say that one day, when hell shall laugh you in the face for your folly. Think of men that are dying every day saying, "We must live," and forgetting that they must die. O poor soul! to be caring about that house, thy body, and neglecting the tenant within! Another replies, "I must have a little more pleasure." Pleasure dost thou call it? What! can there be pleasure in turning suicide to thine own soul - pleasure in defying thy Maker, trampling on his laws, despising his grace? If this be pleasure, 'tis a pleasure over which angels might weep. What, man, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou comest to die? Above all, wilt thou count this pleasure when thou dost stand before thy Maker's bar at last? It is a strange delusion that causes thee to believe a lie. There is no pleasure in that which brings wrath upon thy soul, even to the uttermost.

But the usual reply is, "There is time enough yet." The young man says, "Let me alone till I grow old." And you old men, what do you say? I can suppose that the youth looks forward to life, and expects to find a future time more convenient. But there are some of you o'er whose heads seventy winters have blown. When do you hope to find a convenient season? You are within a few days' march of the tomb: if you do but open your poor dull eyes, you may see death but a slight distance in advance. The young *may* die; the old *must!* To sleep in youth is to sleep in a siege; to sleep in old age is to slumber during the attack. What! man, wilt thou that art so near thy Maker's bar still put him off with a "Go thy way?" What! procrastinate now, when the knife is at thy throat - when the worm is at the heart of the tree, and the branches have begun to wither - when the grinders fail even now, because they are few, and they that look out of the windows are darkened? The sere and yellow leaf has come upon thee, and thou art still unready for thy doom! O man! of all fools, a fool with a gray head is the worst fool anywhere. With one foot in the grave, and

another foot on a sandy foundation, how shall I depict you, but by saying to you, as God said to the rich man, "Thou fool! a few more nights and thy soul shall be required of thee;" and then where art thou?

But still the common cry is, "There is time enough." Even the worldly moralist said, "Time enough is always little enough." Time enough, man! What for? Surely you have spent time enough in sin: the time past may "suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." What! time enough to serve a God that laid down his life for you? No! eternity will not be too long to utter his praise, and therefore it can not be too long to love him here, and serve him the few remaining days that you are to live on earth. But stop! I will reason with you. Come, Felix! thou shalt not go away this morning till my whole soul hath poured itself out over thee, not until I have cast mine arms round thee, and tried to stop thee this time from turning from the face of him that bids thee live. Thou sayest, "Another time." How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps, a voice is saying in thine heart, "Prepare to meet thy God." To-morrow that voice will be hushed. The gayeties of the ball-room and the theater will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a *last warning*. Perhaps this is your last warning. You are told to-day, that except ye repent, ye must perish, except ye put your trust in Christ, ye must be cast away forever. Perhaps no honest lip will again warn you; perhaps no tearful eye will ever look on you affectionately again; God to-day is pulling the reins tight to check you from your lust; perhaps, if to-day you spurn the bit, and rush madly on, he will throw the reins upon your back, saying, "Let him alone;" and then it is a dark steeplechase between earth and hell, and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a hell till you find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope.

But again: how knowest thou, if thou shouldst ever have these feelings again, God will accept thee then? "To-day," he says, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This hour his love weepeth over you, and his bowels yearn for you. To-day he says, "Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Do you to-day

turn a deaf ear to him? Do you to-day forego his invitation and despise his warning? Take heed! You may one day need what now you despise, and you may then cry to him, but he will not hear you; you may then pray to him, but he will shut out your prayer, and his only answer will be, "*I called!*" "*I called, and you refused.* You stood against that pillar under the gallery; *I called and you refused! I stretched out my hands,* as if I would bring you to my bosom, *and no man regarded me.* You were there in the gallery; you listened, but it was as though you heard not; therefore" - and oh! the dreadful conclusion! - "*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.*" Stay! those are not my words, they are God's words. Turn ye to the book of Proverbs, and find them there. It were a harsh thing for me to say of God; but God says it of himself, and God is true, though every man be a liar; and if he be true, how know ye that he may not despise your prayer one day, shut out your cry, and banish you forever?

But again: how do you know that you shall live to be warned again? Said a minister once, when I gently hinted to him that he had not preached the gospel that morning, "No, I did not mean to preach to sinners in the morning; but I will preach to them in the evening." "Ah!" said I, "but what if some of your congregation of the morning should be in hell before the evening." So may I say to you. You have promised to go to a friend's house to-day, you think you can not break that promise; you wish you could. You wish you could go home and fall on your knees and pray; but no, you can not, because your promise binds you. You will have a convenient season one of these days! And so God Almighty is to wait man's convenience! How do you know you will live till that convenience comes? A little too much heat or too much cold within the brain - a little too fast flowing of the blood, or a little too slow circulation thereof - some little turning of the fluids of the body in a wrong direction, and you are dead!

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To bear you to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

Oh! why will you then dare to procrastinate, and say, "time enough yet?" Will your soul ever be saved by your saying "Time enough yet?" Archbishop Tillotson well says, "A man might say I resolve to eat, but the resolve to eat would never feed his body. A man might say, I am resolved to drink, but the resolve to drink would never slake his thirst." And you may say, "I am resolved by-and-by to seek God;" but your resolve will not save you. It is not the forgetful hearer but the doer of the word that shall be blessed therein. Oh that ye might now say - To-day, my God, to-day I confess my sin; to-day I ask thee to manifest thy grace; to-day receive my guilty soul, and show me a Saviours blood; to-day I renounce my follies, my vices, and my sins, constrained by Sovereign Grace; to-day I cast away my good works as my ground of trust; to-day I cry,

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling!"

Oh! happy minister who shall have such an audience! - happier than Paul, if he should know that his congregation had said this! Come, O Holy Spirit, and draw unwilling hearts, and make them bow before the scepter of sovereign grace.

Preaching, you see, takes away my voice. Ah! it is not that. It is not the preaching, but the sighing over your souls that is the hard work. I could preach forever: I could stand here day and night to tell my Master's love, and warn poor souls; but 'tis the after-thought that will follow me when I descend these pulpit steps, that many of you, my hearers, will neglect this warning. You will go; you will walk into the street; you will joke; you will laugh. My Master says, "Son of man, hast thou heard what the children of Israel say concerning thee? Behold, thou art as one that playeth a tune upon an instrument; they make merry with thee, and they go their ways." Yes, but that were little. To be laughed at is no great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers; caricatures, lampoons, and slanders, are my glory; of these things I boast, yea, in these I will rejoice. But that you should turn from your own mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but oh! repent! Laugh at me: but oh I believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, if you will: but damn not your own souls! Oh! do not despise your own mercies. Put not away from you the gospel of Christ.

There are many other ways of playing fool beside that. Carry coals in your bosom: knock your head against a wall: but do not damn your souls for the mere sake of being a fool, for fools laugh at. Oh! be in earnest upon an earnest subject. If there be no hereafter, live as you like; if there be no heaven, if there be no hell, laugh at me! But if these things be true, and you believe them, I charge you, as I shall face you at the judgment bar of the Lord Jesus in the day of judgment - I charge you, by your own immortal welfare, lay these things to heart. Prepare to meet your God, O sons of Israel! And the Lord help you in this thing; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Peace At Home, And Prosperity Abroad

He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. - Psalm 147:14-15

Pardon me, my brethren, if I attempt no exposition whatever of the text, but simply endeavor to address you upon what I think is an inference from it, or at least a reflection to which it might readily give rise. The Psalmist is here describing the prosperity of Jerusalem, and he connects that prosperity with the progress and diffusion of the Word of God. He is teaching us I think just this great truth, that there is an intimate connection between the establishment and the building of our Zion at home, and the going forth and the spread of God's Word abroad, both in the provinces of our own land, and throughout the regions of the world. Our own churches must be in a prosperous state. AS the second verse hath it—"the Lord doth build up Jerusalem," we may then rest assured that "he will gather together the outcasts of Israel." If there be in the churches of our own highly-favored land a healthiness of spirit and an abundance of the grace of God, we need not fear but that all our

operations will be carried on with success. God shall greatly crown our endeavors, and give us to see our heart's desire. If this be not precisely the critical meaning of the text, then let me just say I shall use it in this sense as a motto. The subject of this evening's discourse will be the connection between a healthy church at home, and the increase of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, let me very briefly advert to the main points which constitute a healthy state in the Church of Christ. Under what conditions should we be warranted in applying to it the glowing description of this Psalm—"He hath blessed thy children within thee; he maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of wheat." When we have described this healthiness, we shall proceed to show the connection between this and the sending forth of God's commandment upon earth—the running swiftly of his word; and then we shall conclude by pushing this principle home to the necessary inference.

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME?

To begin with the most important—the true piety of an her members. A Church can never be in a sound and satisfactory state for labor, she never can be in such a condition that God can smile upon her complacently, if she be mixed up with the world, if her sons and daughters be not sufficiently distinguished from the world to be manifestly God's people. if we take into our churches those who are not converted, we swell our numbers, but we diminish our real strength. We might need to purchase a larger church-book, we might, perhaps, be able to parade our numbers before the world, and we might even flatter ourselves with our apparent prosperity till we intoxicated our own brain, but we should be going backward when we think we are going forward. We have not conquered the world; we have only yielded to it. We have not brought the world up to us, we have only brought ourselves down to it. We have not Christianized an ungodly generation, but we have adulterated Christianity. We have brought the chaste spouse of Christ to commit fornication among the people. We cannot possibly be too strict in the examination of those who are proposed for church fellowship. I will grant

you, there are methods by which bigotry may exclude a large proportion of those whom God has called, putting such an extent of knowledge as the test of Christian experience, that many of the lambs of the flock stand bleating without the fold, and are never enabled to come and partake of its pasturage. This evil, doubtless, is to be avoided. But on the other hand, it is quite possible that the fullest charity with which the mildness of our Savior's mind and the love of the Spirit can imbue us, may be blended with the sternest firmness in executing a sacred trust, and with the most prudent discretion in maintaining the purity of discipleship, when we are engaged in the acceptance or rejection of candidates for the fellowship of the visible Church. If we could to-morrow bring into the Church a sufficient number of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, to double our subscriptions, to double our places of worship, to enable us to double the number of our missionaries, we should by succumbing to the temptation procure a curse instead of a blessing. In our purity, and in our purity alone we stand. Let us once lose our distinctive principles, let us once come back and attempt to nationalize the Church, and bring ourselves from the distinction we have sought to maintain between the Church and the world, and God's blessing will be withdrawn from us; we shall cease to be strong within, and mighty without. Oh I that God might grant to each of us, who are the pastors of the Church, that unceasing vigilance and constant watchfulness whereby we shall be able to detect the wolves in sheep's clothing, and whereby we shall be able to say calmly, sternly, yet lovingly, to those who come before us seeking communion, without satisfactory evident that they belong to the living family of God, "You must go your way until the Spirit of God hath touched your heart, for until you have received the living faith in Jesus, we cannot receive you into the number of his faithful ones."

Next to the sincere piety of all our Church members, I think we must look very carefully and very steadfastly to the soundness of that gospel which we proclaim and preach. Soundness I say—and here possibly I may be touching upon a delicate subject, but what signifieth if that subject be of the utmost and highest importance ¹ There should be, I aver, in the declaration of the ministers of Christ, not uniformity, for that is not consistent with life, but unity which is not only consistent with life, but which is one of the highest marks of a healthy existence. I do not think

the time will ever come when we shall all of us see eye to eye, and shall all use the same terms and phrases in setting forth doctrinal truths. I do not imagine there ever will be a period, unless it should be in that long-looked for millennium, when every brother thou be able to subscribe to every other brother's creed; when we shall be identical in our apprehensions, experiences, and expositions of the gospel in the fullest sense of the word. But I do maintain there should be, and there must be if our churches are to be healthy and sound, a constant adherence to the fundamental doctrines of divine truth. I should be prepared to go a very long way for charity's sake, and admit that very much of the discussion which has existed even between Arminians and Calvinists has not been a discussion about vital truth, but about the terms in which that vital truth shall be stated. When I have read the conflict between that mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice. Mr. Whitfield, and that other mighty man equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same truths, and that the vitality of Godliness was not mainly at issue in the controversy. But, my brethren, if it should ever come to be a matter which casts doubts upon the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, if it should come to a matter of using gospel terms in a sense the most contrary to that which has ever been attached to them in any age of the truth; if it should ever come to the marring and spoiling of our ideas of Divine justice, and of that great atonement which is the basis of the whole gospel, as they have been delivered to us; then it is time my brethren once for all that the scabbard be thrown aside, that the sword be drawn. Against any who assails those precious vital truths which constitute the heart of our holy religion, we must contend even to the death. It is not possible that an affirmative and negative can be two views of the same truth. We are continually told when one man contradicts another, that he does but see with other eyes. Nay, my brethren, the one man is blind, he does not see at all, the other sees, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened. There may be two views of truth, but two views of truth cannot be directly antagonistic. One must be the true view and the other the false view. No stretch of my imagination can ever allow me to anticipate the time can come when "yes" and "no" can lie comfortably down in the same bed. I cannot conceive by any means there ever can be a matrimonial alliance between positive and negative. Think ye such things might exist! Verily there were

giants at one time, when the sons of God saw the daughters of men; and we may live to see gigantic heresies, when God's own children may look upon the fair daughters of philosophy, and monster delusions shall stalk across the earth. A want of union about truth too clearly proves that the body of the Church is not in a healthy state. No man's system can be said to be in a normal condition if that man prefers ashes to bread, and prefers ditch water to that which flows from the bubbling fountain. A man must be unhealthy or he would not use such garbage. We must look to the preservation of the health of the Church. Alas! if her doctrines be tainted, her faith will not be maintained, and the Church being unsound, can tell what next may occur.

But not to tarry longer here, it seems to me the next important point with regard to the true healthiness of the Church at home, will be more and more of the spirit of union. This Society happily represents in a large degree this saved bond of brotherhood. It may have become somewhat denominational, it was never intended to be; nor is it the fault of the maintainers, it is not because they have made it exclusive but because other denominations have somewhat seceded, and established societies of their own. The London Missionary Society comprehended all Christian men, whether in the Establishment or not. I believe we are an eligible to become members, and all may, as far as we can, assist in sending forward the gospel by its means. But alas I there lingers amongst our Churches—and I hope it is but a lingering of that which must presently expire—there lingers still a spirit of disunion, because we do not agree in ceremonies. We must needs have livens communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless we are really and vitally one. We must have I suppose different walks, and cannot commune and converse with one another as members of the same family, and as parts of the same divine body. Whenever the foot is at enmity with the hand there must be something like madness in the body; there cannot be a sound mind within that frame which is divided against itself. And if there be among us any remnants of the spirit of division; if there be aught in us that would make us excommunicate and cut off brethren, because we cannot see with them in all the points of the spiritual compass, though we agree in the main; if it be so, then there must be somewhere or other an unhealthy disease, there must be grey hairs here and there, which have

stolen upon us though we knew it not. Oh my heart longs to see a more thorough union among the ministers of Christ Jesus. I think there is more of it than we sometimes believe. I am sure the more we come to know one another, the better we love each other. Distrust may arise from want of personal acquaintance; we need more frequently to come into company; and if the Churches were more active, so as to throw us into contact, I think we should discover more of a real unity than perhaps we think has begun to exist. And oh I that this unity may grow and continue, and may not be merely an evangelical alliance in form, but a spiritual confederation in fact; that its enunciation may come from every lip and every heart, and that there may be a real love toward every other member of that alliance, in carrying out its principles to the fullest and the greatest extent.

These three points—purity of life, soundness of doctrine, and unity of the ministers of the Church of Christ—will help to constitute a healthy Church at home. All these things, however, will never avail unless there be added another, namely, constant activity. We all have our times when we feel dull, and listless, and heavy, when we would rather be in bed all day than get up, rather sit in the chair than go to business or enter the pulpit; or when we are in the pulpit, we find our brain does not work, and we cannot put forth the energy that we would. The tongue may be as a ready writer, but we cannot speak as we would desire. We feel at times that we are not well, that there is something wrong in our system. And the Church every now and then gets into the same state. At intervals some earnest speech stirs the members up to spasmodic action, then they return again to their apathy and Laodicean lukewarmness. Sometimes they feel as if they would carry all by storm, but anon they sit down again in calm security. We have hundreds of our churches, from which I continually receive an answer like this to the enquiry, "How do you prosper?"—"Well, we are not increasing much, we have added no souls to the Church, but we are very comfortable." That very comfortableness has stolen upon a large proportion of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a marvel that they should be comfortable while souls are dying, and sinners perishing; when hell is filling, and the kingdom of Christ is not extending. But yet quite comfortable they are; and they come to look upon the revivals and increase to the Church as wonders and prodigies,

rather like comets that come now and then, than like sums which are to abide with us; and they grow into the habit of questioning the revival spirit, and thinking that when the Church is alive, she has become excited, that she has been dram drinking. and is intoxicated, instead of behaving that it is just her actual evidence of health. When she is in health she is at work without her hands, praying with an her tongues, weeping with an her eyes, and agonizing with God in prayer with all the might of her many intercessors. Oh, my brethren, we are an wrong when we think that the Church is healthy when it is comfortable and still. Is the health of the stagnant pool, the health of the grave-yard, the health of a fainting fit—a fit that is on the very verge of death. God be pleased to let loose some blood from we, that we may discover what the Church really is when she shall put forth all her energy. If we saw a queen sitting upon a heap of rubbish, her hair disheveled, and dirt upon her garments, if she never stirs hand or foot, but sits down sleeping on in her misery, could you think she is a queen in all her dignity? Rise up thou Virgin Daughter of Zion, and let us behold thee in thy beauty; shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments, and ascend to thy throne—then shall men see what thou art. When thou art idle, and careless, and prayerless, thou art sick and ready to die, but when thou art anxious, and striving, and travailing, then art thou in the state in which thy Lord would have thee; thou dost bless him and he hath blessed thee.

One more point, and I will conclude this description of the Church's healthiness. The Church is never healthy except when she abounds in prayer. I have known prayer meetings that have been like the bells to the parish steeple—a very poor parish where there were never enough bells to ring a chime. The minister has had to pray twice and read a long chapter, in order to spin out the time, or to meet the want yet more efficiently, he has caned upon a brother who had the gift of supplicating for twenty-five minutes, and then concluded by asking pardon for his short comings. And then the few friends, the bold-hearted, self-denying martyrs, who went to hear the Word of God, were obliged to endure the torture of hearing such a prayer as that. Those brethren must come and go, and never feel that God has been in their midst, that they have never been near to the throne of God, never had the wresting with the angel, never brought a blessing down, for the man has been praying against time, "an

occupying of the few minuted, as they call it, and there was no real intercession or drawing near to God. Now, what Church can be considered to be as Christ would have her, when her members meet to pray, and they constitute but a handful? I care not if the place is crowded at your other services, the Church is not prosperous if the prayer-meetings be thin. It signifies nothing if that Church has sent up a hundred, or five hundred, or a thousand pounds to the Missionary Society—write "Ichabod" on her walls, unless the brethren meet together for prayer. The most erudite minister may instruct the people; the most earnest preacher may plead God's cause with men, but if he bath not with him a band of men who plead man's cause with God, his pleadings will be in vain. Shut up that house in which men have ceased to pray; or if you open it, let your opening be a meeting for hearty and earnest prayer. I have to mourn and confess in my own case, that I have had to feel in myself—and I think I can speak for many others—a want of prayerfulness with regard to missionary effort especially. These things do not meet us as the destitution of London does; for the City Missionaries, and for the sinners of our own congregations, I trust we do not need arguments to make us pray. These arguments are before us every day. We do pray for our own families, and our own congregations, but the heathens are across the sea, many miles away. We may now and then see a Master in the street, or the dark face of a Hindoo, and then our soul breathes a silent ejaculation; but alas! for the most part, many Christians might say whole months pass with them without carrying the cause of the heathen, who are in darkness, before the throne of God; and how can we expect, while this unhealthiness exists among us, that God will bless our missionary operations. Zion must avail before she can bring forth children. She may use all her weapons but if she keep back the great battering-ram of prayer, she will never break the walls of the spiritual Jericho. She may use every other instrument, but unless she takes John Bunyan's weapon of "all-prayer," she will never put to rout the great enemy of souls. Yes, my brethren, we want faithfulness, we want healthiness, we want a prayerful spirit given to us, then we may conclude that all is well with us.

It shall be left to each individual heart, and each member of the Church, to answer for himself the question, whether his own Church is in a state of spiritual health, taking these things as a test; namely, purity,

soundness, unity, and prayerfulness.

II. I have now to show THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY CHURCH AT HOME AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ABROAD.

To the mind of the simple this thing will be clear enough. Suppose all the Churches to degenerate into a lack of life, and into nearness to spiritual death. Suppose the pulpit in our land gives an uncertain sound. As a result God's people begin to forsake the assembling of themselves together, no crowds gather to hear the Word; places begin to get empty prayer-meetings become more and more deserted; the efforts of the Church may be still carried on, but they are merely a matter of routine; there is no life, no heart in it. I am supposing a case you see, a case which I trust we never may see. Things get worse and worse; the doctrines of the gospel become expunged and unknown; they that fear the Lord no more speak one to another. Still for a little time the money continues to be brought into the Society, and foreign missions are sustained. Can you not imagine reading in the next report, "We have had no converts this year; our income is still maintained; but notwithstanding that, our brethren feel that they are laboring under the greatest possible disadvantages; in fact, some of them wish to return home and renounce the work." Another year—the missionary spirit has grown cold in the Churches, in funds decrease. Another year, and yet another, it becomes a moot point among us as to whether missions are necessary or not. We have come at last to the more advanced point which some have already reached, and begin to question whether Mahomet and Confucius had not a revelation from God as well as Jesus Christ. And now we begin to say, "Is it needful that we should extend the gospel abroad at all? We have lost faith in it; we see it does nothing at home, shall we send that across the sea which is a drug on the market here, and distribute as a healing for the wounds of the daughters of Zidon and of Tyre that which hath not healed the daughter of Jerusalem?" I can conceive that first one station then another would be given up, those that would be maintained would only be kept up by reason of an old custom which was recollected to have existed in the absurd days of Evangelists. I can imagine the Church degenerating further, and further, and further, till at last her unhealthiness clearly

showed that it would be impossible that it ever could be maintained abroad. You have only to look abroad upon nature, and you will soon find analogies to this. There is a well of water springing up, and the people of the district flock to it, it is said to have healthy properties; men come and dome thereat and are refreshed. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail; by some means or other the water is removed to another place, and the spring is no more there. You can conceive that this place would cease to be a thoroughfare; there would no longer be passengers. Where multitudes of men and women were wont to drink with joy and gladness, there is not a single person to be seen. Or, suppose again, there is the sun in its sphere shedding light on all the planets, and with its attractive power making them move with regularity in their orbits Suddenly the sun's fire dies out; its attractive power decreases also, and becomes extinguished. Can you not imagine that the result must be fatal to all the planets that revolve around it I How shall they be sustained in their light and heat, or how shall they be kept in their spheres when once the power that kept them there is gone? No, prophecy is fulfilled; the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree.

And what is the Church to our missionary stations but like the sun? Is it not her light that shines? Do they not receive from her their instructions in the Word of God—the light of the world? And are not; those stations the rays from the great central luminary? Let her lose her power and her light, and what must become of the rest of the world? Must not total blank darkness cover all the nations? Oh I yes, my brethren, if we do not know that, we soon should know it if God should ever put us to the test. If once England's glory were extinguished, if once the Christianity of America were put out, where were all the vital godliness then? How should those agencies which depend upon us! be sustained if our home piety were once brought to nought? No; we must have the bars of our gates strengthened, there must be peace in our borders, and we must. be filled with the finest wheat, or else God s Word will not run very quickly, nor will his commandment be sent faith upon the earth.

Let me endeavor very briefly to shows what this connection is. There is a direct connection between the primeness of the Church at hone and the

progress of Christianity abroad—a direct connection; we shall have to speak of the more indirect connection by-and-bye. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christ's kingdom in other lands. An excellent minister of the Church in France told me—and told it with a sorrowful earnestness too—that Protestantism received a severe check in Paris from the inconsistent conduct of Christian men there, those who protested Protestantism at least, if they were not members of our Churches. "Now sir," said he, "when a man visits Paris, who is a Protestant—an English Protestant—I will not say is an actual member of your Church certainly,—when he comes to Paris, he neglects all attendance to the Sabbath-day;" and Romanists, if spoken to about their constant breach of the holy day, will reply to the Reformed Christians of France, "Look to the Protestants of Great Britain when they are here; do they attend to their religion abroad any better than we do?"

I have been assured by several pastors living in Paris, that it is a frightful and lamentable fact, that men when they go on the Continent seem to go there to get rid of their religion, when they land on those shores they assume the garb of a traveler, and think they may be permitted to attend Roman Catholic places of worship on the Lord's day, and they are not seen worshipping God with their brethren where the worship in the English language is still maintained. I can assure you that I was affectionately requested to avail myself of an early opportunity to make a prominent complaint against the Christianity of England for its inconsistency abroad. In the name of the pastors of France I speak, and in the name of the pastors of l'Oratoire I think I speak it also—I think I speak for five of them at least—I do beseech of Christian men who are going abroad, not to permit themselves to forget their Christianity, but to remember that the eyes of men are still upon them, and if not the eyes of men certainly the eyes of God.

Let me give you another fact, which proves that when the Church is unsound home she will not go on well abroad. In the late Report of the Baptist Missionary Society I observed a great trouble through which certain stations have lately passed; a trouble which they have survived, but which materially checked their usefulness. Certain brethren holding

rather extreme Church views thought it necessary, instead of carrying on operations among the pure heathen, to set to work to convert those who were Christians already to their own creed, and the effect in the villages where they tried their scheme was, that by dint of giving more charity than a poorer society could afford to give, they managed to decoy a large proportion of the congregations to a different form of Protestant service. The result was just this—they were informed by these pastors—good men doubtless—that the sect to which they once belonged was an ignoble body in its own country, and did not possess any influence. And for the first time the Hindoos answered that there were Christian men who could depreciate one another—that there were professors of this one religion who had a greater dislike to one another than any two sects of Heathenism ever had. The effect upon the minds of the villagers was not merely disastrous to that one mission, but to Christianity herself. They began to suspect that the house that was divided against itself could not have its foundations upon truth.

My brethren, when we shall once come to unity of doctrine, and to purity and consistency of life, the direct agency of our Church members, and of our missionaries upon the heathen world, will be far more healthy and effective than it is. I do not doubt, if I had a wider and more extensive knowledge of the proceedings of the Church in other lands, I could multiply instances of this kind, in which our faults at home have been very great draw-backs upon our success abroad.

And yet the agency, I think, may be considered in the main to be indirect; but nevertheless, as potent as if it were direct. If our Churches be not true, if they be not kept by God, if they be not pure and holy, and prayerful, they will begin to lose the missionary spirit, and when the missionary spirit evaporates, of what use will be the missionary body? Bury it; yes, in Bloomfield Street will we dig its grave, or in Moorgate Street shall we make a vault I put on its shroud, and let it have a tearful burial, for if the spirit of missions be lost in the Churches, it would be no use trying to maintain the semblance of the body of the Society. We all know what the missionary spirit is, and yet we could not any of us exactly describe it. It is a sort of thing that sets a man longing to see others saved, and makes him pant especially for those who have no means of grace in

their own lands, that they may have those means carried to them, that they may be saved. This leads them to self-denying, and to earnest prayer for those that are diligent servants. Extinguish the healthiness of the Church, and you have lost that spirit. We can never expect the ruddy flush of health upon the cheek, unless there is health within. The missionary spirit is just that bloom, which will soon be taken away if consumption should seize upon the frame. The missionary spirit can only be maintained by the maintenance of life and vitality in the Church. But further, if you take away the missionary spirit; of course all prayerfulness, and with that an powerful. ness to rend the clouds of heaven is withdrawn. Let the winds of the Holy Spirit, brethren, once depart from our Churches at home, our Missionary Society shall be as a ship at sea with her sails an spread, and her spars well rigged, but without a breath of air to move her towards her port. There she shall lie till she perishes upon the rocks, or founders in a calm. She can be of no service; she can bring no glory to her God, carry no cargo of living spirits up to the port of heaven, unless there be prayer at home to wake up all the winds, and let them loose upon her to speed her on her destined course. With that want of prayer too, you must remember you suspend all hopes of finding fresh missionaries. I have often wondered whether our Churches are choosing the best means to find out young men who would be useful in the mission field. There is growing now-a-days a lack of ministers for our own pulpits. Why it is so I cannot tell, except that it strikes me, that young men are not sufficiently encouraged when they have preaching abilities, to endeavor to do their best to exercise them. I do know a brother who ever makes it a rule, if a young man displays any sort of ability, and applies to him for a recommendation for College or otherwise,—positively to throttle him if he can. "You," he says. "Who are you? I am sure you will never make a minister, you can only talk, sir—you are no good." And many a young man who might have been usefully employed in that one Church has been driven away from it to seek some more congenial spirit, because he has been put back in his attempts to do some service. Of course if we never make an attempt to grow ministers, or to bring them out from the world, train them up and guide them to the place where their talents may be proved, we shall not have a right to expect God's blessing in this matter. Only cease to cultivate wheat, and you shall have but very little of it. God does raise men and send them out; but at time he works by means. And

he makes the Church use means to bring out members. The old Church of the Waldenses used the best means I think that ever will be devised. Every pastor of the Church had one young man with him, and tried to train him up, keeping him in habitual conversation with him, and teaching him what he knew of pastoral discipline and of the preaching of the Word. So that when the one minister died, they had not to look for a successor, there he was ready to hand among the young men who had come out of that Church. Our nation used to boast that it could grow everything it needed; we do not care for the boast in these free-trade times, but we do say that our Churches ought to grow All that they need for themselves. They ought not always to go a hundred miles to get pastors when they could obtain them amongst themselves. They do not go abroad for deacons! Why not have pastors from among themselves that were raised from childhood in the Church? Ah! should we once become unsound in our Churches, and prayer become cold, and where are the men to come from that shall succeed those heroes of Christ whose blood was shed by heathen hands? Where shall we find the successors to Knuibb and Williams? Where shall we find the successors to Moffat and Livingstone, unless the healthy tone of Christian self-denial and holy firmness of divine fervor be kept up and maintained? Do you imagine you can enlist them from abroad? Do you think they will spring up at your can? Oh, no. It is one thing to obtain money to keep a man, to obtain a free passage for him, and a station where he may be maintained; but another thing to find your man. And you may lose your men because you are not looking for them; you may pass over the men whom God would honor most, because they come not up to your standard of scholastic attainments or oratorical gift. They might come up to that by-and-bye. You striving together with prayer, with sympathy and interest in their welfare, God would enrich them, and you might find a phalanx of heroes who should be like the old guard, who never could surrender, but in every battle upon which they should enter would drive their foemen before them, even to the ends of the earth.

III. The last point is one upon which I would briefly but very earnestly preach to myself and to all here assembled. If it be true, and I am sure it is, that the healthiness of the Church at home is vitally connected with the success of the Word of God as preached abroad, then, dear brothers and

sisters, let us remember that it must have also a connection with our own personal standing in the sight of God. Truth is like the crystal, which retains its shape even though it be broken almost to an invisible atom. And so the truth that our success depends upon the whole Church is equally sure, when we bring it down to this, that our success in a measure depends upon the vitality, healthiness, and Godliness of each individual. If you were as a Christian, my brother, a separate and distinct organism—a body entirely separate from every one else—you, might be never so sick and no one else would suffer; but you are not so. Remember that you are a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and we hold it to be a precious fact, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer; that, if one member rejoice, all the members share the joy. Must it not equally be true, that if one member be unhealthy, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole? The Church had all things common in the Apostles' days in temporals; to this day she has all things common in spirituals. We all draw from the same treasury; on the other hand we ought to contribute to the same. If you contribute less, there is the less in the treasury; if your efforts be more feeble than they should be, the efforts of the whole Church are the feebler. Depend upon it, if there be no electric unions between man and man, there are such spiritual unions that the thoughts, acts, and words of any one man do in a degree, however inappreciable to our senses, affect the deeds and actions of every living man, and perhaps of every man that ever shall live to the end of this earthly dispensation. There is no end to a word, it is an infinite thing. It is like the stone that is dropped into the lake—the circles are ever-widening. So your influence for good or evil knows no bound. It may be but little upon one individual, but then that individual prolongs it upon another, and he upon another still, till the pulse of time, nay of eternity, may be made to throb through something that you have said or done. You may work an evil work which shall tremble in the flames of hell for ever and ever, or you may do a good work, which under God may glisten in the light of glory throughout eternity. There is no limit to the influence of any man, and certainly there is no possibility of your staying that influence altogether, and of making yourself so distinct that you are independent of another.

Look then ye cold, ye careless ones, look ye on this—ye are not clear, ye

have helped to spoil the Church. Next time ye go abroad to find fault, remember that you share in the cause of that fault. Next time you mourn the Church's prayerlessness, remember that it is your own prayerlessness that helps to make up the bulk of the Church's lack. Next time you would complain of any minister's dullness, or of any Church's want of energy, oh! reflect, it is your own dullness, your own want of energy, that helps to swell the rolling tide. If every man mended one, all would be mended if every man had but one soul stirred, and that soul his own, the whole Church would be stirred up. If it were possible for every member of the Church to be sound how could any part of the body be sick? If every individual were what he should be, how could there be any complaints? We have grown into the habit of praying for the Church as if she were a colossal culprit, which we should tie up, and then take the ten-thonged whip of the law and pull off thongful after thongful of the quivering flesh, while all the while the real culprit is escaping, namely—ourselves—our own individual selves. I do feel more and more the necessity of looking at the souls of men in the light of my own responsibility to them. I do not want to look at the maps sometimes published by the Society, with red and green marks, showing where there is light. I like to look at, and have a map where I have been a light. I would rather look at London, not in the light of what any particular society or its agency can do for it, but in the light of what I can do for it; and so each of you ought to look on his fellow-man. No society ever thought of taking your responsibility on itself; if it did so, or if you ever thought you have been both mistaken. Responsibilities to God for the souls of men is east on each one of us, and no contribution, however liberal, can ever shield us from the obligation. We must stand, each man for himself, and hear the "Well done good and faithful servant," or else "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

My dear Christian friends—members of our Churches—are you doing all you can for the souls of men. You cannot save them, but God the Holy Spirit can make you the instruments of their salvation. When you hear the bell tolling to-morrow for some one who lived in your street, can you go into the cemetery, and can you stand there and look at the grave and say, "I did all that was in the power of any mortal man for that man's salvation" No, you cannot. I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, could say, when we hear of the death of friends, "If that man perish, I did

not leave a single stone unturned." No, we might say we have done something, but we could not say that we have done all that we might have done.

And to conclude,—that I may discharge this solemn responsibility myself in some measure,—are there not many in this congregation who are still unconverted? We talk about heathens—there are heathens here. You have heard the name of Jesus these many years, but you are no more Christian tonight than the Hottentot in his kraal; perhaps further off from the kingdom of heaven than he, because you have become more hardened in heart by rejecting the gospel of Christ,—a sin he has never committed, seeing his bath never known it. Ah! my hearers, in this place there have been hundreds of souls brought to Jesus. There is not a pew in this ancient Tabernacle which could not tell stories of grace. If it could but speak, it would say, "Such-and-such a broken-hearted penitent sat there." These walls, if they could cry aloud, could tell how many sighs and groans they have heard, and how many precious tears they have seen trickling from the eyes of converted men and women. And is there not one here to night who shall yet be saved? Remember, you are lost and ruined; ruined utterly, helplessly, and hopelessly. So far as you yourself are concerned, there is no hope of your salvation. But there is help laid on One that is mighty to save even Jesus Christ. Look out of yourself to him, and you are saved. Cast away all self-confidence and repose on Jesus and your spirit lives. The soul-quickenings words are "Believe and live." Oh! may the Lord enable you now to trust Jesus and you shall be saved, be your sins never so many. The hour which sees you look to Christ, sees sin's black garment all unbound and cast away. The hour which sees your eye salute the bleeding Savior, sees the eye of God looking down on you with manifest complacency and joy. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved," be his sins never so many; "he that believeth not shall be damned," be his sins never so few. I would earnestly exhort those who feel their need of Jesus, those who are "weary and heavy-laden, lost and ruined by the fall," now to take the Savior, even now, for he is yours. You have a personal right to him, so surely as your hearts are willing to receive him, you have nothing of your own Christ is yours, take him, his grace is free as the air. Take of this water of life which saves. Drink of it, no one can deny you, drink even to the full, and there shall be joy in

heaven, and joy on earth over sinners saved. May the Lord add his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Peace of God

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.- Philippians 4:7

"Peace" is a heavenly word. When at the advent of our Lord angels came to sing among men a midnight sonnet their second note was "Peace on earth." Would God the shining ones would chant that song again till yonder Balkans heard. the strain, and shook off the sulphurous cloud which now hangs around them. Those who have ever seen war, or even come near the trail of its bloody march, will be thankful to God for peace. I am almost of his mind who said that the worst peace is preferable to the very best war that was ever waged, if best there can be where all is bad as bad can be. Peace is most pleasant when religion sits beneath its shade, and offers her joyful vows to heaven. How grateful we ought to be that we can meet together to worship God after that form which best satisfies our consciences without any fear of being hunted down by the authorities of the land. We have no watchman on the hill tops looking out for Claverhouse's dragoons. We put none at the front door of our conventicle to watch lest the constable should come to take off worshipper and minister, that they may suffer imprisonment or fine. We worship God in unlimited liberty, and we ought to be exceedingly glad of the privilege, and infinitely more grateful for it than we are. Do we not sit every man under his own vine and fig tree, none making us afraid? Blessed is the land in which we dwell, and blessed are the days in which we live, when in all peace and quietness we worship God in public and sing his high praises as loudly as we please. Great God of peace, thou hast given us this peace, and in remembrance of our hunted forefathers we bless thee with our whole hearts!

We have met to-night for the purpose of hearing the gospel of peace, and many of us are afterwards coming to that sacred festival which celebrates peace, and is to all time the memorial of the great peace-making between God and man. And yet it may be that even all believers here are not quite at peace. Possibly you did not leave your family in peace this afternoon. Jars occur even among loving hearts. Alas! even Sabbaths are sometimes disturbed, for evil tempers cannot be bound over to keep the peace, but are riotous even on this sweet restful day. Do Christian men ever permit angry feelings to rise within them? If they do, I am sure that even in coming a way from home to the house of God, they come with a disturbed mind. Ah, how insignificant a matter will mar our peace of mind: some little thing that happened in getting to your pew-some trifling incident even while you are in it, waiting for worship to begin, may, like dust in your eye, cause you the greatest distress. Such poor creatures are we that we may lose our peace of mind even by a word or a look. Peace, in the form of perfect calm and serenity, is a very delicate and sensitive thing, and needs more careful handling than a Venice glass. It is hard for the sea of our heart to remain long in a smooth and glassy state, it may be rippled and ruffled by an infant's breath. Perhaps, too, some of my brothers and sisters here have not been walking near to God; and if so their peace will not be perfect. It may be, my brother, that during the week you have backslidden somewhat from your true standing; and if so, your peace has fled. Your heart is troubled, and though you are believing in Christ for salvation, and are therefore safe, yet for all that your inward rest may be broken; therefore would I turn the text into a prayer, and pray for myself and for every believer in Jesus Christ-that the peace of God which passeth all understanding may now keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. May you all know the text by experience. He who wrote it had felt it; may we who read it feel it too. Paul had oftentimes enjoyed the brightness of peace in the darkness of a dungeon, and he had felt living peace in prospect of a sudden and cruel death. He loved peace, preached peace, lived in peace, died in peace, and behold he hath entered into the fruition of peace, and dwells in peace before the throne of God.

Looking at the text, and thinking how we might handle it best to our profit, I thought we would notice first of all the unspeakable privilege-"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Then, secondly, I

thought that we might gather, from its connection, the method of coming at it; for the preceding sentences are linked on to our text by the word "and," which is not an incidental conjunction, but is placed there with a purpose. Paul means to say that if we do what he bids us do in the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses, then the peace of God shall keep our hearts and minds. When we have looked at that matter for a few minutes, I shall want your careful attention, in the third place, to the power of its operation-for the peace of God "shall keep your hearts and minds"; and then we shall close, in the fourth place, by noticing the sphere of its action, namely "in Christ Jesus" the word should have been "in" rather than "through"- "shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." May the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of peace, now lead us into the center and secret of our text.

I. First, then, here is AN UNSPEAKABLE PRIVILEGE - one of which it is very hard to speak, because it passeth all understanding, and therefore, you may be sure, it must pass all description. It is one of those things which can be more readily experienced than explained. Good Joseph Stennett was right when he spoke of those who

"Draw from heaven that sweet repose
Which none but he that feels it knows."

We may talk about inward rest, and dilate upon the peace of God, and select the most choice expressions to declare the delicacy of its enjoyment, but we cannot convey to others the knowledge at second hand; they must feel it, or they cannot understand it. If I were speaking to little children I would illustrate my point by the story of the boy at one of our mission stations who had a piece of loaf sugar given him one day at school. He had not before tasted such essence of sweetness, and when he went home to his father, he told him that he had eaten something which was wonderfully sweet. His father said, "Was it as sweet as such a fruit?" "It was far sweeter than that." "Was it as sweet as such and such a food?" which he mentioned. "It was much sweeter than that. But father," said he, "I cannot tell you." He rushed out of the house back to the mission house, begged a piece of sugar out of it and brought it back, and said, "Father, taste and see, and then you will know how sweet it is." So I venture to use that

simple illustration and say, "O taste and see that the peace of God is good," for in very deed it surpasseth all the tongues of men and of angels to set it forth.

What is the peace of God? I would describe it first by saying it is, of course, peace with God, peace of conscience, actual peace with the Most High through the atoning sacrifice. Reconciliation, forgiveness, restoration to favor there must be, and the soul must be aware of it: there can be no peace of God apart from justification through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ received by faith. A man conscious of being guilty can never know the peace of God till he becomes equally conscious of being forgiven. When his consciousness of pardon shall become as strong and vivid as his consciousness of guilt had been, then will he enter into the enjoyment of the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ-you that have believed in Jesus-there is perfect peace between you and God now: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Your sin was the ground of the quarrel; but it has gone, it has ceased to be, it is blotted out, it is cast into the depth of the sea. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Our divine scapegoat has carried our iniquities into the wilderness. Our Lord and Master has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The cause of offense is gone, and gone for ever: Jesus hath taken our guilt, hath suffered in our stead, hath made full compensation to the injured law, and vindicated justice to the very highest; and now there is nothing which can excite the anger of God towards us, for our sin is removed, and our unrighteousness is covered. We are reconciled to God by Christ Jesus, and accepted in the Beloved.

Now this actual reconciliation brings to the heart a profound sense of peace. O that all of you possessed it now! O that those who know it knew it more fully! Remember, O soul, if Christ did indeed suffer in your stead and was made a curse for thee, justice can never require at thy hands the penalty which thy Surety has discharged: for this would be to dishonor his sacrifice by making it of none effect. If Jesus stood as thy Substitute, and bore what God required as the vindication of his law, then thou art clear, beyond all hazard clear for ever, saved in the Lord with an

everlasting salvation. If it were not so, why was there a Substitute permitted? Did God design to tantalize mankind by permitting an ineffectual substitution? What did that Substitute accomplish after all if he did not save those for whom he died? What meaning is there in the gospel if it does not reveal an effectual atonement? But truly the Lord Jesus was made sin for us, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are saved.

Here the soul rests: at the foot of the cross it finds a peace it never could have found elsewhere. I hope that many of you are now able to sing

"Jesus was punish'd in my stead,
Without the gate my Surety bled
To expiate my stain:
On earth the Godhead deign'd to dwell,

And made of infinite avail
The sufferings of the man."
"And was he for such rebels given?
He was; the Incarnate King of Heaven

Did for his foes expire:
Amazed, O earth, the tidings hear;
He bore, that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

There take your full of peace, for by this sacrifice a covenant of peace is now established between you and your God, and it is sealed by atoning blood.

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" also takes a second form, namely, that of a consequent peace in the little kingdom within. When we know that we are forgiven and that we are at peace with God things within us come to a sudden and delightful change. By nature everything in our inner nature is at war with itself: it is a cage of evil beasts all rending and devouring each other. Man is out of order: out of order with God, with the universe, and with himself. The machinery of

manhood has fallen into serious disorder; its cogs and wheels do not work in due harmony, but miss their touch and stroke. The passions, instead of being ruled by reason, often demand to hold the reins; and reason, instead of being guided by the knowledge which God communicates by his word, chooses to obey a depraved imagination, and demands to become a separate power and to judge God himself. There is not a faculty of our nature which is not in rebellion against God, and consequently in a state of confusion with regard to the rest of our system. A cruel internal war often rages among our mental powers, animal instincts, and moral faculties, causing distress, fear and unhappiness. There is no cure for this but restoring grace. O man, you cannot get your heart right, you cannot get your conscience right, you cannot get your understanding right, you cannot bring your various powers to their bearings and make them act in true harmony till first you are right with God. The King must occupy the throne, and then the estate of Mansoul will be duly settled, but till the chief authority has due eminence rebellion and riot will continue. When the Lord breathes peace into a man, and the Holy Spirit descends like a dove to dwell within the soul, then is there quiet: where all was chaos order appears, the man is created anew, and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus; and though rebellious lusts still try to get the mastery, yet there is now a ruling power which keeps the man in order so that within him there is "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." This leads on to peace in reference to all outward circumstances by reason of our confidence that God ordereth them all rightly, and arranges them all for our good. The man who believes in Jesus and is reconciled to God has nothing outside of him that he needs to fear. Is he poor? He rejoices that Christ makes poor men rich. Does he prosper? He rejoices that there is grace to sanctify his prosperity lest it become intoxicating to him. Does there lie before him a great trouble? He thanks God for his promise that as his day his strength shall be. Does he apprehend the loss of friends? He prays that the trial may be averted, for he is permitted so to pray, even as David begged for the life of his child; but, having so done, he feels sure that God will not take away an earthly friend unless it be with kind intent to gather up our trust and confidence more fully to himself. Does there lie before him the prospect of speedy death? The hope of resurrection gives peace to his dying pillow. He knows that his Redeemer lives, and he is content to let his body sleep in the dust

awhile. Is he reminded by Scripture of a day of judgment when all hearts shall be revealed? He has peace with regard to that dread mystery and all that surrounds it, for he knows whom he has believed, and he knows that he will protect him in that day. Whatever may be suggested that might alarm or distress the believer, deep down in his soul he cannot be disturbed, because he sees his God at the helm of the vessel holding the rudder with a hand which defies the storm.

This is peculiarly advantageous in days like these when all things wear a dreary aspect. The storm signals are flying, the clouds are gathering, flashes of lightning and grumblings of distant thunder are around us. If you read the papers, wars and rumors of wars are incessant; your eyes light upon narratives of famine and drought; you see distress here, slackness of business there, and poverty and starvation in many places, and the fear creeps over you that there are dark days yet to come, and seasons in which faces will grow pale and hands hang heavy. Brethren, it is for the believer in such a case to feel no dismay, for our God is in the heavens, and he doth not forsake the throne; his purposes will be fulfilled and good will come out of evil, for at this very moment God sitteth in the council-chambers of kings, and ordereth all things according to the counsel of his will. We are not children whose father has gone to sea and left them at home without a guardian. We read just now the words, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," and we believe that gracious word. God is most near us, and we are most safe. Though we cannot see the future, and do not wish to pry between the folded leaves of the book of destiny, we are absolutely certain that nothing is written upon the unopened page of the future which can contradict the divine faithfulness so conspicuous in the past. We are sure that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose, and therefore our soul as to all external circumstances casts anchor and enjoys the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

Nor is this all. God is pleased to give to his people peace in reference to all his commands. While the soul is unregenerate it rebels against the mind and will of God. If God forbids, the unrenewed heart longs for the forbidden thing. If God commands, the natural mind, for that very

reason, refuses to do it. But when the change takes place, and we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, then, beloved, we drop into the same line with God, and our deepest desire is to abide in full harmony with him. His will becomes our delight, and our only sorrow is that we cannot be perfectly conformed to it. There is no precept of God which is grievous to a gracious heart. His statutes are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. We also feel perfect peace with regard to God's providential doings, because we believe that they are helping us to arrive at conformity with him, and that is just what we want, Oh that we could never have a thought or wish henceforth that would be disagreeable to the Lord. We now love him, we love his ways, we love his people, we love his word, we love his day, we love his promises, we love his precepts—we are altogether agreed with him through his rich grace; and in this sense we have a peace towards God which passeth all understanding.

What a wonderful description that is of this peace—it "passeth all understanding." It is not only beyond a common understanding, but it passeth all understanding. Some have said it means that the ungodly man cannot understand it; that statement is true, but it is not a tithe of the whole meaning, for even he who enjoys it cannot understand it. It is deeper, it is broader, it is sweeter, it is more heavenly than the joyful saint himself can tell. He enjoys what he cannot understand. What a mercy that such a thing is possible, for otherwise our joys would be narrow indeed! Reason has limits far narrower than joy. Truly this peace is hid from the eyes of the ungodly and the unbelieving; it is far above, out of their sight. Now, there are kinds of peace in the world which the ungodly man can understand. There were the Stoics, who schooled themselves to apathy; they would not feel, and so they attained a senseless peace: their secret is easily discovered, it does not pass understanding. Many a Red Indian has been as stolid as the greatest Stoic, and has, perhaps, surpassed him, in hardening himself so that he would not groan if pierced with arrows or burned with fires. Some men have had such mastery over themselves that it has seemed a matter of perfect indifference whether they suffered pain or not. But Christianity does not teach us stoicism, nor does it point in that direction; it cultivates tenderness, and not insensibility. Its influence tends to make us sensitive rather than callous, and it gives us a peace consistent with the utmost delicacy of feeling, yea,

with a sensitiveness more intense than other men know, since it makes our conscience more tender, and causes the mind to be deeply distressed by the slightest frown of heaven. Our peace is not the peace of apathy, but one of a far nobler sort. Others have aimed at the peace of levity, which the world can readily understand. They count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away, and whatever happens of ill they drown reflection in the flowing bowl and laugh over it-making mirth when misery devours their souls.

Christians do not attempt to get rid of the trials of life in that fashion. The world, therefore, cannot understand the believer's peace, since he is neither apathetic nor frivolous. Whence comes this peace? The jaunty answer of many a worldling is, "Oh, it comes from some fanatical delusion." But, indeed, we are not deluded. The grounds of a Christian's peace are rational, logical, and well grounded. They are to be justified by common sense. A person who has been in debt, and who is still in debt, ought not to be at peace; but suppose a man is found to be perfectly at his ease, who can blame him if he can say, "I have a right to be so, for my debt is paid"? No one can challenge such an argument. He who believes that Christ Jesus suffered in his stead that which was due to God's justice, has a rational argument for being at peace which he may plead anywhere he pleases. God has forgiven for Christ's sake all his iniquity, why should he not be at peace? And if it be indeed so- that the Christian has become the child of God, ought he not to be at peace? If God his Father rules all things for his good, ought he not to be at peace? If for him there remains no hazard of eternal death-if for him there is prepared a glorious resurrection, and if he is ultimately to shine with Christ in eternal glory, why should not the man have peace? It is far more difficult, I should think, rationally to blame him for his happiness than it would be to justify him if he were in alarm. We are not victims of delusion, but speak the words of truth and soberness when we claim to be the most favored of mankind; the folly and the fanaticism lie with those who neglect God and eternity, and make a mock at sin.

Hence the worldling does not understand our peace, and frequently sneers at it because he is puzzled by it. Even the Christian is sometimes surprised at his own peacefulness. I know what it is to suffer from terrible

depression of spirit at times; yet at the very moment when it has seemed to me that life was not worth one single bronze coin, I have been perfectly peaceful with regard to all the greater things. There is a possibility of having the surface of the mind lashed into storm while yet down deep in the caverns of one's inmost consciousness all is still: this I know by experience. There are earthquakes upon this earth, and yet our globe pursues the even tenor of its way, and the like is true in the little world of a believer's nature. Why, sometimes the Christian will feel himself to be so flooded with a delicious peace that he could not express his rapture. He is almost afraid to sing, lest even the sound of his voice should break the spell; but he says to himself, "Come, then, expressive silence, muse his praise." Satan has breathed a whisper into the mind- "It is too good to be true;" but the spirit, firmly believing in the truthfulness of God, has repelled the insinuation, and rested, in the faithfulness of God, in the eternal covenant, in the finished work of Christ, in the love of God manifested towards his people in Christ Jesus. This is the peace of God. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." It is a rest with an emphasis, rest in Jesus' sense when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"-rest in the most golden sense that we can ever give to the word, and much more. It passeth understanding, but it does not surpass experience. Do you know it? Pray answer the question each one for himself, for I must come back to where I started from. It is not to be described: it must be tested to be known.

II. Now, I must, in the second place, with very much brevity, indicate, beloved friends, **HOW THIS PEACE IS TO BE OBTAINED**. Now, mark you, the apostle was addressing himself only to believers in the Lord Jesus, and I must beg you to take heed to the limitation. I am not now addressing myself to the ungodly: I speak to Christians alone. You are always at peace with God, though you do not always enjoy the sense of it; but if you wish to realize it, how are you to do so? The connection tells you. In the fourth verse Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." If you want to have peace of mind make God your joy, and place all your joy in God. You cannot rejoice in yourself, but you ought to rejoice in God. You cannot always rejoice in your circumstances, for they greatly vary, but the Lord never changes. "Rejoice in the Lord always." If you have rejoicing in earthly things you must indulge it moderately; but

rejoicing in the Lord may be used without the possibility of excess, for the apostle adds, "Again I say, Rejoice"-rejoice, and rejoice again. Delight yourselves in the Lord. Who has such a God as you have? "Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." Who has such a Friend, such a Father, such a Savior, such a Comforter as you have in the Lord your God? To think of God as our exceeding joy is to find "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Go on to the fifth Verse, where the apostle says, "Let your moderation be known unto all men"; that is to say, While all your joy is in God, deal with all earthly things on the principle of caution. If any man praises you, do not exult; if, on the contrary, you are censured, do not let your spirit sink. If you have prosperity, thank God for it, but do not be sanguine that it will continue. If property be yours, take it, but do not let it become your treasure or the chief consideration of your mind. Do you suffer adversity?

Pray God to help you, but do not be so cast down as to despair. Drink of earthly cups by sips; do not be foolish like the fly which drowns itself in sweets. Use the things of time as not abusing them. Do not wade far out into the dangerous sea of this world's comfort. Take the good that God provides you, but say of it, "It passeth away," for indeed it is but a temporary supply for a temporary need. Never suffer your goods to become your god. Rejoice in God alone, and as for all else, come or go, rise or fall, let it neither distress you nor make you exult. Take matters quietly and calmly, and if you do that you will have peace,. If you idolize any earthly good your peace will depart, but keep the world under your feet, and the peace of God shall keep your heart and mind. Three rules are then added by the apostle, which you will be sure to recollect. He tells us to be careful for nothing, to be prayerful for everything, and to be thankful for anything. Anyone who can keep these three rules, with the other two, will be quite sure to have a peaceful mind.

"Be careful for nothing"; that is-leave your care with God. Having done your best to provide things honest in the sight of all men, take no distressing, disturbing, anxious thought about anything, but cast your burden on the Lord. Then pray about everything, little as well as great, joyous as well as sad. "In every thing by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." That which you pray over will have

the sting taken out of it if it be evil, and the sweetness of it will be sanctified if it be good. The tribulation which you pray over will become bearable, even if it be not changed into a subject for rejoicing. A trouble prayed over is a dead lion with honey in the carcase.

And then we are bidden to be thankful for anything, for the apostle says, "In every thing with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Thankfulness is the great promoter of peace; it is the mother and nurse of restfulness. Doubtless, our peace is often broken because we receive mercies from God without acknowledging them: neglected praises sour into unquiet forebodings. If we render to the Lord the fragrant incense of holy gratitude we shall find our soul perfumed with the sweet peace of God.

Take those five things, then, as the connection sets them before you. Pile up all your joy into the sacred storehouse of your God, and be glad in the Lord. Next, leave, as much as you can, the things of this world alone; touch them with a light finger- "Let your moderation be known unto all men." And then pray much, care for nothing, and bless God from morning to night. In such an atmosphere shall peace grow as rare flowers and fruits bloom beneath sunny skies in well-watered gardens. May the Holy Spirit work these things in us and cause us to rest.

III. This brings me to the third point of our subject to-night, which was **THE OPERATION OF THIS BLESSED PRIVILEGE UPON OUR HEARTS**. It is said that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds. The Greek word is phroureo, which signifies keeping guard, keeping as with a garrison: so completely and so effectually does the peace of God keep our hearts and minds. Look, then: our hearts want keeping, keeping from sinking, for our poor spirits are very apt to faint, even under small trials. They also want keeping from wandering, for how soon are they beguiled! What feeble charms are able to attract us away from the altogether lovely One! Our hearts need keeping up, and keeping right. The way to keep the heart, according to the text, is to let it be filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. A quiet spirit, calm, restful, happy, is one that will neither sink nor wander: how can it? If the peace of God be in you, what can cause you distress? You will be like those great buoys moored out at sea, which cannot sink; it matters not

what storms may be raging, they always rise above all. Our souls, moored fast and rendered buoyant with peace, will be as fixed marks whereby others may know their way. Moreover, a man who has his heart full of peace is not likely to wander, for he says to himself, "Why should I wander? Where can such sweetness be found as I have tasted in my Lord? Why should I seek elsewhere? "The best way to keep a person in your service is to make it worth his while to stop; and if he is so happy and so content that he feels he could not better himself, you are likely to retain him for many a long day. Now, our Lord and Master has made his service such that we could not better ourselves. When he said to some of his servants" Will ye also go away?" they said, "To whom shall we go?" Ah, indeed! to whom could we go? Eyes, will you leave the light for the thick darkness? Ears, will ye turn away from the music of Jesus' Voice? Heart, wilt thou leave a faithful lover for a deceiver? Understanding, wilt thou go abroad after novelties when thou hast found the old, sure, satisfactory truth? Conscience, wilt thou burden thyself again with thy former load? When thou art so perfectly satisfied with the work and person of Christ wilt thou not stay where thou art? Oh yes, the heart is held with bands as strong as they are tender when it is full of the peace of God which passeth understanding. You young people get tempted, I know, and who among us does not? And the world has many charms for you. I recommend you, therefore, to pray the Lord to maintain your happiness in Christ, your joy in the Lord, for if you get out of heart with regard to your Lord and Master, it may be the devil may catch you when you are bad tempered and cross-grained towards your great Lord, and entice you away from your allegiance; but if your heart is always peaceful you will have a strength about you with which to resist the suggestions of the evil one. Rivets of peace are good fastenings for Christian loyalty. It is a very serious thing for a Christian to be in an uncomfortable state, for he is then weak in an important point. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," are God's words to his prophets, because he knows that when we lose comfort, or lose peace, we lose one of the most valuable pieces of armor of which our panoply is composed.

But the text also adds that this will keep our mind as well as our heart. Now in all ages we find that the minds of Christians have been apt to be disturbed and vexed upon vital truths. I think sometimes that this is the

worst age for error which has ever darkened the world. I get distressed and bowed to the earth as I see the treachery of ministers, professed ministers of Christ, who deny the inspiration of Scripture and lay the axe at the very root of all the doctrines which we hold dear, while yet they continue to occupy Christian pulpits. But when I look back all through history I find it was always so. From the days of Judas Iscariot until now there have been traitors and there have been men of ready speech and of quick thought who have used both fair speech and subtle thought to turn away simple minds from the gospel, insomuch that they would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. But why are not the elect deceived? As a rule it is because they find such peace -such perfect peace-in the truths which they have received, that deceivers vainly attempt to entice them away from it. "Ah," cries the restful believer, "I cannot give up the gospel. It is my life, my strength, my solace, my all. It was the comfort of my dying mother, and it remains the mainstay of my aged father. It was that which brought me to a Savior's feet and gives me grace to remain there. It has helped me in the hour of trial again and again. I feel I want its consolations, and therefore I can never part with it." And so he grows indignant with the man who casts a doubt thereon, especially if he be of the clerical order, and a pretender to the Christian ministry. Brethren, we cannot move one single inch from the truth which we have been taught by the Holy Ghost in our soul, and it is only such truth as that which can bring into the heart the peace of God which passeth understanding. When the Lord has brought his own truth into our minds by his own power and made the sweet savor of it to pervade our frame, and given us to drink thereof till we have been filled with joy and peace unutterable, we cannot, then, depart from it. Truth taught us by man we may forget, but that which the Holy Ghost engraves upon the inmost heart we cannot depart from. So help us God, we must stand to it, even if we die for it.

And what are the inventions they offer us instead of the choice things of the covenant of peace? They are trifles light as air. If they were true they would not be worth propagating: they might be left among the minor matters which are of no practical value to the sons of men. They bring us no new grounds of solid peace or fresh discovered arguments for holy joy. The negative theology promises no blessings to mankind; it is an empty-handed plunderer, robbing us of every solace, but offering nothing in

return. If modern thought could be proved to be true the next thing that ought to be done would be to hang the world in sackcloth, because such vanity of vanities has taken the place of the delightful truth which once gladdened the hearts of men. It were the saddest of all facts if we were assured that the doctrines of grace are after all a fiction. But they are not so. They cannot be: they bear their own witness within themselves. Some of us can speak about them as Christian replied to Atheist, when Atheist said, "Go back: go back!" Christian's reply was, "We are seeking the Celestial City." "Oh," said Atheist, "but I have gone farther than any of you, and I tell you that there is no such place. I have met with many learned men who have studied the whole matter, and it is all a delusion. Go back: go back." Then Christian said, "What! No Celestial City? Did we not see it from the top of Mount Clear, when we were with the shepherds and looked through the telescopic glass?" So we say-No atonement? Have we not felt the peace with which it soothes the conscience? No regeneration?

Are we not ourselves `the living evidence that men are made new creatures in Christ Jesus? No answers to prayer? Surely then we are not sane men at all, and our senses have failed us. No final perseverance? What then has kept us to this day? No work of the Holy Ghost? What? Are we asleep? Is even our existence a delusion? No, as we rub our eyes we feel that we have not been dreaming, but we feel sure that some other people are dozing and doting, and we pray that God in mercy may end their dream, and bring them to know those glorious and substantial verities which fill us with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and in so doing keep our hearts and minds. We are bound to the cross for ever, nailed to the wood with Christ for ever. The blood-red colors of the atonement are fastened to our masthead, to fly there till our vessel sinks, if sink it must, but never to be struck, though man or devil, priest or philosopher, fire hot shot into our vessel. We dare not change, but stand faithful to that which Jesus has taught us, at whose feet we sat in our youth, and who continues to teach us still. His peace keeps our heart and mind, and therefore we will with heart and mind keep his truth, come what may.

IV. Lastly, let us observe THE SPHERE OF ITS ACTION. The text says,

"In Christ Jesus." Now, beloved, I beg you to note this with interest. The apostle never mentions the name of Jesus too often. You cannot say that he drags it in, but he mentions it as often as ever he can, for he delights in the sound of it. "In Christ Jesus." These words touch every point of our text all the way through. Are we speaking of ourselves? We are in Christ Jesus. Our faith has realised our union with His sacred person. He is our head, and we are his members; he is the corner-stone, and we are built upon him. There is nothing about ourselves worth thinking of apart from him; and it will be well if we dismiss the thought.

Then if we dwell upon the peace of God, we still think of our Lord Jesus, for it is all in him. No peace is to be found out of Christ. No peace can warm our heart while we forget Christ. "He is our peace." Never go, dear brethren and sisters, for your peace to the law or to your own experience, to your own past achievements, or even to your own faith. All your peace is in Jesus.

And then our hearts and our minds, mentioned in the text, must all be in Jesus: the heart loving him, and loved of him; the mind believing him, resting in him, using its faculties for him,-all in him. If I leave that last thought with you it will be the best ending for my sermon: namely, that to get peace, and to get your hearts and minds kept, the grand necessity is to be in Christ-in your dying, risen, reigning Lord. Let him be upon your thoughts now and always. His table is now spread, come hither to commune with him. Come hither with your Master, to see your Master, and to eat his flesh, and drink his blood, after a spiritual fashion, at his own table.

A word to you who do not know our Lord. How I wish you did know him. You can never possess peace till you possess Christ. What a blessed beginning of Sabbaths it would be to your souls if you were to seek Christ to-night. You have not far to go to find him. He is not far from any of us. Cover your eyes and breathe a prayer to him. Stand behind one of the columns outside or get into the street and let your heart say, "Savior, I want peace, and peace I can never have till I have found thee. Behold, I trust thee. Manifest thyself to me at this moment and say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'" God grant you may so pray. It seems to me very wonderful that we should need to persuade men to think of their own

interests, and to care for their own selves. In other things they are always sharp enough to look after what they call "number one," but when it comes to the most solemn concern, the greatest blessing, and the purest happiness that can be had, they are so foolish as to let all things else attract them more than the Lord Jesus. The Lord save you all for his infinite mercy's sake. Amen.

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A Peal of Bells

In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. - Zechariah 14:20

There are many days already past which we might well have wished to see. Who would not have rejoiced to have beheld the day when God smote Rabab and broke the dragon in the deep waters, when Miriam took the timbrel and went forth with the daughters of Israel, saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea?" Who might not have wished to have witnessed the glorious victories of the judges when they put to rout the oppressors of Israel, or that day when David returned from the slaughter of Goliath, or that auspicious morn when Solomon's temple, glittering in unrivalled magnificence, was dedicated by a vast concourse of people with generous sacrifice to the worship of the true God? Many days there were in the chronicles of the Jewish Church which are never to be forgotten earth's red letter days when God made bare his arm and showed forth his might. Days there were, too, in Christ's history which it was a high privilege to see. The day of his birth—would that we had been among the shepherds on the plain when they heard the angels sing "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men," or the day of his death when he cried, "It is finished," and yielded up be ghost, or, better still, the day of his resurrection, when he routed all our foes by rising again for our justification, or the day of his ascension, when he led captivity captive and ascended up on high, or even that day of Pentecost, when the Spirit

of God fell on the disciples, and when they, preaching with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance multitudes being added to the Church of these who were ordained unto eternal life. Those days are gone, we look back upon them with faith, and as Abraham rejoiced in prospect, so would we do in retrospect. But there are days yet to come for whose advent we may well be eager. There is the day when Ephraim shall not envy Judah nor Judah vex Ephraim, for all the Church of Christ shall be one in spirit. There is the day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. There is the day, too, when Israel shall be restored to its own land, when its country shall be called no more desolate, but Beulah, and no more forsaken, but Hepzibah shall its name be, for the Lord delighteth in it. There is specially the day of the Second Advent, that day of days for which methinks all other days that went before were made, that day which shall be the summing up, the total of all ages, for the fullness of time shall come, and Christ in the fullness of his glory shall reign among the sons of men. I think I may with your permission add to the text of days which we might desire to see that which is spoken of in the text—"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord." What connection there may be between that day and others which I have mentioned it is not my purpose this morning to explain. I would that this were to us personally the day when it should be fulfilled in us as individuals, and may the Lord hasten the happy day when universally throughout the Church this text has been fulfilled, and upon the bells of the horses there shall be "Holiness unto the Lord!"

The text, as you perceive, deals with horses which were unclean under the Jewish law yet, in the day spoken of in the text, the horses themselves shall be purged from commonness or uncleanness, and their harness shall be dedicated to God as certainly as the vestments of the High Priest himself. It will be a happy day indeed when the men who deal with horses, too often a race anything but honest and upbeat shall exhibit in their common transactions a consecration to God, so that on the horses' furniture shall be written. Holiness to the Lord. The original Hebrew word translated "bells" is a very singular one, because nobody knows precisely what it means. The fact is, the Hebrews knew so little of horses from being interdicted from their use that they had not a very large

vocabulary to describe the harness and other equipments of the horse. The word is translated by some critics, "bells," by others, "bits," by some, "frontlets," by others, "collars," by some, and by Calvin especially, "blinkers," and Calvin also hints that the word may mean "stables." The words must then mean—"The furniture of the horses shall be, Holiness to the Lord," and there is no doubt a comparison between the horses and the High Priest: if it be the frontier—just as the High Priest upon his brow the Hebrew letters in gold "Holiness to the Lord," so on the frontlet of the horses shall be Holiness to the Lord, and as the High Priest wore bells about his garments, so the horses are decorated with their silver bells, there shall be on the bells, Holiness to the Lord, and if it signify any other kind of vestment, even as on the very ornaments of the Priest, on his ephod and breastplate holiness was written, so in every article that shall be by the horse shall holiness to God be most clearly manifest, yea, even the stables, unconsecrated as one could suppose they must always remain, shall be consecrated to God. The commonest buildings, set apart to meanest uses, being frequented by worshippers of the Lord, shall become temples of him dwelleth in humble and contrite hearts.

The simple meaning of the text is just this, that the day shall come when in common life holiness shall be the guiding star, when the ordinary actions of human existence shall be as much the worship of God as the sacrifice of the altar or the mission of the high priest when he went within the veil. Everything, that which was most despised—the horses, the places seemed the least likely to be consecrated—the stables, and those things which seemed the least holy, even the horses' harness,—all shall be so thoroughly used in obedience to God's will that everywhere there shall be, "Holiness unto Jehovah." Common things, then, in the day spoken of by Zechariah, are to be dedicated to God and used in his service.

I shall work out this great thought in a somewhat novel manner. First, let us hear the horses' bells; secondly, let us commend their music; and then, thirdly, let us go home and tune our bells, that they may be in harmony with this sacred chime—"Holiness unto the Lord!"

I. First of all, let us HEAR THESE HORSES BELLS, which, according to the text are to be tuned to the heavenly note of "Holiness unto the Lord."

First, let us mark the trappings of the steed as he goeth forth to war. "He champs his bit and is eager for the fray: his snortings are terrible, his neck is clothed with lightning, and he crieth in the midst of the battle, "Aha! Aha! Aha!" War is to our minds the most difficult thing to sanctify to God. The genius of the Christian religion is altogether contrary to everything like strife of any kind, much more to the deadly clash of arms. Yet it may be possible that occasions may arise in which war itself might become hallowed; and certainly we must not deny that many of those who have to deal with war are at this day consecrated men, like Cornelius' devout soldier, and as truly servants of Christ in the arm as though they were civilians. Now I say again, I am no apologist for war, from my soul I loathe it, and I do not understand the position of a Christian man as a warrior, but still I greatly rejoice that there are to be found at this present day in the ranks many of those who fear God and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. I may almost venture to say that the war against the tyrant, Charles I., was a consecrated fight. The people of God had been hunted like partridges upon the mountains, in the reigns of Elizabeth, and James, and Charles. At last their lion-like spirits turned at bay, and their enemies driven back before their gallant fury; Cromwell, the Christian hero, mounted his charger, and bade his saintly warriors, with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, fight for England's liberty. I think in those valiant charges when they shouted their battle-cry—"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge"—there was, as if ever there was, upon the frontlets of the horses, their collars, and their bits, "Holiness unto the Lord." May such a war never rise again, but honor to the ashes of the consecrated brave! If I could believe that there were in America a sincere desire on the part of the Northerners to set free every slave, I would say, "God speed their swords and bless their arms." If I could believe that the chain would be broken, and that it was their intent to do it,—if I did not fear that they will yet compromise and make terms with the bloodhound's master, and let him still hold his blood-stained property in the souls and bodies of men, I would say that that might be, if war ever could be, a consecrated war, and the bits of the horses would be "Holiness unto the Lord." But since that is a difficult point to speak of, since, as I have said before, the very genius and spirit of Christianity go against war altogether, though I must believe there have

been occasions in which the bells of war-horses have been Holiness unto the Lord, yet I would rather speak of individuals. If there ever lived a man who, disinterested in spirit, and without any desire of aggrandizement or selfish honor, held in his hand a consecrated sword, it is Garibaldi. I think of him, for his speeches make me believe it, not only as a hero, but as a Christian, as the scourge of Popery and the enemy of all despotism, it might be said that his war-garments are Holiness to the Lord. The like might we say of Hedley Vicars, whose history, so well-written, you have all so often read and of Havelock, our own true Havelock, who for the deliverance of our own wives and sisters, in silence rushed upon his prey, and delivered women and children out of the fierce jaws of the blood-loving tiger. These men preached Christ wherever they went. I love not their trade, but I love them. I would wish them to put up their swords into their scabbards, but when they did draw them, I am sure they did it in the full conviction that they were doing their duty, and though even that may not justify the error, yet it must prevent any of us from condemning them. I believe that they did it as in the sight of God, and what they did was to them Holiness unto the Lord Oh! may there never be war again! may peace reign! but if there must be wars, may they all be just ones! if there must be fighting may it ever be for the freedom of the slave and the deliverance of the helpless! and in all this may Jehovah, even in the battle in the garments rolled in blood, and in the fire and vapor of smoke, still be acknowledged and across the field of fire may there be written, "Holiness to the Lord!"

We turn aside awhile, for other horses are coming, and their bells are ringing forth Holiness unto the Lord. Horses are used in state. In splendor, kings, princes, and judges of the land ride through the crowd. The text says, "Upon the bells of the horses shall be, Holiness unto the Lord." Drawn by noble steeds, glittering with rich caparisons, an exalted personage passes through the thronging mass, it is a sovereign and oh! when the sovereign of a nation hath a heart which boweth before God, and hath a hope of an immortal and an imperishable crown, then regal state is sanctified and the bells upon the horses are Holiness unto the Lord. When a Sir Matthew Hale rode in the judge's chariot to distribute justice, surely the state which attended the Lord Chief Justice of the land was holiness to God, and when a Sir Thomas Abney even on the night of

the Lord Mayor's banquet, retired awhile that he might have prayer with his family and his servants, surely then the too gaudy show of civic pomp was for that once Holiness unto the Lord. And, I think, when Wilberforce went to the House of Commons, however he might ride, the bit of his horse was Holiness to the Lord. Since we cannot dispense with the ceremonial honor which surrounds governors, we must consecrate it, as long as kingdoms remain, it must be the prayer of Christians that the state may be a holy state, and that its officers and governors may be devout and upright men. Little do we know, my brethren, what mischief would soon be done in the high places of the land, if we had back again upon the throne a George the Fourth, if once again our eminent men were found indulging in the lowest pastimes of the very scum of this city, if again unblushing bribery defiled the judgment-seat; if a bloody Jeffreys could browbeat the saints of God once more—then we should consider it a matter of importance to pray to God for kings and those in authority. Had we not, my brethren, better think it a matter of importance now, and pray daily to God that he would cause the state to be more and more consecrated to him, so that the very bells upon the horses, as they walk in solemn pomp, may be Holiness unto the Lord?

But I hear the tinkling of other bells. The day is to come when, not only war and the states shall be consecrated to Christ, but even pleasure and recreation shall become Holiness to the Lord. When you are travelling in Alpine regions, you will be amused by the ringing of the little bells upon the horses. You are there for rest, to recruit the body, but let that rest be taken in the spirit of holiness. I fear that many leave their religion behind them when they go to the sea-side, or to continental countries. It ought not to be so, in our pleasures as well as in everything else, on the very berms of the horses there should be, Holiness unto the Lord. A Christian man needs recreation as well as another man, the bow must be unstrung, for the soul always bent to work shall soon lose the energy to labor. There must be times for breathing the fresh country air, and looking upon the meadows and the fields. I wish such days came oftener to the poor toiling population of this huge labyrinth of bricks; would that you could oftener see the laughing face of the verdant earth, and the smokeless heavens! But mark this, let us as Christian men see to it that we carry the spirit of this text with us wherever we go; that the bells of the horses be, Holiness

to the Lord, and our very recreations be done as sacredly and as much in the sight of God as our sacraments and our solemn feast days. Does recreation mean sin? Then, indeed, you have nothing to do with it. Does pleasure mean iniquity? Deny, deny yourselves. But there are pleasures which mean no such thing. As you traverse Alpine regions, let your thoughts stand on the mountain-tops and talk with God, or if you walk the fair lanes of England, let the cool retreat become an oratory for your soul. Why everything that your eye looks upon, from the king-cup in the meadow to the cedar upon the mountain may make you praise God, and when it is so, then the bells upon the horses are Holiness to the Lord. If in seeking rest you are really desiring to get strength that you may spend it in his service, if you take rest not for your pleasure's sake, but that stringing your muscles once more and getting your soul into tune, you may with greater vigor serve him in days to come; then, again, the bells of the horses are Holiness to the Lord. And if you avail yourself of any opportunities which your recreation throws in your way, to speak a kind word and a word for Christ to those whom you pass or with whom you have chance communion in your travellings, then, again, the bells of the horses are Holiness to the Lord. It is greatly to be regretted that the mass of our people who go to the sea-side, and especially who go to Paris, leave their godliness behind them. One of the Ministers of the Church at L'Oratoire told me, the manner in which English Christians spend their Sabbath days in Paris is a very serious impediment to the growth of religion in France. Men think that when they are abroad they may leave their habits which they practiced at home behind them. Full often have I known that at the sea-side, Christians knowingly and wilfully keep the proprietors of the houses where they lodge from places of worship, to prepare their sumptuous repasts on the Sabbath day, and so virtually prevent them from hearing the Word of God for six or nine months in the year. There may be some of you who are going out by-and-bye, I beg you in your recreation not to leave your religion behind you. You will put on your black coat and put on your tourist's suit, but take your Christian character with you I beseech you. Why should it be thought of you that your religion is a local thing, and that out of the way of society, which is a sort of check upon you, you may be free to sin as others do.

Listen to the bells again. Horses are used for journeying. We must all

journey sometimes, and when we do, the bells upon the horses and the shrill scream of the steam-engine should still be—"Holiness unto the Lord." The missionary is crossing the sea; perhaps at this very hour while we are sitting quietly here, his boat is leaping the billows and springing from mountain-wave to mountain-wave. I believe that every motion of the paddles is holiness to the Lord, because the ship is carrying forth God's appointed messenger to proclaim the gospel among the heathen. There are Christian men on board who are not giving forth to preach, but to emigrate and settle down now if they intend in emigrating to establish a Church of Christ where they are to live and to preach the gospel where they may be called to go, every motion of the vessel is Holiness unto the Lord. Perhaps she carries merchants who go abroad to trade and return again, but if they are about to trade as Christians, and then consecrate their substance unto God, that vessel, though when she leaves a black trail across the sky in her cloud of smoke, is as accepted as the smoke of sacrifice—is Holiness unto the Lord. Where there is a true heart, the horse that bears it is a consecrated one. Let our goings out be in the Lord's night. We are lights: if the light is moved, it should be to illuminate other places. We are salt: if the salt be scattered, it should be that the conserving influence should be felt the more widely. Do not go from home unless you feel that you can take your Master with you; and when you are from home, ever seek to be doing something for your Master, that when you are gone, you may leave a fragrance behind you. How much good might some do who are called to travel continually! There are some few in this Church, for instance, who travel as commercial gentlemen; I know one or two of them who scarcely ever go into a town without preaching the Word there, and I know others of them who, in the commercial room where they meet with some who despise the religion of Christ, speak boldly for the truth as it is in Jesus, and are as useful in their daily journeyings as any Christian men could be who filled up a place in the Sabbath-school, or officiated as deacons in the Church at home. Let your journeyings, then, always be with the ringing of these bells, "Holiness until the Lord!"

But horses of old were also used for merchandise, and when the pack-horses went in long strings, the fore-horses always had bells that the others might be guided in the darkness. I think there is an allusion to that

in the text, for such may have been the custom of the Eastern caravans, as indeed it was, and the text means, then, that merchandise and our common trade should be Holiness unto the Lord. O sirs! when you take down your shutters in the morning, let it be with a prayer that your business of the day may be as much a sacrifice to God as the business which I may have to transact as the pastor of the Church, and when you stand behind the counter ask of God, that in your dealings, though they be common to the eyes of men, there may be an inward spirituality which God shall discover, that thus there may be Holiness to the Lord. Sometimes when some of you have been stored up by a sermon, you have come to me and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, could I go to China? Could I become a missionary? Could I become a minister?" In very many cases the brethren who offer are exceedingly unfit for any service of the kind, for they have very little gift of expression, very little natural genius, and no adaptation for such a work, and I have constantly and frequently to say, "My dear brother, be consecrated to Christ in your daily calling; do not seek to take a spiritual office, but spiritualise your common office." Why, the cobbler can consecrate his lapstone while many a minister has desecrated his pulpit. The ploughman can put his hand to the plough in as holy a manner as ever did minister to the sacramental bread. In dealing with your ribbons and your groceries, in handling your bricks and your jackplanes, you can be as truly priests to God as were those who slew the bullocks and burned them with the holy fire in the days of yore. This old fact needs to be brought out again. We do not so much want great preachers as good upright traders, it is not so much deacons and elders we long for as it is to have men who are deacons for Christ in common life, and are really elders of the Church in their ordinary conversation. Sirs, Christ did not come into the world to take all fishermen from their nets though he did take some, nor to call all publicans from the receipt of custom though he did call one, he did not come to make every Martha into a Mary though he did bless a Martha and a Mary too. He would have you be housewives still, be sisters of mercy in your own habitations. He would have you be traders, buyers, and sellers, workers and toilers still, for the end of Christianity is not to make preachers, but to make holy men, the preacher is but the tool; he may be sometimes but the scaffold of the house; but ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building; ye, in your common acts and your common deeds, are they who are to serve God.

That wicked fiction of the Church of Rome, that her cathedrals are holy, has made us think that our houses are not holy. Why, my friends, our houses are as holy, or ought to be, as ever church or chapel. Some seem to think that there is some peculiar sanctity about aisles and oak seats, stone pillars and gothic arches. Holiness cannot belong to stones, holiness has to do with nothing except the acts and thoughts of intelligent subjects, and if holiness can by metaphor belong to places or substances, it must be through the Christian holy minds that are in contact with them. I will not have it that yonder parish church or that this place is one who more holy than that room where you live if you there offer prayer and praise. Oh! brethren, you must not think that the table, and the font, and the baptistry are holy; no, no, if there be holiness in them so may there be in your own table, in your own labors, and in your own tools which you handle, at least, there will be as much in one as in the other if with a holy mind you serve God in both. Not confined holiness—that is superstition; universal holiness—that is Christianity, not the bowls upon the altar holy—that is Judaism, but the bells upon the horses holy—that is true living godliness and vital Christianity. See to it, then, Christian friends, in your common daily doings, that the bells upon the horses are Holiness unto the Lord.

But horses were also used, as they still are, for toil, and toil though I have already anticipated the subject, toil is to be holiness to the Lord. The horse is turning over the furrow with the plough, and if it be held by a godly husbandman, the bells upon that horse are Holiness unto the Lord. And now it is time when the hay should be cut down and carted, if with gratitude in his bosom, the husbandman takes home the fruit of the earth, the carting is Holiness to the Lord. And when harvest-time comes round, and all the country is glad, every shout of harvest-time ought to be a holy shout, every smile that is on the brow of the tiller of the soil should be a holy smile; and when he has consecrated his wave-sheaf unto his God, when he has given a part of his increase to the poor and needy, and when he has bowed his knee and thanked the Universal Giver of all good, then the farmer's toil is Holiness to the Lord. I would, my dear brethren, that you would make your common toils Holiness unto the Lord. Come to look upon your meals as though they were sacraments, your clothes as though they were priestly vestments; your common words as though you

were preaching daily sermons; and your every-day thoughts as though you were thinking for the Sabbath of holy things. It is not to be always talking religion, but to be talking religiously that makes the Christian; it is not to be performing outward symbols, it is to be possessing the inward spirit. I do believe that there is more piety in going to visit the poor and needy and scattering your substance among them; more piety in teaching the poor ignorant ragged child, more piety in seeking to help some poor struggling tradesman, than there is in many a long prayer, and many a sanctimonious whine, ay and in many a long and eloquent discourse. That common piety which like common sense is oftenest the uncommonest of all, is what we need to have, and if I could make one man among you become thus consecrated, I should think I had, under God, done as much as though I poured you out in scores upon the plain of Hindostan, or sent you to edify the Chinese, or to instruct the Ethiopian. We want you as missionaries here; we want you as missionaries in daily life, and we must have you too, or else the Church will not increase, nor will the name of Christ be magnified. I have thus sought to make you listen to the ringing of these bells.

II. Now for the second point; let us COMMEND THE MUSIC of the bells upon the horses.

The religion of common life I must commend, first of all, for its loudness. These are many men who do not hear the Church bell, who will hear the bells upon the horses, by which I mean that preach as frequently as we may, some people will never believe us, but they cannot help believing what they see in your lives. We may extol Christ, and they will say, "It is his office and duty," but if your actions are what they should be, if your lives are saturated with the spirit of Jesus, they cannot help hearing them. They may put their fingers in their ears and not hear our sermons, but they must hear your sermons, for they can hear them through their eyes as well as through their ears, if you in your daily walk act as becometh the gospel of Christ.

Then, again, I commend the music of these horses' bells, not only for loudness, but for clearness. Many people cannot understand our sermons. There are words we use that they do not try to comprehend, and

some which the carnal mind cannot receive but they can understand your sermons, if they cannot mine. If you have traded honourably, if you, instead of taking undue advantage, have only taken that which is your due, if they have seen you refuse to tell a lie though you might have gained much by it, if they have known you to stand firm in your integrity, while others laughed at you as a fool and a madman, they can understand it. My sermons may be mistifying, but yours would not be. The church bell may sometimes have a cracked note, but the bells upon the horses will be so clear that they will be compelled in their consciences to believe what you teach.

Again, I commend the music of these bells for its constancy. The church bell rings but once a week; I am preaching to you some three or four sermons in a week, but you if you consecrate your common things, will be preaching all day long. You will keep the bells upon the horses ringing every time the horses nod their heads. Every time they move there will be a fresh peal, and that is the advantage of putting the bells not on the steeple, but on the horse, so that they must always ring. This place is shut up a great portion of the week, and only opened occasionally for worship, but you ought to keep your preaching places open always. There, behind the counter, should be your pulpit, or in the Corn Exchange, or the Market, or in the family; you should be always preaching. Your life should be always one continual sacrament, always one constant service of God. I commend this music, then, for its constancy as well as for its loudness and for its clearness.

Again, we must praise it for its universality. My church bell can only ring in one place, and the bells in the parish church only ring in the steeples where they hang; but the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go; and so with your piety, it will ring wherever you go. You can preach in the lodging-house, you can preach in the backroom yonder, where poverty has found a haunt, you can preach wherever God in his providence has cast you; at the Boardroom table, in the midst of the Corporation, in the Senate, in the House of Commons, you can preach wherever God calls you. I say again, the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go, and so must your piety ring wherever you are. This universal preaching in every court, and lane, and alley, is better far

for effect than our preaching ever can be.

Once more, I commend the bells upon the horses for their harmony. You know our church bells ring different notes. You go into one, you hear Puseyism; you go into another, and you hear sound evangelical doctrine, you enter another and you hear all but infidelity. Church bells run through the octave of tone. Among true Christians, our bells often ring a little differently. My Wesleyan brothers' bell does not ring quite the same as mine, nor mine exactly the same as the Independents'; but, mark, the bells on the horses all are alike. One Christian man's life is like another Christian man's life. There is nothing contradictory in the practical sermon, if there be in the doctrinal. If the vocal testimony of the Church should be somewhat divided, yet the loving testimony of the Church is always one, if it be always holiness, holiness, holiness unto the Lord. See to it, then, that you ring these bells upon the horses for their lovely harmony, and the absence of all discord.

And then once more. I commend the bells upon the horses, for they ring out a divine note. Our church bells do not always do that. Sometimes our sermons are a little to the honor and glory of the speaker, a little to the honor and glory of a particular Church, but the bells on the horses ring out not the glory of man, but holiness to the Lord, to the Lord, to the Lord. And so if you consecrate your whole life, the testimony of that life may be to your credit, but still it will be far more to the honor and glory of God. There will be no fear that man shall take the honor of your pious consecration, of your holy watchfulness, of your humble integrity, of your industry, your perseverance, and your constancy in the path of right. The bells upon your horses shall ring a diviner note than I fear will yet be rung from the bells of our pulpit. I have thus sought to commend the music.

III. And now I close, by asking you to go home and TUNE YOUR BELLS TO THIS NOTE.

You have many bells in your house, go home and tune first of all the chamber bell. It is an ill thing when a Christian husband is a worse husband than a wordly one; it is an evil thing when the husband and wife do not live together as partakers of the grace of Christ. Perhaps you will

say this is a very homely remark, but I think it is a very necessary one, for if a man cannot conduct himself well in his own family, what is he in the Church? I fear there have been many who have been mighty men in the Church who, if their private affairs had been a little examined, might have come out a little scarred and marred in the ordeal. Should I have a Christian man here who is not acting according to the Christian mandate, should I have a Christian woman here who pulleth her house down with her own hands, through idleness and carelessness, let me speak to them. How can the husband think of edifying others at the prayer-meeting until first he is what he should be before his own house? The husband is to love his wife, even as Christ loved the Church, the wife must see that she reverence her husband, the children must be obedient, and the household affairs must be ordered with discretion, or else your bells are not Holiness unto the Lord.

Then when you have looked at that, look at the kitchen-bell; see that it sounds forth Holiness to the Lord. Let the servant, not with eye-service, as a man pleaser, serve her master, and let the master take care that he giveth unto his servant that which is just and equal. Oh! it is a blessed thing when there is piety in the kitchen, and when the whole household is a Church. Indeed, my brethren, I can speak the joy of one who has servants that fear God, very often have my eyes been filled with tears through the peace, and joy, and rest of spirit that I have had in my own household since God has given me those that fear his name. See to it, that the kitchen-bell does not ring a contrary note to your parlour-bell, for if the kitchen can say, "My master is pious abroad, but he is wicked at home; he can talk very well in the pulpit, and pray very nicely at the prayer-meeting, but he neglects us; he is harsh, over-bearing, and passionate, it will spoil all my sermons. If you say to the servants "Come and hear our minister," she will say, "I do not want to hear him, if he is not a better man than you are, he will not do much good to me." Mark then, if the bells of the horses are to be holy, certainly the bells of the kitchen should be holy too.

Then some of you have got a shop bell, a little bell which rings as soon as ever any one comes in. Now take care that this is Holiness to the Lord. If people get cheated at other shops, do not let them get cheated at yours, or

they still be sure to say, "Ah!" you hear Spurgeon; that is your religion, is it?" They shall be sure to throw the blame on your religion and not on you. If there be a place where they get short-weight, let it never be at yours; if there be a place where there is a want of integrity, or civility, or attention, let it not be yours, but seek so to act that you do not make your religion help your trade, yet you keep your trade always in subservience to your religion, and seek to glorify God in all that you do. Some of you have got a factory bell, that bell rings at certain hours, and I see your men come streaming down the street to work. Now make that bell Holiness to the Lord. When will the time come when all these quarrellings shall be done with between master and man? When shall the day come when both of them shall seek to have perfect peace and harmony? For it is to their mutual interest, let them know. Oh! when shall it be that the workman shall feel that he has all that which is just and equal? And on the other hand when shall the master feel that he has not to deal with men who when given an inch will take an ell, but who are content to deal as fairly with him as he would with them. If I have any of your great cotton lords here, if I have any men who have many servants, let them take care that their religion turns their factory-bell, or else I would not give a farthing for all their religion, let them give what they may towards the maintenance of it. Then some of you have got visiting-bell, for I have seen it marked over, "visitors." And what are visits among the higher classes? It was my misfortune once to sit in the corner of a drawing-room, and listen to the conversation during a visit. If it had been condensed into the sense or usefulness it contained, it might have been spoken in something like the thousandth part of a second. But there it went on, talk, talk, talk, about nothing at all and when it was done they went away I have no doubt greatly refreshed. Now I think the visits of Christian people should never be of that kind. If you go to see anybody, know what you are going for and have a message to go with, and go with some intention. If God had meant you and me to waste our time in flying visits he would have made us butterflies and not men. He would have made us so that we might sip the nectar from the flowers like bees instead of which he has made men whose time is precious and whose hours cannot be weighed in the scale with diamonds. Let your visits be rather to the sick to give them comfort, to the poor to give them help, to your friends to show yourself friendly, and to the godly to get godly refreshment, than to the frivolous

to waste an hour or to the fashionable to maintain a fancied dignity. Let everything, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do be done to the glory of God. Physician, there is a bell at your door, let that be holiness to the Lord. Let those kind acts of yours to the distressed poor, let those divine acts of stooping down to the poor wayfarer in his suffering, consecrate your practice. Let your bell be Holiness to the Lord. Let each of you, whatever his calling may be, seek to find some special way in which that calling may conduce to the glory of Christ. You are a little star in the Pleiades, do not wish to be the pole-star, if you were taken out of the Pleiades, the constellation would not be what it now is. Keep where you are, but shed your special rays upon the earth; and if you be but a little star, do not the little stars together shed much light, and earth were dark if they all were quenched? I have tried to preach a plain homely sermon, but, perhaps I have not hit the mark, perhaps I have not made you feel what I want you to feel. Why, I would have every dustman's bell Holiness unto the Lord. Whatever your business is, though you are a scavenger, though you sweep a crossing, though you black shoes—whatever you have to do, let everything be done to the glory of God. And, if any say it cannot be done, do you show them the way, for the best practical proof is the proof of fact. I may preach to-day, and preach twenty days about making the bells upon the horses holiness to the Lord, but if you do not tune your own private conversation, the text will but excite laughter among some, and no practical profit will it be to any. Is there anything wrong at home? go and set it to rights. Is there anything wrong in the shop or in the kitchen? If you have not done what you ought to have done as a Christian man, if you have not acted as you ought to have done in your trade, go and do better. Not that you are to be saved by works, I have been speaking to those who are saved already. Being saved, show by your profession what you believe and would by your acts glorify your Master. Let me pray you to think often of this text—"In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord."

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The Peculiar Sleep Of The Beloved

For so he giveth his beloved sleep. - Psalm 127:2

The sleep of the body is the gift of God. So said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy. And so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of his ship. Sleep is the gift of God. We think that we lay our heads upon our pillows, and compose our bodies in a peaceful posture, and that, therefore we naturally and necessarily sleep. But it is not so. Sleep is the gift of God; and not a man would close his eyes, did not God put his fingers on his eyelids; did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep. True, there be some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well nigh to death, and then call it sleep; but the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. He bestows it; he rocks the cradle for us every night; he draws the curtain of darkness; he bids the sun shut up his burning eyes; and then he comes and says, "Sleep, sleep, my child; I give thee sleep." Have you not known what it is at times to lie upon your bed and strive to slumber? and as it is said of Darius, so might it be said of you: "The king sent for his musicians, but his sleep went from him." You have attempted it, but you could not do it; it is beyond your power to procure a healthy repose. You imagine if you fix your mind upon a certain subject until it shall engross your attention, you will then sleep; but you find yourself unable to do so. Ten thousand things drive through your brain as if the whole earth were agitated before you. You see all things you ever beheld dancing in a wild phantasmagoria before your eyes. You close your eyes, but still you see; and there be things in your ear, and head, and brain, which will not let you sleep. It is God alone, who alike seals up the sea boy's eyes upon the giddy mast, and gives the monarch rest: for with all appliances and means to boot, *he* could not rest without the aid of God. It is God who steeps the mind in lethe, and bids us slumber, that our bodies may be refreshed, so that for tomorrow's toil we

may rise recruited and strengthened. O my friends, how thankful should we be for sleep. Sleep is the best physician that I know of. Sleep hath healed more pains of wearied bones than the most eminent physicians upon earth. It is the best medicine; the choicest thing of all the names which are written in all the lists of pharmacy. There is nothing like to sleep! What a mercy it is that it belongs alike to all! God does not make sleep the boon of the rich man, he does not give it merely to the noble, or the rich, so that they can keep it as a peculiar luxury for themselves; but he bestows it upon all. Yea, if there be a difference, the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much. He who toils, sleeps all the sounder for his toil. While luxurious effeminacy cannot rest, tossing itself from side to side upon a bed of eider down, the hard-working labourer, with his strong and powerful limbs, worn out and tired, throws himself upon his hard couch and sleeps: and waking, thanks God that he has been refreshed. Ye know not, my friends, how much ye owe to God, that he gives you rest at night. If ye had sleepless nights, ye would then value the blessing. If for weeks ye lay tossing on your weary bed, ye then would thank God for this favour. But as it is the gift of God, it is a gift most precious, one that cannot be valued until it is taken away; yea, even then we cannot appreciate it as we ought.

The Psalmist says there are some men who deny themselves sleep. For purposes of gain, or ambition, they rise up early and sit up late. Some of us who are here present may have been guilty of the same thing. We have risen early in the morning that we might turn over the ponderous volume, in order to acquire knowledge; we have sat at night until our burned-out lamp has chidden us, and told us that the sun was rising; while our eyes have ached, our brain has throbbed, our heart has palpitated. We have been weary and worn out; we have risen up early, and sat up late, and have in that way come to eat the bread of sorrow. Many of you business men are toiling in that style. We do not condemn you for it; we do not forbid rising up early and sitting up late; but we remind you of this text: - "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." And it is of this sleep, that God gives to his beloved, that we mean to speak this morning, as God shall help us - a sleep peculiar to the children of God - a sleep which he gives to "his beloved."

Sleep is sometimes used in a bad sense in the Word of God, to express the condition of carnal and worldly men. Some men have the sleep of carnal ease and sloth: of whom Solomon tells us, they are unwise sons that slumber in the harvest, causing shame; so that when the harvest is spent, and the summer is ended, they are not saved. Sleep often expresses a state of sloth, of deadness, of indifference, in which all ungodly men are found, according to the words, "It is time for us to awake out of sleep. - "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober." There be many who are sleeping the sluggard's sleep, who are resting upon the bed of sloth; but an awful waking shall it be to them, when they shall find that the time of their probation has been wasted; that the golden sands of their life have dropped unheeded from the hourglass; and that they have come into that world where there are no acts of pardon passed, no hope, no refuge, no salvation.

In other places you find sleep used as the figure of carnal security, in which so many are found. Look at Saul, lying asleep in fleshly security - not like David, when he said, "I will lay me down and sleep, for thou Lord makest me to dwell in safety." Abner lay there, and all the troops lay around him, but Abner slept. Sleep on, Saul, sleep on. But there is an Abishai standing at thy pillow, and with a spear in his hand he says, "Let me smite him even to the earth at once." Still he sleeps; he knows it not. Such are many of you, sleeping in jeopardy of your soul; Satan is standing, the law is ready, vengeance is eager, and all saying, "Shall I smite him? I will smite him this once, and he shall never wake again." Christ says, "Stay, vengeance, stay." Lo, the spear is even now quivering - "Stay, spare it yet another year, in the hope that he may yet wake from the long sleep of his sin." Like Sisera, I tell thee, sinner, thou art sleeping in the tent of the destroyer; thou mayest have eaten butter and honey out of lordly dish; but thou art sleeping on the doorstep of hell; even now the enemy is lifting up the hammer and the nail, to smite thee through thy temples, and fasten thee to the earth, that there thou mayest lie for ever in the death of everlasting torment - if it may be called a death.

Then there is also mentioned in the Scripture, a sleep of lust, like that which Samson had when he lost his locks, and such sleep as many have

when they indulge in sin, and wake to find themselves stripped, lost, and ruined. There is also the sleep of negligence, such as the virgins had, when it is said, "they all slumbered and slept;" and the sleep of sorrow, which overcame Peter, James, and John. But none of these are the gifts of God. They are incident to the frailty of our nature; they come upon us because we are fallen men; they creep over us because we are the sons of a lost and ruined parent. These sleeps are not the benisons of God; nor does he bestow them on his beloved. We now come to tell you what those sleeps are, which he does bestow.

I. First, there is a *miraculous sleep* which God has sometimes given to his beloved - which he does not now vouchsafe. Into that kind of miraculous sleep, or rather trance, fell Adam, when he slept sorrowfully and alone; but when he awoke he was no more so, for God had given him that best gift which he had then bestowed on man. The same sleep Abram had, when it is said that a deep sleep came on him, and he laid him down, and saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, while a voice said to him, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Such a hallowed sleep also was that of Jacob, when, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, he laid him down and slumbered. Dreaming, he saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Such a sleep had Joseph, when he dreamed that the other sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf, and that the sun, moon, and seven stars were subject unto him. So oftentimes did David rest, when his sleep was sweet unto him, as we have just read. And such a sleep was that of Daniel, when he said, "I was asleep upon my face, and behold the Lord said unto me, Arise, and stand upon thy feet." And such, moreover, was the sleep of the reputed father of our blessed Lord, when in a vision of the night, an angel said to him, "Arise, Joseph, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." These are miraculous slumbers. God's angel hath touched his servants with the magic wand of sleep, and they have slept, not simply as we do, but slept a wondrous sleep; they have dived into the tenfold depths of slumber; they have plunged into a sea of sleep, where they have seen the invisible, talked with the unknown, and heard mystic and wondrous sounds: and when they awoke, they have said, "What a sleep! Surely, my sleep was sweet

unto me." "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

But, now-a-days, we do not have such sleeps as these. Many persons dream very wonderful things, but most people dream nonsense. Some persons put faith in dreams: and, certainly God doth warn us in dreams and visions even now. I am sure he does. There is not a man but can mention one or more instances of a warning, or a benefit, he has received in a dream. But we never trust dreams. We remember what Rowland Hill said to a lady, who knew she was a child of God, because she dreamed such- and-such a thing: "Never mind, ma'am, what you did when you were asleep; let us see what you will do when you are awake." That is my opinion of dreams. I never will believe a man to be a Christian merely because he has dreamed himself one; for a dreamy religion will make a man a dreamer all his life - and such dreamers will have an awful waking at last, if that is all they have to trust in.

II. He gives his beloved, in the second place, the sleep of a *quiet conscience*. I think most of you saw that splendid picture, in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy - the Sleep of Argyle - where he lay slumbering on the very morning before his execution. You saw some noblemen standing there, looking at him, almost with compunction; the jailer is there, with his keys rattling; but positively the man sleeps, though tomorrow morning his head shall be severed from his body, and a man shall hold it up, and say, "This was the head of a traitor." He slept because he had a quiet conscience: for he had done no wrong. Then look at Peter. Did you ever notice that remarkable passage, where it is said that Herod intended to bring out Peter on the morrow; but, behold, as Peter was sleeping between two guards, the angel smote him? *Sleeping between two guards*, when on the morrow he was to be crucified or slain! He cared not, for his heart was clear; he had committed no ill. He could say, "If it be right to serve God or man, judge ye;" and, therefore, he laid him down and slept. O sirs! do ye know what the sleep of a quiet conscience is? Have you ever stood out and been the butt of calumny - pelted by all men; the object of scorn - the laugh, the song of drunkards? And have ye known what it is, after all, to sleep, as if you cared for nothing, because your heart was pure? Ah! ye who are in debt - ah! ye who are dishonest - ah! ye who love not God, and love not Christ - I wonder ye can sleep, for

sin doth put pricking thorns in the pillow. Sin puts a dagger in a man's bed, so that whichever way he turns it pricks him. But a quiet conscience is the sweetest music that can lull the soul to sleep. The demon of restlessness does not come to that man's bed who has a quiet conscience - a conscience right with God - who can sing -

With the world, myself, and thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace shall be.

"So he giveth his beloved sleep."

But let me tell you who have no knowledge of your election in Christ Jesus, no trust in the ransom of a Saviour's blood - you, who have never been called by the Holy Ghost - you, who were never regenerated and born again - let me tell you that you do not know this slumber. You may say your conscience is quiet; you may say, you do no man any wrong, and that you believe at the bar of God you shall have little to account for. But, sirs, you know that the soul that sinneth, if it sins but once, must die. If the picture has a single flaw, it is not a perfect one. If ye have sinned but once, ye shall be damned for it, unless ye have something to take away that one sin. Ye do not know this sleep, but the Christian does, for all his sins were numbered on the "scape-goat's head of old." Christ has died for all his sins however great or enormous; and there is not now a sin written against him in the Book of God. "I, even I," says God, "am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and I will not remember thy sins." Now thou mayest sleep; for "so he giveth his beloved sleep."

III. Again: there is *the sleep of contentment* which the Christian enjoys. How few people in this world are satisfied. No man ever need fear offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man; for if any one came to claim the reward, he would of course prove his discontent. We are all in a measure, I suspect, dissatisfied with our lot; the great majority of mankind are always on the wing; they never settle; they never light on any tree to build their nest; but they are always fluttering from one to the other. This tree is not green enough, that is not high enough, this is not beautiful enough, that is not picturesque enough; so they are ever on the wing, and never build a peaceful nest at all. The Christian builds his nest;

and as the noble Luther said, "Like yon little bird upon the tree, he hath fed himself tonight - he knoweth not where his breakfast is tomorrow. He sitteth there while the winds rock the tree; he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing, and sleeps; and, when he awakes in the morning sings,

Mortals cease from toil and sorrow;
God provideth for the morrow."

How few there are who have that blessed contentment - who can say, "I want nothing else; I want but little here below - yea, I long for nothing more - I am satisfied - I am content." You sung a beautiful hymn just now; but I suspect that many of you had no right to it, because you did not feel it.

With thy will I leave the rest,
Grant me but this one request;
Both in life and death to prove
Tokens of thy special love.

Could you say there was nothing you wanted on earth, save Jesus? Did you mean that you are perfectly content - that you had the sleep of contentment? Ah! no. You, who were apprentices, are sighing till you shall be journeymen; you who are journeymen, are groaning to be masters; masters are longing till they shall retire from business, and when they have retired, they are longing that all their children shall be settled in life. Man always looks for a yet-beyond; he is a mariner who never gets to port; an arrow which never reaches the target. Ah! the Christian hath this text and communed with it: - "So he giveth his beloved sleep." In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, methought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old fortress, bidding defiance to the foe; but I was not happy in it. I thought I lay upon a couch; but scarcely had I closed my eyes, ere a trumpet blew, "To arms! To arms!" and when the danger was overpast I lay me down again. "To arms! To arms! once more resounded, and again I started up. Never could I rest. I thought I had my armour on, and moved about

perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, aroused by some fresh alarm. At one time a foe was coming from the west; at another from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some deep part of the castle, and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me. I awoke, and I thought I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the castle of discontent, the castle of ambition, in which man never rests. It is ever "To arms! To arms! To arms!" There is a foe here or a foe there. His dear-loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crosses the drawbridge of the castle of discontent. Then I thought I would supplant it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place, but I cared not for that. I had no treasure in the world, save one sparkling jewel on my breast; and I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep, nor did I wake till morning light. That treasure was a quiet conscience and the love of God - "the peace that passeth all understanding." I slept, because I slept in the house of content, satisfied with what I had. Go ye, overreaching misers! Go ye, grasping ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken; the dream of the miser is always evil; the sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty; but God "giveth," by contentment, "his beloved sleep."

IV. Once more: God giveth his beloved the sleep of *quietness of soul as to the future*. O that dark future! that future! The present may be well; but ah! the next wind may wither all the flowers, and where shall I be? Clutch thy gold, miser; for "riches make to themselves wings and fly away." Hug that babe to thy breast, mother; for the rough hand of death may rob thee of it. Look at thy fame and wonder at it, O thou man of ambition! But one slight report shall wound thee to the heart, and thou shalt sink as low as e'er thou hast been lifted high by the voices of the multitude. The future! All persons have need to dread the future, except the Christian. God giveth to his beloved sleep with regard to the events of coming time.

What may be the future lot,
High or low concerns me not;
This doth set my heart at rest,
What my God appoints is best.

Whether I am to live or die is no matter to me; whether I am to be the "offscouring of all things," or "the man whom the king delighteth to honour," matters not to me. All is alike, provided my Father doth but give it. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." How many of you have arrived at that happy point that you have no wish of your own at all? It is a sweet thing to have but one wish; but it is a better thing to have no wish at all - to be all lost in the present enjoyment of Christ and the future anticipation of the vision of his face. O my soul! what would the future be to thee, if thou hadst not Christ? If it be a bitter and a dark future, what matters it, so long as Christ thy Lord sanctifies it, and the Holy Ghost still gives thee courage, energy, and strength? It is a blessed thing to be able to say with Madame Guyon -

To me 'tis equal, whether love ordained,
My life or death, appoint me pain or ease;
My soul perceives no real ill in pain,
In ease or health, no real good she sees.
One good she covets, and that good alone,
To choose thy will, from selfish bias free,
And to prefer a cottage to a throne,
And grief to comfort, if it pleases thee.
That we should bear the cross is thy command -
Die to the world, and live to sin no more;
Suffer unmoved beneath the rudest hand,
As pleased when shipwrecked, as when safe on shore.

It is a happy condition to attain. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." Ah! if you have a self-will in your hearts, pray to God to uproot it. Have you self-love? Beseech the Holy Spirit to turn it out; for if you will always will to do as God wills, you must be happy. I have heard of some good old woman in a cottage, who had nothing but a piece of bread and a little wafer, and lifting up her hands, she said, as a blessing, "What! all this, and Christ too?" It is "*all this*," compared with what we deserve. And I have read of some one dying, who was asked if he wished to live or die; and he said, "I have no wish at all about it." "But if you might wish, which would you choose?" "I would not choose at all." "But if God bade you

choose?" "I would beg God to choose for me, for I should not know which to take." Happy state! happy state! to be perfectly acquiescent -

To lie passive in his hand,
And to know no will but his.

"So he giveth his beloved sleep."

V. In the fifth place: there is the sleep of security. Solomon slept with his armed men round his bed, and thus slumbered securely; but Solomon's father slept one night on the bare ground - not in a palace - with no moat round his castle wall, - but he slept quite as safely as his son, for he said, "I laid me down and slept, and I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." Now, some persons never feel secure in this world at all; I query whether one half of my hearers feel themselves so. Suppose I burst out in a moment, and sing this -

I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven.

You would say, that is too high doctrine; and I would reply, very likely it is for you, but it is the truth of God, and it is sweet doctrine for me. I love to know, that if I am predestinated according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, I must be saved; if I was purchased by the Son's blood, I cannot be lost, for it would be impossible for Jesus Christ to lose one whom he has redeemed, otherwise he would be dissatisfied with his labours. I know that where he has begun the good work he will carry it on. I never fear that I shall fall away, or be lost; my only fear is, lest I should not have been right at first; but, provided I am right, if I be really a child of God, I might believe that the sun would be smitten with madness, and go reeling through the universe like a drunken man - I might believe that the stars would urn form their courses, and instead of marching with their measured tramp, as now they do, whirl on in wild courses like the dance of Bacchanals - I could even conceive that this great universe might all subside in God, "even as a moment's foam subsides again upon the

wave that bears it;" but neither reason, heresy, logic, eloquence, nor a conclave of divines, shall make me pay a moment' attention to the vile suggestion that a child of God may ever perish. Hence I tread this earth with confidence. Arguing a little while ago with an Arminian, he said, "Sir, you ought to be a happy man; for if what you say be true, why you are as secure of being in heaven as if you were there." I said, "Yes, I know it." "Then you ought to live above cares and tribulations, and sing happily from morning to night." I said, "So I ought, and so I will, God helping me." This is security. "He giveth his beloved sleep." To know that if I died I should enter heaven - to be as sure as I am of my own existence that God, having loved me with an everlasting love, and he being immutable, will never hate me if he has once loved me - to know that I must enter the kingdom of glory - is not this enough to make all burdens light, and give me the hind's feet wherewith I may stand upon my high places. Happy state of security! "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

And there is a sleep, my dear friends, of security, which is enjoyed on earth even in the midst of the greatest troubles. Do you remember that passage in the book of Ezekiel, where it is said, "They shall dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods?" A queer place to sleep in! "In the woods." There is a wolf over yonder; there is a tiger in the jungle; and eagle is soaring in the air; a horde of robbers dwell in the dark forest. "Never mind," says the child of God:

He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode;
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there at night shall rest his head.

I have often admired Martin Luther, and wondered at his composure. When all men spoke so ill of him, what did he say? Turn to that Psalm - "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." In a far inferior manner, I have been called to stand up in the position of Martin Luther, and have been made the butt of slander, a mark for laughter and scorn; but it has not broken my spirit yet; not will it, while I am enabled to enjoy that

quiescent state of - "So he giveth his beloved sleep." But thus far I beg to inform all those who choose to slander or speak ill of me, that they are very welcome to do so till they are tired of it. my motto is *cedo nulli* - I yield to none. I have not courted any man's love; I asked no man to attend my ministry; I preach what I like, and when I like, and as I like. Oh! happy state - to be bold, though downcast, and distressed - to go and bend my knee and tell my Father all, and then to come down from my chamber, and say -

If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be;
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
For thou'lt remember me.

VI. The last sleep God giveth his beloved is the sleep of a happy dismissal. I have stood by the graves of many servants of the Lord. I have buried some of the excellent of the earth; and when I bid farewell to my brother down below there slumbering in his coffin, I usually commence my speech with those words, "So he giveth his beloved sleep." Dear servants of Jesus! There I see them! What can I say of them, but that "so he giveth his beloved sleep?" Oh! happy sleep! This world is a state of tossing to and fro; but in that grave they rest. No sorrows there; no sighs, no groans, to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Well may I address the dead thus: - "My brother, oftentimes hast thou fought the battles of this world; thou hast had thy cares, thy trials, and thy troubles; but now thou art gone - not to worlds unknown, but to yonder land of light and glory. Sleep on, brother! Thy soul sleepeth not, for thou art in heaven; but thy body sleepeth. Death hath laid thee in thy last couch; it may be cold, but it is sanctified; it may be damp, but it is safe; and on the resurrection morning, when the archangel shall set his trumpet to his mouth, thou shalt rise. 'Blessed are they dead that die in the Lord: yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.' Sleep on in thy grave, my brother, for thou shalt rise to glory." "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

Some of you fear to die, and have good reason to do so, for death for you would be the beginning of sorrows; and on its approach ye might hear the

voice of the angel of the Apocalypse: "One woe is past, but behold two woes more are to come." If, sirs, ye were to die unprepared, and unconverted, and unsaved, "There remaineth nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." I need not speak like a Boanerges, for it is to you a well known truth, that without God, without Christ, "strangers from the commonwealth of Israel," your portion must be amongst the damned - the fiends - the tortured - the shrieking ghosts - the wandering souls who find no rest -

On waves of burning brimstone toss'd,
For ever, O for ever lost!

"The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!"

But beloved Christian brother, wherefore dost thou fear to die? Come let me take thy hand:

To you and me by grace 'tis given,
To know the Saviour's precious name;
And shortly we shall meet in heaven,
Our end, our hope, our way the same.

Do you know that heaven is just across that narrow stream? Are you afraid to plunge in and swim across? Do you fear to be drowned? I feel the bottom - it is good. Dost thou think thou shalt sink? Hear the voice of the Spirit: "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God: when thou passest through the river, I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee." Death is the gate of endless joys, and dost thou dread to enter there? What! fear to be emancipated from corruption? Oh! say not so! but rather, gladly lay down and sleep in Jesus, and be blessed.

I have finished expounding my subject. There is only one question I want to ask of you before you pass out of those doors. Do you seriously and solemnly believe that you belong to the "beloved" here mentioned? I may be impertinent in asking such a question; I have been accused of that before now, but I have never denied it. I rather take the credit of it than not. But seriously and solemnly I ask you - Do you know yourselves to be

amongst the beloved? And if it happens that you want a test, allow me to give you three tests, very briefly, and I have done. It has been said that there are three kinds of preachers - doctrinal preachers, experimental preachers, and practical preachers. Now I think there are three things that make up a Christian - true doctrine, real exzperience, and good practice.

Now, then, as to your doctrine. You may tell whether you are the Lord's beloved partly by that. Some think it matters not what a man believes. Excuse me: truth is alway precious, and the least atom of truth is worth searching out. Now- a-days the sects do not clash so much as they did. Perhaps that is good; but there is one evil about it. People do not read the Bibles so much as they did. They think we are all right. Now, I believe we may be all right *in the main*, but we cannot be all right where we contradict one another; and it becomes every man to search the Bible to see which is right. I am not afraid to submit my Calvinism, or my doctrine of believer's baptism, to the searching of the Bible. A learned lord, an infidel, once said to Whitfield, "Sir I am an infidel, I do not believe the Bible, but if the Bible be true, *you* are right, and your Arminian opponents are wrong. If the Bible be the Word of God, the doctrines of grace are true;" adding that if any man would grant him the Bible to be the truth, he would challenge him to disprove Calvinism. The doctrines of original sin, election, effectual calling, final perseverance, and all those great truths which are called Calvinism - though Calvin was not the author of them, but simply an able writer and preacher upon the subject - are, I believe, the essential doctrines of the Gospel that is in Jesus Christ. Now, I do not ask you whether you believe all this - it is possible you may not; but I believe you will before you enter heaven. I am persuaded, that as God may have washed your hearts, he will wash your brains before you enter heaven. He will make you right in your doctrines. But I must enquire whether you read your Bibles. I am not finding fault with you this morning for differing from me, I may be wrong; but I want to know whether you search the Scriptures to find what is truth. And, if you are not a reader of the Bible, if you take doctrines second-hand, if you go to chapel, and say, "I do not like that:' what matters your not liking it, provided it is in the Bible? Is it Biblical truth, or is it not? If it is God's truth, let us have it exalted. It may not suit you; but let me remind you,

that the truth that is in Jesus never was palatable to carnal men, and I believe never will be. The reason you love it not, is because it cuts too much at your pride; it lets you down too low. Search yourselves, then, in doctrine.

Then take care that you remember the experimental test. I am afraid there is very little experimental religion amongst us; but where there is true doctrine, there ought always to be a vital experience. Sirs, try yourselves by the experimental test. Have you ever had an experience of your wretchedness, of your depravity, your inability, your death in sin? Have you ever felt life in Christ, an experience of the light of God's countenance, of wrestling with corruption? Have you had a grace-given Holy Ghost-implanted experience of a communion with Christ? If so, then you are right on the experimental test.

And, to conclude, take care of the practical test. "Faith without works is dead, being alone." He that walketh in sin is a child of the devil; and he that walketh in righteousness is a child of light. Do not think, because you believe the right doctrines, therefore you are right. There are many that believe right, act wrong, and they perish. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

I have done. Now let me beseech thee, you, by the frailty of your own lives - by the shortness of time - by the dreadful realities of eternity - by the sins you have committed - by the pardon that you need - by the blood and wounds of Jesus - by his second coming to judge the world in righteousness - by the glories of heaven - by the awful horrors of hell - by time - by eternity - by all that is good - by all that is sacred - let me beg of you, as you love your own souls, to search and see whether ye are amongst the beloved, to whom he giveth sleep. God bless you.

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A People Prepared For The Lord

To make ready a people prepared for the Lord. - Luke 1:17

John was the herald of Christ; he was to prepare the way for the coming King, but from this text it appears that he was to do more than that. He was not only to make the road ready for the Lord, but he was also "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." That was a great work, a task in which he would require strength and wisdom greater than his own. He would need that the Spirit of God, who was to be given without measure to the coming One, should also be in a measure within himself, if he should really "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

This is not at all a usual expression; at first sight, it hardly looks to us like a gospel expression. We sang just now, -

"Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come."

We sang over and over again those words, "Just as I am," "Just as I am," and we are prone to protest against the idea of being prepared for Christ; we preach constantly that no preparation is needed, but that men are to come to Jesus just as they are. Yet here is John the Baptist set apart "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The fact is, dear friends, that to get men to come to Jesus just as they are, is not an easy thing. To get them to give up the idea of preparing, to get them prepared to come without preparing, to get them ready to come just as they are, this is the hardest part of our work, this is our greatest difficulty. If we came and preached to men the necessity of preparation through so many weeks of fasting during a long Lent, or through so many days of scourging and penitence, they would attend to us at once, for they would be willing enough to make any preparation of that kind; but, when we say to them, "Come just as you are now, with nothing in your hand to buy the mercy of God, with nothing wherewith to demand or to deserve it," men want a great deal of preparing before they will come to that

point. Only the grace of God, working mightily through the Word, by the Spirit, will prepare men to come to Christ thus, prepared by being unprepared so far as any fitness of their own is concerned. The only fit state in which they can come is that of sinking themselves, abandoning all idea of helping Christ, and coming in all their natural impotence and guilt, and taking Christ to be their all in all.

Beloved friends, this is the true preparedness of heart for coming to Christ, the preparedness of coming to him just as you are; and it was John's business thus "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." That is also my business at this time. May the good Spirit, who dwelt in John the Baptist, work through us also, that some here may be made ready for Christ, "a people prepared for the Lord"! Let us see how John carried out his commission; we shall then be able better to understand the text.

I. First, John made ready "a people prepared for the Lord" BY AROUSING THEIR ATTENTION. The people were asleep; they had fallen into a condition of religious lethargy, when suddenly there stood in their midst a man clothed with camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins,—a prophet, manifestly, by the boldness and truthfulness of his utterances. He spoke in such a way that the people in general heard of his speaking, and they advertised him by saying the one to the other, "That is a strange man who has begun to preach by the River Jordan, and whose meat is locusts and wild honey."

The whole style of the man set the people wondering and talking; and when they came to listen to him, he did not flatter them, he did not utter mere commonplace truths to them, but with burning earnestness he drove straight at their hearts, and spoke like Elijah, the great prophet of fire, had done in the ages gone by. So *he set them thinking*. That is a great preparation for coming to Christ just as you are, to be set a-thinking. We have always hope of men when they once begin to think about religion and the things of God. See how the bulk of them hurry on with their eyes tightly shut, rushing fast and yet faster still down to destruction. You cannot make them stop and think. There are thousands of men who would almost sooner be whipped than be made to think. The last thing to which they will ever come of themselves is thoughtfulness. Let me appeal

to some here who are still unconverted. Did you ever give the affairs of your soul the benefit of an hour's serious consideration? You have your regular time for stock-taking, those of you who are in business; do you ever take stock of your spiritual estate? I know that you are not such fools as to neglect your ledgers, you cast up your accounts to see whereabouts you are financially; but do you cast up the account between God and your own soul, and look the matter fairly, and squarely in the face? Oh, if we could but bring you to do this, we should feel that you were being prepared for coming to Christ just as you are, for no man will come to Christ while he is utterly careless and thoughtless! Faith is a matter of thought; it requires a mind aroused from slumber, a mind that has taken wing; and John the Baptist did good service for his Master when he startled men into that condition, and so made them consider their ways.

He did more than that, for, having first made them think, he *preached to them a Savior*. He told them that One was coming with power to baptize them after a higher sort than his baptism. He cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and this message infused into the people a measure of hope. The poor people said, "What shall we do?" for they had a hope that there was something to be gained. Even the tax-gatherers, despised as they were, began to look up, and think that there might be something even for them, so they said to John, "Master, what shall we do?" And the rough Roman soldiers thought, "There may be something for us," so they also asked, "And what shall we do?" John inspired the multitudes with hope.

It is a very blessed state of mind for a man to get in when he begins to hope that he may be saved. Then he will be prepared to come to Jesus, just as he is, when he feels that he is not shut up to despair. "Oh!" says the poor man, "I need not, after all, be lost; I need not abide for ever under the wrath of God. There is an open door set before me, there is a way of mercy even for me." I wish it were possible that everybody whom I am now addressing had that feeling; it would be part of the making ready of "a people prepared for the Lord" when thought had blossomed into hope.

But John led his hearers on further than that, for *they began to expect something as well as to hope for it*. They expected that the Christ would

speedily come, and they expected some great blessings through the coming of the Messiah. And oh! when men, after hearing the gospel, have great expectations concerning God and his salvation, surely their expectations will not be long disappointed. I remember a man coming one day to see me, and he said that he wished to take a sitting in the Tabernacle. He had been hearing me for some time, and he wanted to take a seat; but he desired to be very honest with me, and not to take a seat except upon a right understanding. I asked, "What is the difficulty, my friend?" "Well," he replied, "the person who sat next to me on Sunday told me that, if I became a regular hearer here, you would expect me to be converted." "Well," I answered, "that is true, I shall expect it." "But," said he, "you do not mean that you will require it of me." "Oh, dear no!" I replied, "nothing of the sort; I do not expect you to convert yourself; but I hope and trust that you will be converted, that is what I mean. I shall expect that God, in his grace, will meet with you and save you." "Oh!" he said, "I hope that, too; only I mean that I could not guarantee it." "Ah!" I said, "I see that you have taken the word 'expect' in the wrong sense; but I think, dear friend, that if you come expecting to be converted, and I preach expecting that you will be converted, it is highly probable that it will soon take place." "Oh!" he exclaimed, "God grant it!" The good brother has long since gone to heaven. A very few weeks after our conversation, he came and told me that the expectation in which we had united had been fulfilled, and he trusted that he had found the Saviour. When people come really expecting a blessing, they will be sure to get it. I do believe that some folk go to hear ministers with the idea that there will be something to find fault with, and, of course, they find that it is so; and when people come to hear another preacher, with the hope and expectation that God will bless them, of course God does bless them. Their expectation is divinely fulfilled. I have always a bright hope that a man will lay hold on Christ when he begins to expect to be saved, for he feels then that the time has come for him to find eternal life. John made ready "a people prepared for the Lord" because, first, he led them to thought; next, he led them to hope; and then he led them to expectation, and this is a high measure of preparation.

John did more than this, for he cried, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," that is to say, *he put a pressure of presentness upon*

the people. A brother, who is an eminent preacher, but who uses rather long words, was explaining to me the benefit of the preaching of Mr. Fullerton and Mr. Smith in his place of worship. He said, "I do not know exactly why these brethren were the means of the conversion of many in my place whom I had never reached, but I perceived that they had the power to precipitate decision." It sounded rather strange, but when I thought it over a little while, I rather liked the expression, "the power to precipitate decision." That is the power that leads men to make up their minds, and say "Yes," or "No," to feel that the decision has to be made at once, and that the putting of it off is impossible because it would be a kind of insanity. Now that is the meaning of what John said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand! Repent ye! He is coming who wields the axe of divine Justice; bear fruit, or else be cut down. He is coming who uses the great winnowing fan; be the true wheat, or else be blown away." He put the truth so pointedly, and so earnestly, that he did by that means make ready "a people prepared for the Lord."

II. Now, secondly, John made the people ready for Christ BY AWAKENING THEIR CONSCIENCES.

His very first utterance, as I have reminded you, was, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent! Repent ! Repent!" was John's continual cry. This awakened the consciences of his hearers concerning *their sin*. Preaching repentance meant, "You have sinned; change your mind in reference to that sin. You have sinned; quit the sin, mourn over it, ask forgiveness for it. Repent ye!" Whenever a man brings to the minds of others their sins, when he so does it that they begin to feel that they have sinned, then they are being prepared for the Lord, for no man will come to the Saviour unless he knows that he needs a Saviour; and no man will feel that he needs a Saviour until he feels that he is a sinner. Hence it is a real preparation of men for Christ to convince them of sin.

This John did; he brought their sin before them, and then *he showed them their need of cleansing*, for he stood by the River Jordan, not with a scallop shell, as some depict him, but he stood by the flowing stream, ready to immerse all those who repented. This was practically saying to them, "You need to be washed, you need to be cleansed; and I show you

this truth as I baptize you with water unto repentance. Be this a token to you that there is no entering heaven in your filthiness, but you must first be washed. As your bodies are washed with pure water, so must your souls be washed and made clean ere you can enter heaven." This was John's plain teaching by his action as well as by his words.

Then he went very straight to his point of arousing their consciences by telling them of *their need of a change of life*. He said that it was no use for them to pretend to grieve over the past, and then continue to sin in the same fashion. "Bring forth fruits," said he, "meet for repentance," or, "answerable to amendment of life," as the margin has it. And he took pains to point out what the fruits must be. If they were men of greed, they must become generous, and give to their needy neighbours. If they had been unrighteous and exacting, they must become honest. If they had been domineering, and brutal, and murmuring, they must become contented, and quiet, and gentle.

He not only preached to the multitudes about repentance of sin in general, but *he pointed out the precise sin of each class of persons* that came to him, and urged them to perform the special duties which they had neglected. Now, brethren, I believe, as I have often said, that there is no sewing with silk thread alone; you must have a needle as well. You need a sharp needle to go first to draw the thread through the material; so you must preach the law, you must denounce sin, and you must individualize, and condemn special sins; and you must be personal, and pointed, or else men will not feel in their consciences what you say to them. Conscience is very apt to get seared as with a hot iron, to lose sensitiveness, so as to be no use at all as a conscience. Some say that conscience is a spark of deity, a divine monitor; it is nothing of the sort, in many a man it is almost extinct, for it does not act at all. The preacher who would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" must come out with his axe, and lay it to the root of the trees; he must be definite and distinct in indicating this sin and that sin, and crying to all men, "Repent of these sins. Give them up. Get clear from them. Be washed from them; or else, as God lives, when the Christ himself comes, it will not be to save you, but to blow you away with his winnowing fan as the chaff is blown into the fire."

This is "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" by their being convinced of sin and led to repentance. That, I think, is a second meaning clearly illustrated in the ministry of John the Baptist.

III. But thirdly, John had "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" BY POINTING OUT THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

He showed that *it did not depend upon external privileges*. As soon as ever John began to preach, the men of Jewish race, proud of their pedigree, pressed near; and John, with all the courage that a servant of the Lord could have, said, "Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." You see the drift of his preaching, do you not? He says, practically, "Men and women, there is no virtue in your boasted privileges, there is no merit in your religious descent. As for supposing yourselves to be the peculiar people of God, you are not to be saved that way. Say not, We have Abraham to our father." Oh, how many hug that idea, "My father was a Christian." Others say, "Well, I live in a Christian country." They suppose that there is something in the very race from which they have sprung. Away with all such notions, for whatever external privileges you may have had, they are not sufficient to secure salvation for you.

Then came the Pharisees and the Sadducees; they were the religious people of the time, the great observers of all outward propriety, but John taught them that *true religion is not the same as official pretension*. He called them a "generation of vipers." This was very disrespectful, and very shocking indeed on his part; all the newspapers of the period, if there had been any, would have cried him down for his want of charity, but he wanted those who came to him to understand that true religion was not the same as professing to be religious. It was not making broad the borders of their garments, it was not wearing a text of Scripture as a phylactery between their eyes, it was not making long prayers at the corners of the streets, that would save them; there must be a thorough change of heart. So John spoke right straight out; and this, I believe, is a great way of preparing men for coming to Christ, when you tell them, "It

is not your early training, it is not your going to church or chapel, it is not your infant sprinkling and your confirmation, it is not even your adult baptism, nor your saying prayers and reading the Bible, that will save you; but 'ye must be born again.' There must be an inward spiritual change, wrought by the Holy Spirit. You must believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, and you must so believe in him as to be made new creatures in him, or else you cannot be saved." Now, when men realize that all this is true, it startles them out of their false refuges, and makes them ready to flee to the only true refuge, so that it is really the way of making ready "a people prepared for the Lord."

While John set forth this matter negatively, putting down all the wrong hopes of his hearers, he was exceedingly plain in telling them that the way of salvation would involve them in *the necessity of being right before God*. "There," said he, "the proof of a tree's life is its fruit, and the evidence of your new life will be your good works. 'Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'" Unless our religion makes us holy, it has not done anything for us that is really worth doing. Unless we hate sin, and love righteousness, our religion is a sham and a lie. John stated that truth very plainly; and that is the way to drive men to Christ.

He told them also that the trial of a life would be by its weight as well as by its fruit. "Look," said he, "at the heap that lies on the threshing-floor. He that hath the fan in his hand begins to winnow it; that which is light and chaffy is blown away, that which has wheat in it remains on the floor. So," said he, "there must be weight about your religion—stability, reality, sincerity. There must be heart-work in it, it must be no pretence; it must be true from beginning to end, or else it shall no more avail you than a heap of chaff would avail the husbandman when it is blown into the fire."

Then John taught his hearers that Christ himself would be the great Trier of human hearts; not ministers or fellow-professors, but, Christ himself. When men feel this to be true, then they begin to say to themselves, "There is more required than we at present possess. There is more demanded than we can ever manufacture of ourselves. Let us go to him

that hath it, and ask him for it. Let us go to Christ, who hath grace to bestow upon the poor and needy."

This, then, is the way to make ready "a people prepared for the Lord," by pointing out to them the nature of true religion; that is what I have tried to do, dear hearer. When you know that you cannot save yourself, you sing -

"Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands:
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:"

and then you are ready to finish the verse by singing -

"Thou must save, and thou alone."

IV. Now I shall close my discourse by noticing a fourth way in which John made ready "a people prepared for the Lord." He did it BY DECLARING THE GRACE AND POWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

My brethren, if I were to preach to you merely to arouse your attention, to awaken your consciences to a sense of sin, or simply to show you the nature of true religion, yet you would not be prepared for Christ unless also you knew something about him, something about his suitableness and his power to save you. So, *John preached Jesus Christ as a mighty and glorious Saviour on whom the Spirit rested*. He says that, when he baptized our Lord, as Jesus came up out of the water, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." John boldly preached, and told the people that the Spirit of God rested upon Jesus Christ, yea, abode upon him. Now, this would lead them to him, and this should lead you to him. Whatever there is, poor souls, that you need to make you holy and perfect, Christ has it, for the Spirit of God rests on

him, and abides in him without measure. It you want the grace of penitence, Christ has it to give you. If you want the grace of supplication, he has it to give you. If you want the grace of faith, he has it. If you want the grace of holiness, he has it. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," "and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John taught this to his hearers, and I teach it to you. There is nothing wanted between hell-gate and heaven-gate but what is in Christ, nothing wanted for the biggest sinner out of hell to make him the biggest saint in heaven but what Christ has, nothing wanted in any hour of temptation, in any time of depression, nothing wanted in any moment of sickness, or in the article of death itself, but what it is in Christ, and there for you if you trust him. If you are willing to have it, it is freely presented to you. He who makes you willing to receive is certainly willing to give. If he has emptied you, and prepared you to receive of his fulness, do not think that he will refuse you when you come to him for it. He hath said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Last Sunday morning, I blew the great trumpet in the hope of startling some to Christ; on this occasion, I would ring the little silver bell with a gentle noise in the hope that some may, by that means, be made willing to come to Christ. My hearer, thou canst want nothing which Christ does not possess; all thy requirements are fully met in him. The Spirit of God dwells in him as a fulness, and as an abiding fulness; therefore, do but believe in him, and even that faith he will give thee, do but trust him, and thou art saved, and fully supplied in him who can meet all the necessities of thy case. Now, brethren, John taught the people this, that they might be ready for Christ, "a people prepared for the Lord," for, when men begin to see what a Christ Christ is, what a Saviour the Saviour is, then they are ready to come to him; and I pray that many of you may so come to him even now.

John also told his hearers that *the Christ whom he preached was able to baptise them with the Holy Ghost*. "See," says he, "I only plunge you in the flowing stream, I can do nothing more for you than dip you in this River Jordan, on profession of your repentance of sin; but this Saviour, this Christ of God, can immerse you into the Spirit of God. He can give you of his power to fill you; you can be baptized into the Holy Ghost by him:" Dost thou hear this, sinner? Jesus Christ can come and give thee the Holy Spirit in such measure that thou shalt be baptized into him -

"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in his immensity."

This will make thee to be really his, and make thee truly to live unto him. The very fulness of grace, then, is with Christ, and he is prepared to give it; and this should make men prepared to receive it. Did not the poor prodigal son say of the provision in his father's house, "There is bread enough and to spare"? It was partly that which made him go to his father's house; and we may say of the Spirit who is in Christ, "There is enough and to spare for every poor sinner who comes to him;" therefore, come along with thee, be prepared at once to come and receive the Saviour.

Lastly, John said in his preaching, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." *He pointed out Christ as the Sin-bearer*, bearing human guilt in his own person. That is the master-key which lets men into the kingdom of heaven. Oh! how I do delight to preach Christ as the Substitute, Christ as the atoning sacrifice; and when you have heard Christ preached in that way, it makes you ready, "a people prepared for the Lord." How can men come to Christ if they do not know what Christ has done for them? If you do not understand that he suffered in your stead, the Just for the unjust, to bring you to God, how can you come to Christ? But when you have learned that holy and blessed doctrine of Christ's propitiation for human sin, why, then, methinks, you will leap at the very sound of it, and say, "Yes, I will take this propitiation to be a sacrifice for me. Blessed Lamb of God, -

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin."

John's preaching Christ was the best way of making ready "a people prepared for the Lord," and there is no better way of preparing you to come to Jesus. Oh, that God would grant to some of you that "precipitation of decision" of which my learned friend spoke! Oh, that in

some lives the turning-point might be reached to-night, the happy moment when they should decide for Christ! Lord, decide them! My friend, you have come to the cross-roads; peradventure, to-night, if you reject the Saviour, it will be your last rejection of him, and it will finally seal your doom; and I am sure, with no peradventure whatever, that if this night you look to Jesus, and trust to his finished work, you shall be saved, and saved for ever.

Here is a text for you: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Is not that a wonderful "whosoever"? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord" in believing prayer, asking mercy, trusting Christ for mercy, "shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Most of you know these texts by heart; grip them as with hooks of steel. If you say that you are hungry, and I put a loaf of bread in front of you, will you sit and look at it all night? If I meet you in a week's time, will you still complain that you are hungry, while there is the bread in front of you still untouched? You deserve to be hungry if that is the case, you deserve to be famished to death if, the bread being there, you will not have it. Take it, and eat it. "May I have it?" asks one. Thou art commanded to have it; this is not a matter that is left to thy option. "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Our Lord himself said, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." It is, therefore, a gospel command that thou shouldest repent and believe, and truly thou mayest obey a command given by the Lord himself. There is no question about thy permission to obey it; then, obey it at once, and take Christ to thyself.

"You do not know me," says a sorrowing one away there in the corner, "you do not know me, sir; else you would not talk so." I do not need to know you; but if you were the devil's own, if you would but come to Christ, you should be at once and for ever Christ's own. Though thou wert sunk almost into hell by a life of horrible crime, yet if thou wilt now come and repent of thy sin, and lay hold on Christ, thou shalt be saved. I do not know how to use language that shall be stronger than that; but do not think that I will withdraw it, or qualify it. If I did know how to speak in broader terms even than those I have used, I would so speak. Ye guiltiest

of the guilty, you most condemned of all the condemned, for whom the hottest hell would be your due place, yet come away, and look to Christ, and you shall live, for none are too vile for him to cleanse, none are too guilty for him to pardon. Oh, that you would believe in Jesus while yet the gospel bell rings out, "mercy, mercy, mercy!"! God help you to do so, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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The People's Christ

I have exalted one chosen out of the people. - Psalm 89:19

Originally, I have no doubt, these words referred to David. He was chosen out of the people. His lineage was respectable, but not illustrious; his family were holy, but not exalted: the names of Jesse, Obed, Boaz, and Ruth, awoke no royal recollections, and stirred up no remembrances of ancient nobility or glorious pedigree. As for himself, his only occupation had been that of a shepherd-boy, carrying lambs in his bosom, or gently leading the ewes great with young - a simple youth of a right royal soul, and undaunted courage, but yet a plebeian - ;one of the people. But this was no disqualification for the crown of Judah. In God's eye the extraction of the young hero was no barrier to his mounting the throne of the holy nation, nor shall the proudest admirer of descent and lineage dare to insinuate a word against the valour, wisdom, and the justice of the government of this monarch of the people.

We do not believe that Israel or Judah ever had a better ruler than David; and we are bold to affirm that the reign of the man "chosen out of the people" outshines in glory the reigns of high-bred emperors, and princes with the blood of a score of kings running in their veins. Yea, more, we will assert that the humility of his birth and education, so far from making him incompetent to rule, rendered him, in a great degree, more

fit for his office, and able to discharge its mighty duties. He could legislate for the many, for he was one of themselves - he could rule the people, as the people should be ruled, for he was "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh " - their friend, their brother, as well as their king.

However, in this sermon we shall not speak of David, but of the Lord Jesus Christ; for David, as referred to in the text, is an eminent type of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who was chosen out of the people; and of whom his Father can say "I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Before I enter into the illustration of this truth I wish to make one statement, so that all objections may be avoided as to the doctrine of my sermon. Our Saviour Jesus Christ, I say, was chosen out of the people; but this merely respects his manhood. As "very God of very God" he was not chosen out of the people; for there was none save him. He was his Father's only-begotten Son, "begotten of the Father before all worlds." He was God's fellow, co-equal, and co-eternal; consequently when we speak of Jesus as being chosen out of the people, we must speak of him as a man. We are, I conceive, too forgetful of the real manhood of our Redeemer, for a man he was to all intents and purposes, and I love to sing,

"A Man there was, a real Man,
Who once on Calvary died."

He was not man and God amalgamated - the two natures suffered no confusion - he was very God, without the diminution of his essence or attributes; and he was equally, verily, and truly, man. It is as a man I speak of Jesus this morning; and it rejoices my heart when I can view the human side of that glorious miracle of incarnation, and can deal with Jesus Christ as my brother - inhabitant of the same mortality, wrestler with the same pains and ills, companion in the march of life, and, for a little while, a fellow-sleeper in the cold chamber of death.

There are three things spoken of in the text: first of all, Christ's extraction - he was one of the people; secondly, his election - he was chosen out of

the people; and thirdly, Christ's exaltation - he was exalted. You see I have chosen three words, all commencing with the letter E, to ease your memories that you may be able to remember them the better - extraction, election, exaltation.

I. We will commence with our Saviour's EXTRACTION. We have had many complaints this week, and for some weeks past, in the newspapers, concerning the families. We are governed - and, according to the firm belief of a great many of us, very badly governed, - by certain aristocratic families. We are not governed by men chosen out of the people, as we ought to be; and this is a fundamental wrong in our government, - that our rulers, even when elected by us, can scarcely ever be elected from us. Families, where certainly there is not a monopoly of intelligence or prudence, seems to have a patent for promotion; while a man, a commoner, a trades man, of however good sense, cannot rise to the government. I am no politician, and I am about to preach no political sermon; but I must express my sympathy with the people, and my joy that we, as Christians, are governed by one chosen out of the people." Jesus Christ is the people's man; he is the people's friend - ay, one of themselves. Though he sits high on his Father's throne, he was "one chosen out of the people. Christ is not to be called the aristocrat's Christ, he is not the noble's Christ, he is not the king's Christ; but he is "one chosen out of the people." It is this thought which cheers the hearts of the people, and ought to bind their souls in unity to Christ, and the holy religion of which he is the Author and Finisher. Let us now beat out this wedge of gold into leaf, and narrowly inspect its truthfulness.

Christ, by his very birth, was one of the people. True, he was born of a royal ancestry. Mary and Joseph were both of them descendants of a kingly race, but the glory had departed; a stranger sat on the throne of Judah; while the lawful heir grasped the hammer and the adze. Mark ye well the place of his nativity. Born in a stable - cradled in a manger where the horned oxen fed - his only bed was their fodder, and his slumbers were often broken by their lowings. He might be a prince by birth; but certainly he had not a princely retinue to wait upon him. He was not clad in purple garments, neither wrapped in embroidered clothing; the halls of kings were not trodden by his feet, the marble palaces of monarchs were

not honored by his infant smiles. Take notice of the visitors who came around his cradle. The shepherds came first of all. We never find that they lost their way. No, God guides the shepherds, and he did direct the wise men too, but they lost their way. It often happens, that while shepherds find Christ wise men miss him. But, however, both of them came, the magi and the shepherds; both knelt round that manger, to show us that Christ was the Christ of all men; that he was not merely the Christ of the magi, but that he was the Christ of the shepherds - that he was not merely the Saviour of the peasant shepherd, but also the Saviour of the learned, for

"None are excluded hence, but those
Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude,"

In his very birth he was one of the people. He was not born in a populous city; but in the obscure village of Bethlehem, "the house of bread," the Son of Man made his advent, unushered by pompous preparations, and unheralded by the blast of courtly trumpets.

His education, too, demands our attention. He was not taken as Moses was, from his mother's breast, to be educated in the halls of a monarch; he was not brought up with all those affected airs which are given to persons who have golden spoons in their mouths, at their births. He was not brought up as the lordling, to look with disdain on every one; but his father being a carpenter, doubtless he toiled in his father's workshop. "Fit place," a quaint author says, "for Jesus; for he had to make a ladder that should reach from earth to heaven. And why should he not be the son of a carpenter?" Full well he knew the curse of Adam: "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Had you seen the holy child Jesus, you would have beheld nothing to distinguish him from other children, save that unsullied purity which rested in his very countenance. When our Lord entered into public life, still he was the same. What was his rank? Did he array himself in scarlet and purple? Oh! no: he wore the simple garb of a peasant - that robe "without seam from the top to the bottom," one simple piece of stuff, without ornament or embroidery. Did he dwell in

state, and make a magnificent show in his journey through Judea? No; he toiled his weary way, and sat down on the curb-stone of the well of Sychar. He was like others, a poor man; he had not courtiers around him; he had fishermen for his companions; and when he spoke, did he speak with smooth and oily words? Did he walk with dainty footsteps, like the king of Amalek? No, he often spoke like the rough Elijah; he spoke what he meant, and he meant what he said. He spoke to the people as the people's man. He never cringed before great men; he knew not what it was to bow or stoop; but he stood and cried, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Woe unto you, whitewashed sepulchres," He spared no class of sinners: rank and fortune made no difference to him. He uttered the same truths to the rich men of the Sanhedrim, as to the toiling peasants of Galilee. He was "one of the people."

Notice his doctrine. Jesus Christ was one of the people in his doctrine. His gospel was never the philosopher's gospel, for it is not abstruse enough. It will not consent to be buried in hard words and technical phrases: it is so simple that he who can spell over, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," may have a saving knowledge of it. Hence, worldly-wise men scorn the science of truth, and sneeringly say, 'why, even a blacksmith can preach now-a-day, and men who were at the plough tail may turn preachers,' while priestcraft demands, 'What right have they to do any such thing, unauthorized by us?' Oh! sad case, that gospel truth should be slighted because of its plainness, and that my Master should be despised because he will not be exclusive - will not be monopolised by men of talent and erudition. Jesus is the ignorant man's Christ as much as the learned man's Christ; for he hath chosen "the base things of the world and the things that are despised." Ah! much as I love true science and real education, I mourn and grieve that our ministers are so much diluting the Word of God with philosophy, desiring to be intellectual preachers, delivering model sermons, well fitted for a room full of college students and professors of theology, but of no use to the masses, being destitute of simplicity, warmth, earnestness, or even solid gospel matter. I fear our college training is but a poor gain to our churches, since it often serves to wean the young man's sympathies from the people, and wed them to the few, the intellectual, and wealthy of the church. It is good to be a fellow-citizen in the republic of letters, but

better far to be an able minister of the kingdom of heaven. It is good to be able like some great minds, to attract the mighty; but the more useful man will still be he, who, like Whitfield, uses "market language," for it is a sad fact that high places and the gospel seldom well agree; and, moreover, be it known that the doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of the people. It was not meant to be the gospel of a caste, a clique, or any one class of the community. The covenant of grace is not ordered for men of one peculiar grade, but some of all sorts are included. A few there were of the rich followed Jesus in his own day, and it is so now. Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus were well to do, and there was the wife of Herod's steward, with some more of the nobility. These, however, were but a few: his congregation was made up of the lower orders - the masses - the multitude. "The common people heard him gladly;" and his doctrine was one which did not allow of distinction, but put all men as sinners naturally, on an equality in the sight of God. One is your father, "one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." These were words which he taught to his disciples, while in his own person he was the mirror of humility, and proved himself the friend of earth's poor sons, and the lover of mankind. O ye purse proud! O ye who cannot touch the poor even with your white gloves! Ah! ye with your mitres and your croizers! Ah! ye with your cathedrals and splendid ornaments! This is the man whom ye call Master - the people's Christ - one of the people! And yet ye look down with scorn upon the people; ye despise them. What are they in your opinion? The common herd - the multitude. Out on ye! Call yourselves no more the ministers of Christ. How can ye be, unless, descending from your pomp and your dignity, ye come amongst the poor and visit them - ye walk amongst our teeming population and preach to them the gospel of Christ Jesus. WE believe you to be the descendants of the fishermen? Ah! no, until ye doff your grandeur, and, like the fishermen, come out, the people's men, and preach to the people, speak to the people, instead of lolling on your splendid seats, and making yourselves rich at the expense of your pluralities! Christ's ministers should be the friends of manhood at large, remembering that their Master was the people's Christ. Rejoice! O rejoice! ye multitudes. Rejoice! rejoice! for Christ was one of the people.

II. Our second point was ELECTION. God says, "I have exalted one

chosen out of the people." Jesus Christ was elected - chosen. Somehow or other, that ugly doctrine of election will come out. Oh! there be some, the moment they hear that word, election, put their hands upon their foreheads, and mutter, "I will wait till that sentence is over; there will be something I shall like better, perhaps." Some others say, "I shall not go to that place again; the man is a hyper-Calvinist." But the man is not a hyper-Calvinist; the man said what was in his Bible - that is all. He is a Christian, and you have no right to call him by those ill-names, if indeed an ill-name it be, for we never blush at whatever men do call us. Here it is: "One chosen out of the people." Now, what does that mean, but that Jesus Christ is chosen? Those who do not like to believe that the heirs of heaven were elect, cannot deny the truth proclaimed in this verse, - that Jesus Christ is the subject of election - that his Father chose him, and that he chose him out of the people. As a man, he was chosen out of the people, to be the people's Saviour, and the people's Christ. And now let us gather up our thoughts, and try to discover the transcendent wisdom of God's choice. Election is no blind thing. God chooses sovereignly, but he always chooses wisely. There is always some secret reason for his choice of any particular individual; though that motive does not lie in ourselves, or in our own merits, yet there always is some secret cause far more remote than the doings of the creature; some mighty reason unknown to all but himself. In the case of Jesus, the motives are apparent; and without pretending to enter the cabinet council of Jehovah, we may discover them.

1. First, we see that justice is thereby fully satisfied by the choice of one out of the people. Suppose God had chosen an angel to make satisfaction for our sins - imagine that an angel were capable of bearing that vast amount of suffering and agony which was necessary to our atonement; yet after the angel had done it all, justice would never have been satisfied, for this one simple reason, that the law declare - "The soul that sinneth IT shall die." Now, man sins, and therefore man must die. Justice required, that as by man came death, by man also should come the resurrection and the life. The law required, that as man was the sinner, man should be the victim - that as in Adam all died, even so in another Adam should all be made alive. Consequently, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be chosen out of the people; for had yon blazing angel near

the throne, that lofty Gabriel, laid aside his splendours, descended to our earth, endured pain, suffered agonies, entered the vault of death, and groaned out a miserable existence in an extremity of woe, after all that, he would not have satisfied inflexible justice, because it is said, a man must die, and otherwise the sentence is not executed.

2. But there is another reason why Jesus Christ was chosen out of the people. It is because thereby the whole race receives honor. Do you know I would not be an angel, if Gabriel would ask me. If he would beseech me to exchange places with him, I would not, I should lose so much by the exchange, and he would gain so much. Poor, weak, and worthless, though I am, yet I am a man, and being a man, there is a dignity about manhood - a dignity lost one day in the garden of the fall but regained in the garden of resurrection. It is a fact, that a man is greater than an angel - that in heaven humanity stands nearer the throne than angelic existence. You will read in the Book of the Revelation, of the four-and-twenty elders who stood around the throne, and in the outer circle stood the angels. The elders, who are the representatives of the whole church, were honored with a greater nearness to God than the ministering spirits. Why man - elect man - is the greatest being in the universe, except God. Man sits up there - look! at God's right hand, radiant with glory, there sits a man! Ask me who governs Providence, and directs its awfully mysterious machinery; I tell you it is a man - the man Christ Jesus. Ask me who has during the past month bound up the rivers in chains of ice, and who now has loosed them from the shackles of winter, I tell you a man did it - Christ. Ask me who shall come to judge the earth in righteousness, and I say a man. A real, veritable man is to hold the scales of judgment, and to call all nations around him. And who is the channel of grace? Who is the emporium of all the Father's mercy? Who is the great gathering up of all the love of the covenant? I reply a man - the man Christ Jesus. And Christ, being a man, has exalted you, and exalted me, and put us into the highest ranks. He made us, originally, a little lower than the angels, and now despite our fall in Adam, he hath crowned us, his elect, with glory and honor, and hath set us at his right hand in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

3. But, my brethren, let us take a sweeter view than that. Why was he chosen out of the people? Speak, my heart! What is the first reason that rushes up to thyself? for heart thoughts are best thoughts. Thoughts from the head are often good for nothing; but thoughts of the heart, deep musings of the soul, these are priceless as pearls of Ormuz. If it be a humbler poet, provided that his songs gush from his heart, they shall better strike the cords of my soul than the lifeless emanations of mere brain. Here, Christian: what dost thou think is the sweet reason for the election of thy Lord, he being one of the people? was it not this - that he might be able to be thy brother, in the blest tie of kindred blood? Oh! what relationship there is between Christ and the believer? The believer can say

"One there is above all others
Well deserves the name of friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Faithful, free, and knows no end."

I have a great brother in heaven. I have heard boys say sometimes in the street that they would tell their brother; and I have often said so when the enemy has attacked me - "I will tell my brother in heaven." I may be poor, but I have a brother who is rich; I have a brother who is a king; I am brother to the prince of the kings of the earth; and will he suffer me to starve, or want, or lack, while he is on his throne? Oh! no; he loves me; he has fraternal feelings towards me; he is my brother. But, more than that: think, O believer! Christ is not merely thy brother, but he is thy husband. "Thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name." It rejoices the wife to lean her head on the broad breast of her husband, in full assurance that his arms will be strong to labor for her, or defend her; that his heart ever throbs with love to her, and that all he has, and is, belongs to her, as the sharer of his existence. Oh! to know by the influence of the Holy Ghost, that the sweet alliance is made between my soul and the ever precious Jesus; sure, tis enough to quicken all my soul to music, and make each atom of my frame a grateful songster to the praise of Christ. Come, let me remember when I lay like an infant in my blood, cast out in the open field; let me recollect the notable moment when he said, "Live!" and let me never forget that he has educated me, trained me up, and one

day will espouse me to himself in righteousness, crowning me with a nuptial crown in the palace of his father. Oh! it is bliss unspeakable! I wonder not that the thought doth stagger my words to utter it! - that Christ is one of the people, that he might be nearly related to you and to me, that he might be the goel, or kinsman, next of kin.

"In ties of blood with sinners one,
Our Jesus is to glory gone;
Hath all his foes to ruin hurled -
Sin, satan, earth, death, hell, the world."

Saint, was this blessed thought, like a necklace of diamonds, around the neck of thy memory, put it, as a golden ring, on the finger of recollection; and use it as the king's own seal, stamping the petitions of thy faith with confidence of success.

4. But now another idea suggests itself. Christ was chosen out of the people - that he might know our wants and sympathize with us. You know the old tale, that one half the world does not know how the other half lives; and that is very true. I believe some of the rich have no notion whatever of what the distress of the poor is. They have no idea of what it is to labor for their daily food, They have a very faint conception of what a rise in the price of bread means. They do not know anything about it; and when we put men in power who never were of the people, they do not understand the art of governing us. But our great and glorious Jesus Christ is one chosen out of the people; and therefore he knows our wants. Temptation and pain he suffered before us; sickness he endured, for when hanging upon the cross, the scorching of that broiling sun brought on a burning fever; weariness - he has endured it. for weary he sat by the well; poverty - he knows it, for sometimes he had not bread to eat, save that bread of which the world knows nothing; to be houseless - he knew it, for the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. My brother Christian, there is no place where thou canst go, where Christ has not been before thee, sinful places alone excepted. In the dark valley of the shadow of death thou mayest see his bloody footsteps - footprints marked with gore; ay, and even at the deep waters of the swelling Jordan, thou shalt, when thou comest hard by the

side, say, "There are the footprints of a man: whose are they?" Stooping down, thou shalt discern a nail-mark, and shalt say. "Those are the footsteps of the blessed Jesus." He hath been before thee; he hath smoothed the way; he hath entered the grave, that he might make the tomb the royal bedchamber of the ransomed race, the closet where they lay aside the garments of labor, to put on the vestments of eternal rest. In all places whithersoever we go, the angel of the covenant has been our forerunner; each burden we have to carry, has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel.

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?"

I am speaking to those in great trial. Dear fellow-traveller! take courage: Christ has consecrated the road, and made the narrow way the King's own road to life.

One thought more, and then I will pass on to my third point. There is a poor soul over there, who is desirous of coming to Jesus, but he is in very great trouble, lest he should not come right; and I know many Christians who say, "Well, I hope I have come to Christ; but I am afraid I have not come right." There is a little foot-note to one of the hymns in dear Mr. Denham's collection, in which he says, "Some people are afraid they do not come right. Now, no man can come except the Father draw him; so I apprehend, if they come at all, they cannot come wrong." So do I apprehend, if men come at all, they must come right. Here is a thought for thee, poor coming sinner. Why art thou afraid to come?" "Oh!" sayest thou, "I am so great a sinner, Christ will not have mercy upon me." Oh! you do not know my blessed Master: he is more loving than you think him to be. I was once wicked enough to think the same; but I have found him ten thousand times more kind than I thought, I tell you, he is so loving, so gracious, so kind, there ne'er was one half so good as he, He is kinder than ever you can think; his love is greater than your fears, and his merits are more prevalent than your sins. But still you say, "I am afraid I shall not come aright; I think I shall not use acceptable words." I tell you why that is: because you do not remember that Christ was taken out of the people. If Her Majesty were to send for me to-morrow morning, I

dare say I should feel very anxious about what kind of dress I should wear, and how I should walk in. and how I should observe court etiquette, and so on; but if one of my friends here were to send for me, I should go straight off and see him, because he is one of the people, and I like him. Some of you say, "How can I go to Christ? What shall I say? What words shall I use?" If thou wert going to one above thee, thou mightest say so: but he is one of the people. Go as thou art, poor sinner - just in thy rags, just in thy filth - in all thy wickedness, just as thou art. O conscience-stricken sinner, come to Jesus! He is one of the people. If the Spirit has given thee a sense of sin, do not study how thou art to come; come anyhow; come with a groan, come with a sigh, come with a tear, - any come, if thou dost but come, will do, for he is one of the people. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; let him that heareth say, Come." Here I cannot resist giving an illustration. I have heard, that in the deserts, when the caravans are in want of water, and they are afraid they shall not find any, they are accustomed to send on a camel, with its rider, some distance in advance, then after a little space follows another; and then, at a short interval, another: as soon as the first man finds water, almost before he stoops down to drink, he shouts aloud, "Come!" The next one, hearing the voice, repeats the word, "Come!" while the nearest again takes up the cry, "Come!" until the whole wilderness echoes with the word "Come!" So in that verse, "the Spirit and the Bride say, first of all, Come: then let him that heareth say, Come: and whosoever is athirst, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." With this picture I leave our survey of the reasons for the election of Christ Jesus.

III. And now I am to close up with his EXALTATION. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." You will recollect, whilst I am speaking upon this exaltation, that it is really the exaltation of all the elect in the person of Christ; for all that Christ is, and all that Christ has, is mine. If I am a believer, whatever he is in his exalted person, that I am, for I am made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places.

1. First, dear friends, it was exaltation enough for the body of Christ to be exalted into union with the divinity. That was honor which none of us can ever receive. We never hope to have this body united with a God. It cannot be. Once has incarnation been done - never but once. Of no other

man can it be said, "He was one with the Father, and the Father was one with him." Of no other man shall it be said, that the Deity tabernacled in him, and that God was manifest in his flesh, seen of angels, justified of the spirit, and carried up to glory.

2. Again: Christ was exalted by his resurrection. Oh! I should have liked to have stolen into that tomb of our Saviour, I suppose it was a large chamber; within it lay a massive marble sarcophagus, and very likely a ponderous lid was laid upon it. Then outside the door there lay a mighty stone, and guards kept watch before it. Three days did that sleeper slumber there! Oh! I could have wished to lift the lid of that sarcophagus, and look upon him. Pale he lay; blood-streaks there were upon him, not all quite washed away by those careful women who had buried him. Death exulting cries, 'I have slain him: the seed of the woman who is to destroy me is now my captive!' Ah! how grim death laughed! Ah! how he stared through his bony eye-lids, as he said, 'I have the boasted victor in my grasp.' 'Ah!' said Christ, 'but I have thee!' And up he sprang, the lid of the sarcophagus started up; and he, who has the keys of death and hell, seized death, ground his iron limbs to powder, dashed him to the ground and said, "O death, I will be thy plague; O hell, I will be thy destruction." Out he came, and in turn the watch men fled away. Startling with glory, radiant with light, effulgent with divinity, he stood before them. Christ was then exalted in his resurrection.

3. But how exalted was he in his ascension! He went out from the city to the top of the hill, his disciples attending him while he waited the appointed moment. Mark his ascension! Bidding farewell to the whole circle, up he went gradually ascending, like the exaltation of a mist from the lake, or the cloud from the steaming river. Aloft he soared: by his own mighty buoyancy and elasticity he ascended up on high - not like Elijah, carried up by fiery horses; nor like Enoch of old, it could not be said he was not, for God took him. He went himself; and as he went, I think I see the angels looking down from heaven's battlements, and crying, 'See the conquering hero comes!' while at his nearer approach again they shouted, 'See the conquering hero comes!' So his journey through the plains of ether is complete - he nears the gates of heaven - attending angels shout, "Lift up your heads, ye ever lasting gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting

doors!" The glorious hosts within scarce ask the question, "Who is the king of glory;" when from ten thousand thousand tongues there rolls an ocean of harmony, beating in mighty waves of music on the pearly gates and opening them at once, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Lo! heaven's barriers are thrown wide open and cherubim are hastening to meet their monarch.

"They brought his chariot from afar,
To bear him to his throne;
Clapp'd their triumphant wings and said,
'The Saviour's work is done.'"

Behold he marches through the streets. See how kingdoms and powers fall down before him! Crowns are laid at his feet, and his Father says, 'Well done, my Son, well done!' while heaven echoes with the shout, 'Well done! well done!' Up he climbs to that high throne, side by side with the Paternal Deity. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

4. The last exaltation of Christ which I shall mention is that which is to come, when he shall sit upon the throne of his Father David, and shall judge all nations. You will observe I have omitted that exaltation which Christ is to have as the king of this world during the millennium. I do not profess to understand it, and therefore I leave that alone. But I believe Jesus Christ is to come upon the throne of judgment, "and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Sinner! thou belevest that there is a judgment; thou knowest that the tares and wheat cannot always grow together - that the sheep and the goats shall not always feed in one pasture; but dost thou know of that man who is to judge thee - that he who is to judge thee is a man? I say a man - a man once despised and rejected.

"The Lord shall come, but not the same
As once in lowliness he came:
A humble man before his foes;
A weary man, and full of woes."

Ah! no. Rainbows shall be about his head; he shall hold the sun in his right hand as the token of his government; he shall put the moon and stars beneath his feet, as the dust of the pedestal of his throne, which shall be of solid clouds of light. The books shall be opened - those massive books, which contain the deeds of both quick and dead. Ah! how shall the despised Nazarene sit triumphant over all his foes. No more the taunt, the jeer, the scoff; but one hideous cry of misery, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Oh, ye, my hearers, who now look with contempt on Jesus and his cross, I tremble for you. Oh, fiercer than a lion on his prey, is love when once incensed. Oh, despisers! I warn ye of that day when the placid brow of the Man of Sorrows shall be knit with frowns; when the eye which once was moistened by dew-drops of pity, shall flash lightning on its enemies; and the hand, which once was nailed to the cross for our redemption, shall grasp the thunderbolt for your damnation; while the mouth which once said, "Come unto me, ye weary," shall pronounce in words louder and more terrible than the voice of the thunder, "Depart ye cursed!" Sinners! ye may think it a trifle to sin against the Man of Nazareth, but ye shall find that in so doing ye have offended the Man who shall judge the earth in righteousness; and for your rebellion ye shall endure waves of torment in the eternal ocean of wrath. From that doom may God deliver you! But I warn you of it. You have all read the story of the lady, who, on her marriage-day stepped up stairs, and seeing an old chest, in her fun and frolic stepped inside, thinking to hide herself an hour, that her friends might hunt for her; but a spring lock lay in ambush there, and fastened her down for ever; nor did they ever find her, until years had passed, when moving that old lumbering chest, they found the bones of a skeleton, with here and there a jewelled ring and some fair thing. She had sprung in there in pleasantry and mirth, but was locked down for ever. Young man! take heed that you are not locked down for ever by your sins. One jovial glass - it is all. "One moment's step." So said she. But there's a secret lock lays in ambush. One turn into that house of ill-fame - one wandering from the paths of rectitude - that is all. Oh, sinner! it is all. But dost thou know what that all is? To be fastened down for ever. Oh! if thou wouldst shun this, list to me, whilst - for I have but one moment more - I tell thee yet again of the Man who was "chosen out of the people."

Ye proud ones! I have a word for you. Ye delicate ones, whose footsteps must not touch the ground! ye who look down in scorn upon your fellow mortals - proud worms despising your fellow worms, because ye are somewhat more showily dressed! What think ye of this? The man of the people is to save you, if you are saved at all. The Christ of the crowd - the Christ of the mass - the Christ of the people - he is to be your Saviour! Thou must stoop, proud man! Thou must bow, proud lady! Thou must lay aside thy pomp, or else thou wilt ne'er be saved; for the Saviour of the people must be thy Saviour.

But to the poor trembling sinner, whose pride is gone, I repeat the comforting assurance. Wouldst thou shun sin? Wouldst thou avoid the curse? My Master tells me to say this morning, - "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I remember the saying of a good old saint. Some one was talking about the mercy and love of Jesus, and concluded by saying, "Ah, is it not astonishing?" She said, "No, not at all." But they said it was. "Why," she said, "it is just like him: it is just like him!" You say, can you believe such a thing of a person? "Oh yes!" it may be said, "that is just his nature." So you, perhaps, cannot believe that Christ would save you, guilty creature as you are. I tell you it is just like him. He saved Saul - he saved me - he may save you. Yea, what is more, he will save you. For whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.

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Perfection In Faith

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. -
Hebrews 10:14

Think of [this morning's text](#) - "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Is it not very grateful to observe, that what is just in one

part of Scripture presented to us as a matter of faith, is in another place states as a matter of fact? Think of this evening's text - "He HATH perfected us for ever." This morning we went downwards, from faith to prayer. After having said in confidence, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," we meekly besought him - "Forsake not the works of thine own hands," - sinking as it were to a lower note in the scale of music. Then we beheld Perfection in the dim obscurity of the future, like the sun veiled behind a cloud. Our faith rested on it as a thing at present unseen, our hearts yearned after it as an inheritance yet in reserve for us. Now to-night, this perfection is brought nigh to us, I thing accomplished, as an ever-present fact, whose eternal reality shines upon us with unclouded lustre. It is thus I read this verse - "By one offering our Lord Jesus Christ HATH perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

I have been turning this text over, and over, and over in my mind, and praying about it, and looking into it, and seeking illumination from the Holy Spirit; but I was a long time before I could be clear about its exact meaning. It is very easy to select a meaning, and then to say, that is what the text means, and very easy also to look at something which lies upon the surface; but I am not quite so sure that after several hours of meditation any brother would be able to ascertain what is the Spirit's mind in this particular verse, "By one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." When I was trying to find out what this meant, I thought I would read the chapters before it, and if I should happen to find out any word that should seem to be the key to this verse, I would then under the Spirit's guidance, seek to open this lock and mystery with the pick-lock which was there furnished to me. Well, I read the chapters, and I did find out a word which seemed to me to explain the whole of this verse. You must have patience with me, while I try to show you what I think it means; and then I think it will stand out in a very clear and glorious light.

First, the condition of the child of God - what he is. He is a sanctified person "Them that are sanctified." Secondly, what Christ has done for him: "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

I. First, then, THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE HERE INTENDED,

UNDER THE TERM "SANCTIFIED;" they are described as sanctified persons. What does this mean? We usually say there are two meanings to the term "sanctified." One is, "set apart." God has set apart his people from before the foundation of the world, to be his chosen and peculiar inheritance. We are sanctified by God the Father. There is a second signification, which implies not the decree of the Father, but the work of the Holy Spirit. We are sanctified in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit when he subdues our corruptions, imparts to us graces, and leads us onward in the divine walk and life of faith. But the word here, I think, includes both of these senses; and I must try if I can to find a figure which will embrace them both. And what is the apostle speaking about? In the ninth chapter he is speaking about the tabernacle, and the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread, and the sanctuary, and the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, and the pot of manna; he is talking about priests, and about priestly things, and holy things; and he is declaring that all these things of which he speaks were sanctified things, but that though they were sanctified things, they wanted to be made perfect by the sprinkling of blood. Now, I believe, the sanctification of our text is to be understood in this sense. There were certain golden vessels that were used in the sanctuary which were never used for anything else but for the service of God. They were set apart, they were made holy, and they were kept strictly to be the vessels of the sanctuary of the Lord God. They were sanctified things. Again, in the sanctuary there were persons who did nothing else but wait upon the Lord. These were consecrated to their offices; for God chose the tribe of Levi, and out of the tribe of Levi he chose the house of Aaron. These persons were chosen, and then they were prepared. They underwent certain ceremonies, and divers washings, and so they were made ceremonially holy; and these priests were therefore sanctified persons, because they were set apart, dedicated and reserved to the special service of the Lord God. Now, brethren, that is just what you and I are, and what we ought to be. We are sanctified persons: that is to say, we are chosen by God to be the peculiar vessels which he will use in pouring out his mercy, and to be the special priests whom he shall employ in his divine worship in this world. No man had any right to take wine for his own drinking, and drink it out of the golden cups of the sanctuary. If he did so, he did it to his own destruction - witness Belshazzar. He took the cups, and the golden candlesticks, and so forth,

and used them in his debaucheries, and lo! he was swept away, and the handwriting on the wall foretold his doom. Even so, beloved brethren, Christian men are not to be used for anything but for God. They are a set-apart people; they are vessels of mercy, they are not for the devil's use, not for their own use, not for the world's use, but for their Master's use. He has made them on purpose to be used entirely, solely and wholly for him. Now, that is what is meant in this text by "sanctified." We are sanctified persons, set apart for God's use, consecrated, just as the vessels, the cups, the candlesticks, and the tables, and the altars of the sanctuary, were sanctified unto God and set apart for his service; and I said, we that are priests are sanctified persons, not because of any holiness in our character, seeing there were some of them that were not holy in their character. My text does not touch character - it touches position in the sight of God. We are not perfect in character, any one of us - we are only perfect in position. There were two men who officiated as priests before God, namely the sons of Eli, who committed sin and iniquity before God; and yet they were set apart for God's service, mark you; and when they offered the sacrifices as priests, because they had been washed with water and sprinkled with blood, they were officially accepted as being sanctified persons. Now, brethren, the children of God are sanctified persons, to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God through Jesus Christ, and we have no right to do anything else but serve God. "What!" say you, "have not I to attend to my business?" Yes, and serve God in your business. "Am I not to look after my family?" Assuredly you are, and serve God in your family, but still you are to be a set-apart person; you are not to wear the white robe nor the breastplate, but still you are to think of yourself as being as much a priest as if the breastplate were on your breast, and the white robe about your loins; for ye are priests unto God and his Father. He hath made you a peculiar generation, a royal priesthood, and hath set you apart for himself.

Now, I think that this first head of my sermon gives you an inkling of what the rest must mean. I have already hinted at what I think is the sense of the text. I have explained, I suppose, clearly enough in what sense God's people are a sanctified people, as understood in this verse. They are chosen and set apart and reserved to be God's instruments and God's servants, and thus they are sanctified.

II. Now comes the second thing: IN WHAT SENSE ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THAT CHRIST HAS PERFECTED THESE THAT ARE SANCTIFIED? Why, just this: When the golden vessels were brought into the temple or into the sanctuary, they were sanctified the very first moment that they were dedicated to God. No one dared to employ them for anything but holy uses. But they were not perfect. What did they need, then to make them perfect? Why, to have blood sprinkled on them; and, as soon as the blood was sprinkled on them, those golden vessels were perfect vessels, officially perfect. God accepted them as being holy and perfect things, and they stood in his sight as instruments of an acceptable worship. Just so was it with the Levites and the priests. As soon as ever they were set apart to their office; as soon as ever they were born, in fact, they were consecrated, they belonged to God; they were his peculiar priesthood. But they were not perfect until they had passed through divers washings, and had the blood sprinkled upon them. Then God looked upon them in their official priestly character, as being perfect persons. They were not perfect in character, I repeat, they were only perfect officially; perfect in the sight of God; and they stood before him to offer sacrifice as acceptably, as if they had been pure as Adam himself. Now, then, how does this refer to us, and what is the meaning of this text, that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified?" Turn back a moment or two. You will find in the 9th chapter of the Hebrews, at the 6th verse, "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." Mark here. The first meaning of my text is this. The child of God is a priest, and as a priest he is sanctified to enter within the veil. He is now permitted to go into the place which was once within the veil, but which is not so now, because the veil is rent in twain; but the high priest could not go within the veil, because he was not perfect; he had to be sprinkled with the blood, and that made him officially perfect. It would not make him perfect merely to put on the breast-plate, or to wear the ephod; he was not perfect till the blood had been sprinkled upon him, and then he went within the veil. But when next year came round he was not fit to go within the veil till blood was sprinkled on him again; and the

next year, though he was always a sanctified man, he was not always, officially, a perfect man. He had to be sprinkled with blood again. And so, year after year, the high priest who went within the veil, needed afresh to be made perfect, in order that he might obtain access to God.

Here is one sense of the text. The apostle says that we who are the priests of God have a right as priests to go to God's mercy-seat that is within the veil; but it were to our death to go there unless we were perfect. But we are perfect, for the blood of Christ has been sprinkled on us, and, therefore, our standing before God is the standing of perfection. Our standing, in our own conscience, is imperfection, just as the character of the priest might be imperfect. But that has nothing to do with it. Our standing in the sight of God is a standing of perfection; and when he sees the blood, as of old the destroying angel passed over Israel, so this day, when he sees the blood, God passes over our sins, and accepts us at the throne of his mercy, as if we were perfect. Therefore, brethren, let us come boldly; let us "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The apostle brings in, in the twenty-second verse of this tenth chapter, one inference which I have just drawn from my text. In having access to God, perfection is absolutely necessary. God cannot talk with an imperfect being. He could talk with Adam in the garden but he could not talk with you or with me, even in paradise itself, as imperfect creatures. How, then, am I to have fellowship with God, and access to his throne? Why, simply thus: - "The blood of Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and consequently we have access with boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace, and may come boldly in all our time of need. And what is better still, we are always perfect, always fit to come to the throne, whatever our doubts, whatever our sins. I say not this of the priest's character. We have nothing to do with that at present. We come before God in our station, not in our character, and therefore, we may come as perfect men at all times, knowing that God seeth no sin in Jacob, and no iniquity in Israel; for in this sense Christ hath perfected for ever, every consecrated vessel of his mercy. Oh! is not this a delightful thought, that when I come before the throne of God, I feel myself a sinner, but God does not look upon me as one? When I approach him to offer my thanksgivings, I feel that I am

unworthy in myself; but I am not unworthy in that official standing in which he has placed me. As a sanctified and perfected thing in Christ, I have the blood upon me; God regards me in my sacrifice, in my worship, ay, and in myself, too as being perfect.

Oh how joyful this is! And there is no need a second time to repeat this perfecting. It is an everlasting perfection; it allows a constant access to the throne of the heavenly grace. That is one meaning of the text.

Again, a little further on, our apostle, in the 9th chapter of the Hebrews, says, at the 21st verse, "He sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry," They were all sanctified vessels, you know, but they were not perfect vessels till they were sprinkled with the blood. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these," and so forth. Now, beloved, the vessels of the sanctuary, as I have said, were sanctified the moment they were put there, but they were not perfect; God could not therefore accept any sacrifice that was touched with the golden tongs or that lay upon the brazen altar, so long as those golden tongs and the brazen altar were imperfect. What was done to make them perfect? Why, they were sprinkled with blood; but they had to be sprinkled with blood ever so many times - once, twice, thrice, multitudes of times, because continually they wanted making perfect. Now you and I are this day, if we are consecrated persons, like the vessels of the sanctuary. Sometimes we are like the censer - God fills us with joy, and then the smoke of incense ascends from us; sometimes we are like the slaughter-knife that the priests used; we are enabled to deny our lusts, to deny ourselves, and put the knife to the neck of the victim, and sometimes we are like the altar, and upon us God is pleased to lay a sacrifice of labour, and there it smokes acceptably to heaven. We are made like sanctified things of his house. But, beloved, we, though we are sanctified, and he has chosen us to be the vessels of his spiritual temple, are not perfect till the blood is on us. Yet blessed be his name, that blood has once been put upon us, and we are perfected for ever. Is it not delightful to think that when God uses us in his service he could not use

unhallowed instruments? The Lord God is so pure that he could not use anything but a perfect tool to work with. "Then surely he could never use me or use you." Nay, but don't you see, the blood is on us, and we are the sanctified instruments of his grace; and moreover, we are the perfect instruments of his grace through the blood of Jesus. Oh! I delight to think that although in preaching the gospel I am in my own estimation and in yours rightly enough, imperfect; yet when God makes use of me in conversion, he does not make use of an imperfect man; no, he looks upon me in Christ as being perfect in Him, and then he says, "I can use this tool; I could not put my hand to an unholy thing, but I will look upon him as being perfected for ever in Christ, and therefore I can use him. Oh! Christian, do try to digest this precious thought: it has indeed been precious to my soul since I first laid hold upon it. You cannot tell what God may do with you, because if he uses you at all he does not use you as a sinner - he uses you as a sanctified person; nay more, as a perfect person. I will repeat it; I do not see how a holy God could use an unholy instrument; but he puts the blood on us, and then he makes us perfect - perfects us for ever, and then he uses us. And so I see the work of God tarried on by men whom we think are imperfect; but I never see God doing any of his deeds except with a perfect instrument; and if you ask me how he has done it, I tell you that all his consecrated ones, all whom he has sanctified to his use, he has first of all perfected for ever through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

And now we will have use more thought, and then I shall have given you the full meaning of the text. In the seventh chapter, the nineteenth verse, there is a word that is a key to the meaning of my text, and that helped me all through it; and I will give you the key now. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God." Then with this, compare the tenth chapter and first verse, "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year, continually make the comers thereunto perfect." There is the word "perfect;" and we have got it in the text; "for then," says he, if they had been perfect, "would they not have ceased to be offered." Why offer any more, if you are a perfect man? "If the sacrifice made is perfect, the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of

sin." Now mark. The Jewish sacrifice was never intended to make the Jews' moral character any better, and it did not; it had no effect upon what we call his sanctification; all the sacrifice dealt with was his justification, and the perfection would be sought after; the perfection is not of sanctification, which the Arminian talks about, but the perfection of official standing, as he stood justified before God. Now that is the meaning of the word "perfect" here. It does not mean that the sacrifice did not make the man perfectly holy, and perfectly moral, and so forth; the sacrifice had no tendency to do that; it was quite another matter. It means that it did not perfectly make him justified in his own conscience and in the sight of God, because he had to come and offer again. Now, here comes a man who is troubled in his conscience. He comes sighing up the temple, and he must speak to the priest. He says to the priest, "I have committed such-and-such a sin." "Ah!" says the priest, "You will never have any ease to your conscience unless you bring a sin offering. He brings a sin offering, and it is offered, and the man sees it burn and goes away. He has got faith - faith in the great sin offering that is to come - and his conscience is easy. A day or two after, the same feelings arise; and what does he do? he goes to the priest again. "Ah!" says the priest, "you must bring another offering; you must bring a trespass offering." He does that, and his conscience grows easier for a time; but the more his conscience gets quickened, the more he sees the unsatisfactory character of the offering he brings. At last, he says, "I am so uneasy; oh! that I could have a sacrifice every hour! For do you know," says he, "while I can put my hand on the head of the victim, I feel so happy: when I come to see it slaughtered, and the blood flowing, I feel so easy; but I do not feel perfect. I will even go up to the temple," he says, "that there I may live." He sees a lamb slaughtered in the morning, and tears of joy are in his eye. "Oh!" says he "I have seen that lamb; and when I saw the blood of that lamb flowing, I felt so rejoiced," Noon comes. "Ah!" says he, "my sins arise again; I have got a conscience, and where can I get relief for it?" And off he went to the temple; and there was another lamb in the evening, because God well knew that the sacrifices were themselves imperfect, only a shadow of the great substance, and that his people would need to have the service renewed, not only every year, but every day; nay, every morning and every evening.

But now, beloved, behold the glory of Christ Jesus as revealed to us in our text. "Those sacrifices could not make the comers thereunto perfect." They could not feel in their own conscience that they were perfectly justified, and they wanted fresh offerings; but here to-day I see the slaughtered Lamb on Calvary, and it was but yesterday I rejoiced in him, and I can rejoice in him again to-day. Years ago I sought him and I found him. I do not want another Lamb; I do not want another sacrifice. I can still see that blood flowing, and I can feel continually that I have no more conscience of sin. The sins are gone; I have no more remembrance of them; I am purged from them: and as I see the perpetual flowing blood of Calvary, and the ever rising merits of his glorious passion, I am compelled to rejoice in this fact, that he hath perfected for ever me - made me completely perfect through his sacrifice.

And now, Christian, try and lay hold upon this meaning of the text. Christ has made your conscience at ease for ever; and if it disturbs you, recollect it has no cause to do so, if you are a believer in Christ; for hath not he given you that which will put away all conscience of sin? Oh! rejoice! It has purged you so entirely that you may sit down and rest. You may sing with the poet -

"Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty.
Trust in his efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."

Look at the text. Once again I am going to say the same things, lest I should not be quite understood. Dear brethren, we could not have access to God, unless on the footing of perfection; for God cannot walk and talk with imperfect creatures. But we are perfect; not in character, mark, for we are still sinners; but we are perfected through the blood of Jesus Christ, so that God can allow us to have access to him as perfected creatures. We may come boldly, because being sprinkled with the blood, God does not look on us as unholy and unclean, otherwise he could not allow us to come to his mercy seat; but he looks upon us as being

perfected for ever through the one sacrifice of Christ. That is one thing. The other was this. We are the vessels of God's temple; he has chosen us to be like the golden pots of his sanctuary; but God could not accept a worship which was offered to him in unholy vessels. Those vessels, therefore, were made perfect by being sprinkled with blood. God could not accept the praise which comes from your unholy heart; he could not accept the song which springs from your uncircumcised lips, nor the faith which arises from your doubting soul, unless he had taken the great precaution to sprinkle you with the blood of Christ; and now, whatever he uses you for, he uses you as a perfect instrument, regarding you as being perfect in Christ Jesus. That, again, is the meaning of the text, and the same meaning, only a different phase of it. And, the last meaning is, that the sacrifices of the Jews did not give believing Jews peace of conscience for any length of time; they had to come again, and again, and again, because they felt that those sacrifices did not present to them a perfect justification before God. But behold, beloved, you and I are complete in Jesus. We have no need of any other sacrifice. All others we disclaim. He hath perfected us for ever. We may set our conscience at ease, because we are truly, really, and everlastingly accepted in him. "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Now, what have I to do, but to turn to you and ask this one question, and I have done. Are you a sanctified person? I have known a man say sometimes to a believer, "Well, you look so sanctified: ah! you are one of those sanctified fellows." Well, if they said so to me, I should say, "I wish you would prove it." What can be a more holy thing than to be a sanctified man? and what a more happy thing! Let me ask you, then, are you sanctified? Says one, "I feel so sinful." That I do not ask you: I ask you whether you are set apart to God's service. Can you say,

"Dear Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do?"

Take me just as I am, and make use of me; I desire to be wholly thine? Do you feel that for you to live is Christ; that there is not any object you are living for but Christ - that Christ is the great aim of your ambition, the great object of all your labours; that you are like Samson, a Nazarite,

consecrated to God? Oh! then, remember that you are perfected in Christ. But, my hearer, if thou art not sanctified to God in this sense, if thou livest to thyself, to pleasure, and to the world, thou art not perfected in Christ, and what is to become of thee? God will give thee no access to him; God will not use thee in his service; thou hast no rest in thy conscience, and in the day when God shall come to separate the precious from the vile, he will say, "Those are my precious ones, who have the blood on them; but these have rejected Christ, they have lived to themselves, they were dead while they lived, and they are damned now they are dead." Take heed of that! May God give you grace to be sanctified to God, and then shall you be for ever perfected through Christ.

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Perseverance In Holiness

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me - Jeremiah 32:40

Last Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart.* It was a very painful discourse to the preacher, and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit, and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife: I felt great tenderness, and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy: the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. To-day, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King himself come near and feast his saints to-day! May the Comforter who convinced of sin now come to cheer us with the promise! We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness: it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation: not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil; but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of grace. May the Lord show us how he establishes his saints in righteousness, and makes the works which he has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of his appearing!

We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God, and are even in league with God. God has made with them a covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into covenant with men; but he has done so. God has pledged himself to his people, and they have, in return, through his grace, pledged themselves to God. These are heaven's Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed: it is not a thing of passing time; but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!

These covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that he is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has he appeared to you, and said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has he given Christ to you? Has he made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, he has done you good; for these gifts are the

outcome of the covenant, and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.

These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge ye, whether it be so in your own case. This is the covenant promise—"I will put my fear in their hearts." Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please him? Do you desire to be like him? Are you like him in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short; and does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious presence of God your heaven below? Is it all the heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.

This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the everlasting covenant: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the covenant: "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that covenant: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this; but I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak is in itself enough for the delight of all true believers. When you have an abundance of solid food wherewith to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask; nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings: however badly I may carve it, you who have appetites will not fail to feed thereon. May the Holy Spirit make it so!

I. First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them."

In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this covenant is called "a new covenant"; and it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to

the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto his people, that if they would keep his laws and walk in his statutes, he would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full: all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey his law. Truly Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their need, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels' food; he sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night he lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He himself walked in the midst of them, and revealed himself to them as he had done to no other nation: they were a people near unto him, a nation beloved of the Lord. But under the exceedingly favourable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares, and no neighbours to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God; nay, they did not even remain faithful to him as their God; for they worshipped a molten image, and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eateth grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs; and they cried, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Thus they brake the covenant in the most wanton and wicked manner. Such a covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people; therefore the Lord, in his immeasurable grace, resolves to make with them a covenant of a new kind, which cannot thus be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old covenant: the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jer 31:32: "Which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them." After long patience, he visited them for their iniquities, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into his rest. In after-ages he gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them; he made them to be carried away captive; and at last he suffered the Roman to burn their holy city, and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them. But in these days the Lord hath, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all believers, a new covenant; not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new covenants; for they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the covenant of grace; they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about grace, but they regard it as dependent upon merit. They speak about God's mercy,

and then combine with it conditions which make it rather justice than grace. Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new covenant is all of grace, from its first letter to its closing word; and we shall have to show you this as we go on.

It is an "everlasting" covenant, however: that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration; but this is an "everlasting covenant." Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word "everlasting" means lasting for ever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that "an everlasting covenant" means a covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?

The first reason why it is an everlasting covenant is, that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The covenant of works was made with the race in the first Adam; but the first Adam was faulty, and failed full soon; he could not bear the stress of his responsibility, and so that covenant was broken. But the surety of the new covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is not faulty, but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of his chosen, and he stands for them: they are regarded as members of his body, and he is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative. The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into covenant with God on the behalf of his people; and because he cannot fail—for in him there is no infirmity or sin—therefore the covenant of which he is the surety must stand. He abideth for ever in his Melchizedek priesthood, and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in his nature and in his work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain, and, therefore, the covenant stands in him. When it is written, "I have given him for a covenant to the people," we see that the covenant cannot fail, because he cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all his believing people in the covenant, therefore the covenant is everlasting.

Next, the covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it; but when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has

at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which he was the surety. He has magnified the law, and made it honourable by his own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government, and made amends to holiness for man's offences. The law is more glorified by his atoning death than it was dishonoured by man's sin. This Man hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the covenant that he sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remaineth only God's side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises—unconditional promises, full of grace and truth, such as these:—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Will not God be true to his engagements? Yes, verily. When he makes a covenant, and on man's part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord's side no word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.

Furthermore, the covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the free grace of God. The first covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of men. If they kept the law, God would bless them; but they failed through disobedience, and inherited the curse. The divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit, but according to mercy; not according to the personal character of men, but according to the personal character of God; not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform. Sovereign grace declares that he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The covenant which saves men according to God's will and good pleasure, is founded upon a rock; for God's free grace is always the same, and God's sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the covenant; but if it be of pure grace, then the covenant is

everlasting.

Again, in the covenant, everything that can be supposed to be a condition is provided. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent; but then the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Ghost worketh in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter heaven, that we should be holy; but the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. All that is required is also supplied. If there be, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a covenant gift which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that the condition, which might seem to put the covenant in danger, is so surely provided for, that thence ariseth no flaw or fracture.

Moreover, the covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God's working he always advances from the good to the better. The old law was put away because he found fault with it, and therefore the new covenant must last till a fault can be found with it; which will never be. This is the glory which excelleth: no brightness can exceed the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God or more safe to man, than the plan of salvation set forth in the covenant of grace. The moon gives way to the sun, and the sun gives way to a lustre which shall exceed the light of seven days; but what is to supersede the light of free grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-begotten that we might live through him! The covenant of grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last for ever.

Beloved, rest in the covenant of grace as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," to be made

with guilty man? It was also divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Saviour like the Only-begotten of the Father? Who could have given him for a covenant but the Father? The covenant is divine in its maintenance. Note well the word of the Lord: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." He does not say, "They shall make a covenant with me"; but "I will make a covenant with them." That God is the maker of the covenant, is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even his promise and his oath; those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head; and very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.

II. Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT: "I will not turn away from them, to do them good."

Please notice the terms here: the Lord does not merely say, "I will not turn away from them," but, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." He will not cease to work good for his chosen. The Lord is always doing his people good; and here he promises that he will never leave off blessing them. Not only will he always love them, but he will always prove his love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of his goodness. In effect he says, "I will not cease blessing them; I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good." Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in his doings towards his covenanted ones?

He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because he has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks, and in his voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good"; and we are sure that he will not forfeit his word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons: this suffices, the Lord hath said it. Hath he said, and will he not do it?

Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why he should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness.

Yes, but observe that when he began to do them good they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were "dead in trespasses and sins." He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels, and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state. In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because he could see no good in us, why did he begin to do us good when we were without desire towards him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants, and a dunghill of sins when he began to do us good. Whatever we may be now, we are not otherwise than we were when first he revealed his love towards us. The same motive which led him to begin leads him to continue; and that motive is nothing but his grace.

Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that he foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises his heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit: he proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, he entered into a covenant with us, and began to bless us with all our sin before his mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account. There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet." He entered into a covenant that he would not turn away from us, to do us good; and no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to him when he thus pledged his word of grace.

Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God at this day viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved, and yet he promised to do us good.

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

And if to-day I am sinful, if to-day I have to groan by reason of my evil

nature, yet I am but where I was when he chose me, and called me, and redeemed me by the blood of his Son. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were undeserving objects upon whom he bestowed his mercy, out of no motive but that which he drew from his own nature; and if we are undeserving still, his grace is still the same. If it be so, that he still deals with us in the way of grace, it is evident that he still views us as undeserving; and why should he not do good towards us now as he did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.

Moreover, remember that he sees us now in Christ. Behold, he has put his people into the hands of his dear Son. He has even put us into Christ's body; "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." He sees us in Christ to have died, in him to have been buried, and in him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in him are we well-pleasing to the Father also; for our being in him identifies us with him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ's acceptance with God, it standeth firmly, and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good. If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy; but in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ he cannot reject his people; until he repudiates the atonement and the resurrection, he cannot cast away any of those with whom he has entered into covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will not turn away from his people, from doing them good, because he has shown them so much kindness already; and all that he has done would be lost if he did not go through with it. When he gave his Son, he gave us a sure pledge that he meant to finish his work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish"; but that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out his whole Deity to save his people, and given his whole self in the person of the Well-beloved for our redemption; and can you believe that he will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous. Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favoured that we dare not fear that his

favour toward us will cease. So heavenly, so divine is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love, that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely, that the secret of the Lord is with us, and he will for ever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed. Like Paul, each one of us may say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that he will complete his designs of grace.

Beloved, we feel sure that he will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when he has hidden his face he has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of his countenance, but never the love of his heart. When the Lord has turned away his face from his people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for his love. How often he has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves his Spirit! When we have cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, ye tried people of God; the Lord's chastenings have always been for your good. When the Lord has bruised you till the wound has been blue, your heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away your comforts, he has done you good by driving you closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched you by your losses, and made you healthy by your sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when he is seen in darkest colours, has not turned away from doing us good, we are persuaded that he will never cease daily to load us with benefits.

Moreover, I close with this argument, that he has involved his honour in the salvation of his people. If the Lord's chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of his redemption? Will not the enemy say of the Lord, "He had not the power to carry out his covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them"? Shall that ever be said of God? Will he thus lose the glory of his omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail; neither can I conceive that he can withdraw his declarations of love to those with whom he is in covenant.

The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, fainteth not, neither is weary. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" "He will ever be mindful of his covenant." Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing—

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."

Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence; for the text is the inspired Word of God, and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus saith the Lord, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good."

III. The third part of our subject leads us to see **THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT**: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

Let me read very distinctly these words: "They shall not depart from me." If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints: "They **SHALL NOT** depart from me." The salvation of those who are in covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive: "They shall not depart from me."

It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord, and wholly lose the life of God: what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly. If a man abide not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it: if grace were gone, safety would be gone. "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" "If these shall

fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." If the work of grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Ghost has indeed regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not saved it from total apostasy, what can be done? There is such a thing as being "born again"; but there is no such thing as being born again and again. Regeneration is once for all: it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, "Though I go back to my old sin, and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a believer." Nay, nay, profane talker; the text saith not, "They shall be saved though they depart from me"; but "They shall not depart from me"—which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! for they must perish, and with them no covenant of peace has been made.

Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, "I will put them where they shall not be tempted; I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth." No, the Lord does not take his people out of the world; but he allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict, but "he giveth us the victory." We are tempted as was our Lord; but we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander, and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this—"They shall not depart from me." What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted; but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to him, and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, "that the man who is converted may live as he likes." We

have never said so; we have never even thought so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes; or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he could live as he likes, he would never sin, but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live; but that they shall not depart from him.

This is effected by putting a divine principle within their hearts. The Lord saith, "I will put my fear in their hearts." It would never be found there if he did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. "I will put my fear in their hearts"; that is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before his law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot, and to obey the Lord whom once we defied. "I will put my fear in their hearts" is the first great act of conversion, and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart. The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones; for the Lord still puts his fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell: he has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all his own, and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, he knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God's great holdfast upon his people, "I will put my fear in their hearts."

What is this fear of God? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see his infinite greatness, and the fact that he is everywhere present with us; and then, filled with a devout sense of his Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, "my fear," also intend filial fear. God is our Father, and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." This child-like love kindles in us a fear to grieve him whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from him. There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex him? He favours me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to his will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot; and when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favour, I have felt that if a

temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander. Our cry is, "The Lord bathes me in his love, he indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with himself, and how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Loved of him so specially, and united to him by an everlasting covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God; but it is our joy to do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

See, beloved, this perseverance of the saints, is perseverance in holiness: "They shall not depart from me." If the grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, he has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life, but he has said it: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed; but it is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth, which cannot die, for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to glory.

If any differ from what I have said, I cannot help it; but I would beg them not to differ from the text; for the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." There it stands, "They shall not depart from me." But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of his people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God: but the Holy Spirit usually works by means. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word; for faith cometh by hearing, and holy fear cometh through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word. That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures; for as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed truth, and meditation thereon. Study the doctrines of grace, and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts. Be much in private prayer; for

that stirs up the fire, and makes it burn more brilliantly. In fine, seek to live near to God, to abide in him; for as you abide in him, and his words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit, and so shall you be his disciples.

I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might, and many were comforted by it; but, better still, many were set thinking, and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward. Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door, but it is all door, and when you get in, there is nothing to be had; you are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not; but if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the covenant of grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them. "Oh!" says one, "if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it. If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it; but if it is pure silver all through, let me have it." Does the gift of grace make us partakers of the divine nature, and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? then let us have it. I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness. The sweetmeat which tempted me to Christ was this—I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said—If I give myself to Christ, he will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to him, and he keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, "They shall not depart from me!"

To use an old figure: be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time; so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life: take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you for ever cannot keep you a day. If the

power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour. Faith in the everlasting covenant stirs my heart's blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm. I can never give up my belief in what the Lord hath said, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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The Perserverance Of Faith

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. - Matthew 15:28

I have frequently spoken to you concerning the faith of this Canaanitish woman, of the way in which Christ tried it, and of the manner in which, at length, he honoured it, and granted all that the suppliant sought. The story is so full of meaning, that one might turn it this way, and that way, and the other way, and always see jewels in it. But I am not going to use it with only one aim, namely, to encourage those who have faith enough to seek Jesus, but have not yet, to their joy and peace, been quite able to find him.

This woman had come to her last word. I do not see what more she could have said. When Christ had likened her to a dog, she had consented to it, and said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." She had come to her last word, and now Christ gives her his best word. It is his way, sometimes, to make us wait till we are completely exhausted, and can say and do no more; then he comes in with the fulness of his divine power, and gives to us what we have

importunately sought at his hands. Our extremity is his opportunity.

I. The first remark which I shall make, and enlarge upon, is that FAITH ALONE CAN KEEP A SOUL SEEKING AFTER CHRIST UNDER DISCOURAGEMENT. Other causes may send us a certain distance along the road, but only faith will bring us to the goal of assured rest.

That which made this woman seek the Saviour was, first of all, parental love. She loved her daughter. She longed to have the devil cast out of her, that her daughter might not be so grievously vexed. That started her going, and carried her some way towards the blessing; but she would have stopped short of the boon she desired if she had relied upon natural love alone.

Her earnestness also to a large extent urged her forward. When she desired healing for her daughter, she meant what she said. When she cried, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" it was with a shrill and piteous voice. She could not bear to be refused. Nobody ever came to Christ who pleaded more from the heart than did this poor Canaanite. She was not an idle repeater of forms of prayer. Her prayer leaped, red-hot, from her soul—"Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" But her earnestness alone would not have upheld her under the ordeal through which she was called to pass. It would have given way if she had not had the believing conviction that Christ could heal her daughter, and that he would do so.

Her humility also helped her greatly. Had she been a proud woman, she would have stood upon her dignity when she was called a dog; but humility came to her help, and she did not resent even the harsh word the Lord used, but still pleaded for her poor child. Now, parental love and earnestness and humility are good things, but they are not enough to enable a soul to cling to Christ, and never let him go. Something more is needed.

This Canaanite woman was a very sensible woman, wise and prudent. She knew how to turn the hard words of Christ into arguments in her own favour. She would not be put back. If he had not answered her, she would

have pleaded with him again. When he did answer her, and say that it was not meet to give the children's bread to dogs, she found even in that dry bone some little marrow on which to feed her heart. But wise as she was, and prudent as she was, she would not have held out to the end, and obtained the blessing she desired for her daughter, if it had not been for her faith.

We may be quite sure that the one thing specially noteworthy in this woman's case was her faith, first, because we have Christ's word for it. He said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith!" He did not say, "Great is thy love to thy child;" nor, "Great is thy earnestness;" nor, "Great is thy importunity;" but he put his finger on the power that had urged her forward, and he said, "O woman, great is thy faith!" And not in this case alone did Christ trace the blessing to faith, but in nearly every instance where a suppliant obtained favour from him, faith was the medium of securing the mercy. Faith is mightier than all other available forces.

Besides this, we know that faith supports the other graces. If other graces can help a soul to plead with Christ, they all owe their power to faith. If it had not been for the faith which she had to support it, parental love would not have helped this woman much. If it had not been for faith, she would not have been earnest and importunate. Faith hangs on to Christ in the dark, it holds to a silent Christ, it holds to a refusing Christ, it holds to a rebuking Christ, and it will not let him go. Faith is the great holdfast that hooks a soul on to the Saviour.

Faith is thus powerful because of its effects. Faith enlightens, enlivens and strengthens. It is written of some of old that "They looked unto him, and were lightened." Faith shed a light upon many things, and lets us see that even if Christ has a frown on his face, he has love in his heart. Faith looks right into the heart of Christ, and helps us to perceive that he cannot mean anything but mercy to a seeking soul. Faith also enlivens, and when the heart begins to faint, faith brings its smelling bottle, and revives it. David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed." Believing is the cure for fainting, and you must do one of two things, either believe or faint. Faith is thus a great help to one who is seeking Christ, because it both enlightens and enlivens the soul. Faith also strengthens. It makes

the lame take the prey. Beloved, it is because faith thus enlightens and enlivens and strengthens, that it is the grace most useful to a soul that is seeking to lay hold upon Christ, and yet cannot get a comfortable look at his blessed face.

Moreover, faith lays hold on Christ. It is like the Greek Antisthenes, who went to a philosopher to learn; but he was a dull scholar, and the philosopher bade him go away. The next time the class met, Antisthenes returned, and the philosopher thereupon sent for a man with a club to drive the stupid scholar away; but he was overcome by his scholar; for Antisthenes said, "There is no club that was ever made that is heavy enough to drive me away from you. Here I mean to stay, and learn whatever you can teach me." Oh, may we have a faith like that, a faith that will say to Christ, "I will not go away from thee. I can but perish if I stay with thee, and if I go from thee, I must perish; therefore I will abide with thee evermore, and learn all thou wilt teach me"! Faith is like the Greek in the days of Xerxes, who seized the boat with his right hand. When they chopped off the right hand, he seized it with the left hand; when they cut off the left hand, he laid hold of the boat with his teeth, and did not let go until they severed his head from his body. Soul, if thou canst lay hold of Christ with thy right hand, or with thy left hand, it will be well with thee. Cling to Christ, and say to him with that holy boldness that is the result of faith, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Faith, then, holds on to Christ.

Further, I would say that faith does this best without help. How often we try to assist faith! We want faith to have some works, some prayers, something or other of our own to help it. It is as if somebody were to try and help me to walk by giving me a big chair to carry. I should not walk so well with the burden, as without it. Have you ever heard this parable concerning faith? She had to cross a stream, and the current was strong, and there came one to her who said, "" faith, I will help thee! Come with me up the river till we can find a place where we can ford it." Faith said, "No; I was bidden to cross the river here." So another came, and said, "I will build a bridge for you, that you may go over the river with ease;" and he laid hold of a few stones, but not much ever came of it. Yet another said, "I will go and find a boat." But there were no boats about; therefore

they asked faith to wait till they build a boat for her. What did she do? She took off her vestments, and plunged into the water. "Thanks God," said she, "I can swim;" and so she swam across, and reached the other side without boat, without bridge, and without ford. That is what I should like to see every sinner here do—begin to swim. Do not wait for help. Cast yourself into the stream of everlasting love. Believe in Christ Jesus, and have no more confidence in the flesh, with its bridges and boats. Commit thyself to the stream of eternal grace, and swim across. Faith can enable you to do it. Nothing else can. Take that lesson home to yourselves, you who are seeking to Saviour at this time.

The only thing that will help you to follow after Christ till you find him, is faith. All your groaning will not help you. All your doubting and your trembling will be of no avail; your feeling that you are too vile to be saved, and that faith would be presumption in such a sinner as you are, will not aid you. But believe that Christ can save you, and trust to his power and love, and he will save you. Come to him as the woman of Canaan came, with her importunate cry, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David," and he will have mercy on you even as he had upon her. Believe, believe, believe! Thou wilt never come into light by doubting and fearing. The way to liberty lies through this one door of faith. Therefore believe and live.

Thus much upon our first remark, that faith alone can keep a soul seeking after Christ under discouragement.

II. Secondly, FAITH IS EXCEEDINGLY DELIGHTFUL TO CHRIST. What he said to this woman began with an exclamation, as if he were struck with something in her that delighted him. He said, "O woman, great is thy faith!" Notice that he spoke of her faith, and of that alone. He knew about her love; he knew about her earnestness; he knew about her humility; but he said nothing at all about them; his one word of commendation was for her faith. "O woman, great is thy faith!" That is what my Lord is looking for now. He comes round and looks at you, who are sitting in these pews, to see whether you have faith in him. There are several thoughts suggested by this, that should encourage you who are seeking Christ.

He can spy out the beginnings of faith. "If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed," he will see it, and he will accept it. If thou hast only now begun to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to trust him, though thy faith be feeble as a babe that cannot stand, but can only cling to its mother's breast, Jesus will see the beginnings of it. He is the "Author" as well as "the Finisher of our faith." Be thou comforted, then, concerning that tiny trust thou hast in him.

Still, he is greatly pleased when he sees great faith. When a great sinner says, "I believe that he is a Saviour great enough to save me;" it brings joy to the heart of Christ. When an old sinner says, "I believe that his precious blood can take away the sin of seventy or eighty years;" the Lord's heart is gladdened. Christ loves a great faith. He deserves great faith, and when he gets it, he is highly pleased. "O woman," said he, "great is thy faith!"

He is so delighted with faith, that he passes by other things for it. If that woman's ears had been hung with rings, and her neck had been decked with pearls, and her hands had been covered with diamonds, he would not have cared about her ornaments and her beauty. He sees something that he prizes more than any of these things; therefore he says to her, "O woman, great is thy faith!" He is charmed with that choice decoration of her heart. By that treasure "The king is held in his galleries." Christ may say of faith, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes." When we can but look straight to Christ, and trust in him, he is charmed and carried away by our faith.

Why does Christ think so much of faith?

One reason is, because faith glorifies him. He thinks much of it, because it thinks so much of him. Faith believes him, faith trusts him, faith lives upon him. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand" and the "altogether lovely" to faith. Therefore, because faith highly esteems Christ, Christ highly esteems faith.

Next, he loves faith because it is God's appointed way in which we are to

receive blessing. God might have appointed ordinances as the vehicle of grace; but, instead thereof, he has made faith to be the medium of salvation. If thou believest, thou shalt be saved. He that be faith lays hold on Christ, has laid hold on eternal life. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To the awakened sinner our word is still, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Since God has put faith into so eminent a place, our Lord Jesus Christ loves to see it; he takes delight in that which pleases his Father.

Another reason why he loves it is, because faith is the signal which permits the train of mercy to come to us. Whenever unbelief holds up its arms, the train of almighty grace stands still. Of a certain place it is said, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Their doubt blocked the way. But when faith lowers the signal, the great Driver of heaven's express says, "That road is clear," and he delights to see it, and drives right ahead. Oh, if thou canst but let that signal go down, showing that the line is clear of all obstructions, Christ will surely come to thee! He is glad to come wherever he can bring a blessing, and he rejoices when faith reveals to him a clear road.

Besides, faith has open arms for embracing Christ. When he comes to our door, and finds it locked, he stands there till his bitter lament is "my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." But when he comes and the door is open, the poor sinner is so taken up with his beauty that he never thinks of shutting him out. "Oh," says the seeking soul, "if the Lord would but come in!" And as surely as Christ finds thus door open, he comes in, and dwells there; and makes that heart and that house happy with his divine presence. Christ loves faith because faith gives him a hearty welcome; faith receives him; faith embraces him.

Oh, I would to God you would think of this and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus! May you see that nothing delights Christ like a sinner believing in him, that nothing gives him more joy than to have a saint resting completely upon him without doubt or fear!

Thus have we considered two points; first, that the only way to keep a soul seeking Christ under discouragement is by faith; and, secondly, that

nothing pleases Christ like believing on his name.

III. The third point is that FAITH WILL, BEFORE LONG, GET A KIND ANSWER FROM THE LORD JESUS. This poor woman at the first, received no reply to her petition, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" Then, when Christ did speak to her, he gave her what seemed to be a rough answer. But, after a while, these notes of heavenly music sounded in her ear, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt!"

Now, someone here probably says, "I have been praying ever so long, and I have received no cheering reply." Well, if thou believest in Jesus, thou shalt have a good reply before long. If thou canst but hold on to Christ, determined to plead with him till he answers thee, he will answer thee kindly ere long. But keep on believing that he can and will give thee what thou needest, and thou shalt not be disappointed. "Oh," says one, "you do not know who I am! I am an outcast." So was the woman. She was a Canaanitish woman, yet she obtained a blessing from Christ; and thou shalt get one, too, if thou dost follow her in her faith. "Oh, but I do not think that I am fit!" Did Christ ever say to you that you were a dog? He did as good as tell this woman that; yet she held on to him by faith, and prevailed. "Oh, but I have prayed in vain for such a long time!": So did she. She prayed, and for a while, she received no answer. "Oh, but I feel worse after I have prayed!" So did she; for instead of getting a comfortable answer, she heard Christ say, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." You cannot be in a worse plight than she was. "But the devil troubles me," you add. The devil also troubled her. She pleaded about her daughter, who was possessed with a devil; and she kept on pleading and believing. She meant to have Christ. I exhort you to come to the same holy determination. Oh, that Almighty grace might help you so to do; for in so doing you will surely get an answer of peace! You will get a comfortable answer before very long, probably much earlier than you have reckoned upon.

Remember that Christ delays in order to increase your faith. Your faith will grow by exercise: therefore he tests it that you may use it, and that thus it may become stronger.

Christ delays in order to increase the blessing itself. While we wait, the blessing becomes bigger, and our hands become stronger to hold it when it does come. You may be sure that our blessed Lord will give you a comfortable answer; for you do not know that he has been sustaining you while you have been pleading, and as yet have received no answer? Did you ever notice, when Joseph's brethren went down into Egypt, that he made himself strange to them, and spoke to them roughly, and put them in prison? But in spite of that, there was one thing he did: when they went back to Jacob, he filled their sacks for them. He would not smile upon them, but he would not starve them; and at last, it is said, "Joseph could not refrain himself," and he "made himself known unto his brethren. He was obliged to show his love at last; but even before he did that, he always filled their sacks for them. Christ will deal with you in like manner; while you are waiting, he will not let you die. Oh, in what wonderful ways did the Lord support me when, through weary years, I was seeking his face! I could not say that I had any comfort that I dared to call my own, and yet there flowed into my soul, somehow, a secret power that enabled me still to hope, and still to hold on; for that I now desire to bless his name, and I tell it for the encouragement of any who may be in soul-trouble as I was. Keep on seeking his grace, dear friend. Believe still; for he must give you a comfortable answer one of these days.

Consider well that it is contrary to his nature to refuse to bless. He is brimful of love; and if he does put a sinner back for a while, it is only because it is right and kind and wise to do so. But his heart yearns over every seeking sinner. He wants you more than you want him. He longs after you. He desires to bless you. He must do so; it is his nature to do so.

He must give you a comfortable reply before long, again, for it is contrary to his glory to refuse. If he allowed a seeking sinner to die, where would his troubles be? Has he not said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? Our friend, Dr. Barnardo, announces that in his refuges no homeless boy will ever be rejected: that no destitute child shall ever be turned away. Suppose somebody could prove—which, of course they cannot do—that scores of destitute children were turned away, all confidence in him would be destroyed. And if it could be proved that

Christ ever cast out a single soul that came to him, it would take away his honor and glory. We could never believe him any more. Perish the thought of such a thing!

It is contrary to his word to refuse any seeker, and Christ will keep his word. "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If Christ will not give you rest when you come to him, what is his promise worth? My friend, Dr. Pierson, sent me, the other day, an imitation of an American banknote, which they call a "greenback" over there, and on one side of it were these words, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." A splendid note that! It had our friends name on the back, "Arthur T. Pierson"; and he said to me, when he sent it, "If the Lord does not pay you, I will, for I have endorsed the note." I shall never have to look my brother Pierson up, and tell him that the note he endorsed is of no value. There it stands, and stands forever/ God will keep his word. I know it; and I want you poor sinners to know it too. He cannot run back from his own promise. His word is his bond. To every honest man it is so; but to the thrice-holy God his oath and his promise bind him eternally.

Let me add that, if Christ does not give a comfortable answer to you who believingly seek him, it is contrary to his custom. Here are many of us who have known our Lord now for forty years, and we can say that his custom is to hear our prayers, and according to our faith, so is it unto us. Come along, thou blackest sinner out of hell! Come, and wash in the fountain filled with blood, and thou shalt be cleansed, as surely as ever Christ died! Come along, thou lowest, meanest, most self-aborred, most self condemned of humankind! Come thou, and look to him, and trust in him; and if thou dost not find peace at once, yet be sure that thou shalt have it before long. "The morning cometh." It is not for long that Christ's mercy can be restrained. He must break forth, like Joseph, weeping over his brethren. He must manifest himself to you in love, and tenderness, and kindness. I will be bound for him any day that it shall be so.

IV. Lastly, we come to a very glorious thought. FAITH GETTING CHRIST'S WORD HATH ALL THINGS. Listen to the text again: "Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto you

even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Christ's word was a comforting word. How the look on this woman's face must have been altered when Christ talked to her so! When he answered her never a word, she doubtless had a long and sorrowful face, and probably the big tears stood in her eyes; but not he began to talk in another strain, how happy she felt! The woman was no more sad. So it is even to-day. One word from Christ can comfort you, even if they talk about putting you into an asylum because you are so melancholy. One word from my Master shall be the balm of Gilead to your wounds. He will bind up your broken heart. He will comfort you and speak peace to you, as he did to her. It was a comforting word.

It was also a commending word, "O woman, great is thy faith!" She had never been praised like that before. I have no doubt that her husband had praised her. What good husband is there who does not praise his wife, even as it is written of the virtuous woman, "Her husband also, and he praiseth her"? but his praise had never been so sweet as this word from the Lord Jesus. I have no doubt that her daughter had called her all the sweet names she could think of; for she loved her child, and it was only natural to believe that her child loved her. But now, when Christ looks her in the face, and says, "O woman, great"—"ah!" she may have thought; "he is going to say, 'Great is thy sin,' or else, 'Great is thy noise.'" What astonishment must have been hers when he said, "Great is thy faith"! He gave her a gold medal for her faith, ay, something even better than that, she was put into the class called "Highly commended." "O woman, great is thy faith!" It was a commending word; and she needed it.

Next, it was a commanding word. Notice that, well. Listen to it: "Be it unto thee." He speaks like a king. And if the Lord now speaks his gracious word with power, as I pray that he may, he will say, "Minister, comfort that woman, who puts her trust in me." He will say, "Ordinances, comfort those weary ones. Bread and wine, be sweet to the taste of those poor troubled ones." He will say, "Prayer-meetings, be a joy to those poor tried ones." It is a commanding voice with which the Lord of hosts speaks, when he says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is

accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."

In addition to being a commanding word, it was a creating word. Why, it was the very word that God himself used when he made the light! He said, "Be light." He said to the earth, "Be," and it was. He said to the heavens, "Be," and they were. The word is a fiat. In the Latin it is precisely that, a fiat. So here, that same mighty voice says, "Be it unto thee. Be it unto thee." O God, send forth a fiat at this moment to some poor weary heart! Create light; create joy; create peace. He can create all of these in your heart now. Oh, that he might do it by the power of his almighty grace! The faith of this poor Canaanite thus obtained for its reward a creative fiat from the lips of Christ.

Further, it was a complying word. You can see all these adjectives begin with the same letter: it was a comforting word, a commending word, a commanding word, a creating word and a complying word. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt—just as you please, whatever you wish for, and in the way you wish to have it." Christ capitulates to a conquering faith. Nothing ever conquered him yet but faith. His love is stronger than death. Death could not conquer Christ, nor could all the powers of hell. But here he surrenders at discretion to a soul that can vanquish him by believing. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Do you want more joy? Do you want full salvation? Do you want perfect rest? Behold, he says to each of you who can and do believe in him, "Be it unto you even as thou wilt."

Thus, lastly, this word became a completing word; "her daughter was made whole from that very hour." From that very hour she was well again. Christ finished that work speedily. He was not long about it. It does not take so long to save a soul as it does for a lightning flash to become visible. You pass from death to life in an instant. When lost, ruined, condemned, the man casts himself at Christ's feet, immediately he is saved. It is not the work of hours or weeks, or years, when you trust to the finished work of Christ. All that required time, Christ has accomplished. All that now has to be done, can be done in a moment. When a man is thirsty, it does not take him long to drink when the water is there. Remember the invitation with which the Scriptures must conclude, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take

the water of life freely." The water of life is there, take it. When a man is hungry, it does not take him long to eat when the bread is on the table. God can now give you, who came to this Tabernacle afar off from him, grace which shall enable you to be made nigh at once. He can bring you immediately out of the blackness of sin, and make you on the instant whiter than snow."

Believe my Lord and Master. Oh, why do you not believe him? Artful doubts and reasonings cease! I would now take the hammer and the nails, and fasten my unbelief and fear to Christ's cross. Hang there, ye thieves, and die! You destroy men's souls, ye doubts and reasonings! Come here, simple faith, thou who hast no wisdom! A mere child thou art, but; O simple faith, thou hast the key of the kingdom! Come, and welcome, into my heart. Will all of you not also believe, and trust in Christ, even now? If you do, you shall be saved.. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." God bless you! Amen.

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Personal Service

O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid thou hast loosed my bonds. - Psalm 116:16

These sentences suggest a contrast. David's religion was one of perfect liberty;—"Thou hast loosed my bonds." It was one of complete service;—"Truly I am thy servant. I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid." Did I say the text suggested a contrast? Indeed the two things need never be contrasted, for they are found to be but part of one divine experience in the lives of all God's people. The religion of Jesus is the religion of liberty. The true believer can say, when his soul is in a healthy state, "Thou hast loosed my bonds. The penal fetters with which my soul was once bound are all dashed to shivers; I am free!" "There is therefore

now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The burdensome bonds of ceremonials are all cast to the winds. Henceforth the beggarly elements are trodden under foot; shadows have yielded to substance, and the type and the symbol cease to oppress; the true light now shineth, and the torches are quenched. "Thou hast loosed my bonds,"—that is to say, thou hast not only saved me from the penal consequences of my sin and from the heavy burden of the old Mosaic ceremonial law, but thou hast moreover delivered me from the spirit of bondage which once led me to serve thee with the fear of an unwilling slave. Thou hast taken the yoke from my neck, and the goad from behind my back. Thou hast made me thy freed man. No more do I crouch at thy feet or go to thy footstool cowering like a slave, but I came to thee with privilege of access, up to thy very throne. By the Spirit of adoption I cry, my Father. Thou dost own the kindred. For by the self-same Spirit I am sealed to the day of redemption. Thus, O Lord, "thou hast loosed my bonds." Nor if religion has had its full sway in us, is this all. Thou hast loosed me from the bonds of worldly maxims; thou hast delivered me from the fear of man; thou hast rescued me from the stooping and fawning which made me once the slave of every tyrant who laid claim to my allegiance, and thou hast made me now the servant of but one Master, whose service is perfect liberty. Whereas before I spoke with bated breath, lest I should offend, and even my condolence had continually to yield to the whims and prejudices of another man, behold now "thou hast loosed my bonds." As an eagle with my eye on the sun, with wings outstretched true to the line upward which I soar, bound no longer to the rooks of prejudice or the mounds of worldly maxim—free, entirely free to serve my God without let or hindrance.—"Thou hast loosed my bonds." Vast and wide is the liberty of the believer. The Antinomian, when he essays to describe gospel liberty, only errs by forgetting that such liberty is consistent with the fullest service. But we enjoy all the liberty that even an Antinomian theology could offer. A liberty to be holy is a grander liberty than a license to be sinful. A liberty to be conscientious; a liberty to know forgiven sin; a liberty to trample upon conquered lusts, this is an infinitely wider liberty than that which would permit me to be the comfortable slave of sin, and yet indulge the delusive hope that I may one day enter the kingdom of heaven. The largest expressions that can ever be used by the boldest

minister of free grace, cannot here be exaggerations. Luther may exhaust his thunders, and Calvin may spend his logic, Zuingle may utter his periods with fiery zeal, but after all the grand things that have been spoken about the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we are freer than those men knew. Free as the very air we breathe is the Christian, if he live up to his privileges. If he be in bondage at all, it is because he hath not as yet yielded his spirit fully to the redeeming and emancipating influence of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullest and widest sense therefore, the believer may cry, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." Nor is this liberty merely consistent with the profoundest and most reverent service, but the service is, indeed, a main characteristic of the exalted freedom.

"Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid." This does not convict with the sentence that follows it,— "Thou hast loosed my bonds." This fact of my being God's servant is to me a proof and evidence, my, and a delightful fruit and effect of my having kind my bonds loosed by the great Emancipator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Service then, as well as liberty I Service is ordained to be a constant characteristic of the true religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. "We are not our own, we are bought with a price." There is not a hair upon our head, there is not a passion in our spirit, there is not a single power or faculty in our mind which is our own. We are all bought—all purchased,—we are all, every single particle of us, the purchased property of the Lord Jesus Christ—perfectly free, and yet perfectly the property of Jesus—supremely blest with the widest liberty, and yet in the fullest sense the property of another—the shackled servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. This service, my brethren, it appears from the text, should be true,— "O Lord, truly I am thy servant " I fear there is very much service of God that only lies in terms and words. Men sit and sing hymns, in which they cry—

"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
I love my God with zeal so great,
I'd freely give him all."

But within an hour their nets belie their song. There is much of service in

our own thought which never comes to service in net. I do not doubt but that we often compliment ourselves upon schemes we have devised, which fall dead to the ground, like blasted figs, never having been carried into effect. We go to our chambers and bend our knees, and Satan whispers some word of self-satisfaction to us, because we have some project on our soul, some device in our heart, though that project has never come to service, has only been an unborn intention, has never come into the life of an act. I would that each one of us knew more fully the meaning of this word, "truly." "O Lord, truly I am thy servant;" so truly that mine enemies cannot dispute it; so truly that if they dare dispute it, my next action shall contradict them; so truly that never in any act of my life shall I give them reason to suppose the contrary; so truly thy servant, that my thoughts yield thee obedience as well as my hands my head as well as my heart; my heart as well as my feet. "Truly I am thy servant!" Not so in name and by profession, but so by actual deeds of holy endurance, and of noble daring for thee. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant." This service, it appears to me also from the text, is continual. "I am thy servant," is the utterance at this moment. "I am thy servant," is the utterance of the next. "I am thy servant," is my utterance to-day. "I am thy servant," will be my utterance when I come to die. Never should the Christian think that any other language will ever be in his lips anything less than traitorous. "I am thy servant," is to be the exclamation of the man the moment his spirit knows its sins forgiven. "I am thy servant" is to be his constant monitor when he stands exposed to temptation; it is to be his continual spur when idleness in a Laodicean spirit would make him lukewarm. "I am thy servant" is it to be his joy in the time of the hardest of labor. "I am thy servant" is to be his song in the time of the sternest suffering. Continually and ever we are the servants of God. We may change our masters upon earth, but our Master who is in heaven is our Master for ever We may cease to serve our country. but we could not cease to serve our God. We may cease to be linked with any denomination, but we could not cease to be the servants of Christ. Even should it be possible for us to be so forgetful of our obligations as to dream for a moment of not being the servants of the Church, we could not harbor the thought that we should cease to be the servants of Christ. "I am thy servant." Let the next moment repeat it; let the next hour echo it, let the next year continue to resound it; let my whole life prolong it; and

let eternity be a continuation of the solemn swell. "Truly, I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds."

May I take the liberty now after offering you these few remarks by way of introduction, as a sort of running commentary upon my text—may I take the liberty of concentrating your thoughts upon one particular, during the rest of my sermon. There is one important point which I wish to bring before this present audience, namely, the duty and the excellence of personal service for their Lord and Master. I think I shall be warranted in confining my text, although it contains far more, to the repetition of that pronoun "I," "Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid: thou has loosed my bonds." The personality of the text seems to be conspicuous to allow me now to restrain myself to that one topic—the duty of the personal service of Christ. I do feel at this peculiar season, when God has visited some parts of our land with rich revival, and when we have reason to hope that revival will extend through this great city, I do feel just now that no topic can be more adapted to the times than the topic of personal service—personal consecration of every Christian to his Lord's will.

This evening, then, I shall first speak upon the nature of personal service; secondly, its reasonableness; thirdly, its excellence; and in the last place, come to that which is no doubt upon your own minds, the special assistance which the Religious Tract Society yields to personal effort in the Redeemer's kingdom.

I. First, then, THE NATURE OF PERSONAL SERVICE. Let me explain it by a contrast. The service of God among us has grown more and more a service by proxy. I would not be censorious. Judge ye what I say, and if there be but any measure of truth in it, let the truth come home to your soul. Do we not observe even in the outward worship of God, at times a great attempt towards worship by proxy? Do we not often hear singing—certainly never in this place—but do we not often hear singing the praises of God confined to some five or six or more trained men and women who are to praise God for us? Do we not sometimes have the dreary thought, when we are in our churches and chapels, that even the prayer is said and

prayed by the minister for us? There is not always that hearty union in the one great prayer of the day which there should be whenever we are gathered together. The thought suggests itself continually to the thinking mind, "Is not much of the devotion confined to the minister, and to those few who pass through the service?", in fact, we have actually degraded ourselves by applying the term "performance" to divine worship. "Performance!" A phrase begotten in the theater, which certainly should have spent its existence there, has actually been brought into the house of God, and the services are now-a-day "performed," and the worship of God is gone through, and the thing is called the "doing duty" of the minister, and not the taking delight and the enjoying of a pleasure by the people. Do we not observe, too, that in our churches there is too much now-a-day of serving God in acts of benevolence, and acts of public instruction through the minister! Your minister is supported; you expect him to discharge your duty for you; he is to be the means of converting sinners; he is to be the means of comforting the feeble minded; in fact, all the mass of duties that belong to the Church are considered to belong to the one man who is specially set apart to devote himself to the service of the ministry. Oh that this were rectified! Would to God that our people could all feel that no support of ministers can ever rid them of their own personal responsibility! I think I speak in the name of all my brethren in the ministry—we repudiate the idea of taking your responsibility upon ourselves. We find that our own work is more than we can perform without our Master's strength. To come at last with clean hands before our Maker's bar, and to be able to say, "We are free from the blood of all men," will be as much as with the most arduous labors, and the most unremitting anxieties, we can expect to attain unto. We cannot take your work—we do not pretend to do so. If you have dreamed of it, forget the delusion, and be rid of it once for all. I will do no man's duty but my own; I will not attempt to stand sponsor to your remissness, and take upon myself the sin of your sloth and lethargy; nor will any minister of Christ for a moment think that his most arduous efforts, and most self-denying exertions, can for a moment acquit you of being guilty of the blood of souls, unless you, each of you, do personally the utmost that you can. A sorry contrast to this principle, I fear, is presented in many, many a Christian Church. You have put one man into the rank, and he is to do all, while you are to sit still to be fed, to be edified, to be built up, as if you

had nothing to do but to be stones and bricks that are to be built up, and not living men and women, who are to spend and be spent in the Redeemer's cause.

Having thus sought to exhibit by contrast, let me now illustrate the nature of this personal service by an actual picture. Look at the early days of Christendom—the Church's pride and glory—when the purest air and the most refreshing dew were upon her mouth—then was the day of personal service. The moment a man was converted to God in those days, he became a preacher; perhaps, within a week, a martyr. Every man then was a witness,—not here and there a bishop, or now and then a confessor—but every Christian whether he moved in Caesar's household, or whether he moved, like Lydia, in the pursuits of humble commerce—every believer had a part in the service, and sought to magnify the name of his Master. Within but a few centuries after the death of Christ, the cross had been uplifted in every land; the name of Jesus had been pronounced in every known dialect; missionaries had passed through the deserts had penetrated into the remote recesses of uncivilized countries; the whole earth was at least, nominally evangelized.

But what has befallen us now, my brethren? The results of the labors of the Church through a space of years—what are they? They dribble into utter insignificance, when compared with the triumphs of the Apostolic times, and my own conviction is, that next to what I fear is the great cause—the absence of the Spirit's influence—next to that, and perhaps first of all, is the absence of personal agency in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the Spirit is manifested in the diversities of his operations. What conqueror or mighty warrior could expect to win a campaign if his troops should vote that one in a hundred should be supported by their rations—that one in a hundred should go to battle? No, ye legions! you must every one of you draw swords. Every heart must be stout, and every arm must be strong; the line must not be composed of here and there a warrior and an interval between, but every man must march forward, with the spirit of a lion and the strength of God, to do battle against the common enemy of souls. We shall never see great things in the world till we have all roused ourselves to our personal responsibilities. God will not give the honor of saving the world to his

ministers. He meant it for his Church; and until his Church is prepared to grasp it, God will withhold the crown which he has prepared for her brow, and for hers alone, and which none but she can over will. I think you may readily understand then what I mean by personal service. I mean this: if there be poor, it is not for you to subscribe to a society that shall send out paid agents for their relief but as far as lieth in you to visit them in their homes, and with your own hands supply them the bounty of a Christian heart. It is not for you to say the City Mission supplies admirably the lack of a sufficient number of ministers; the whole lack is supplied, I may be idle. It is for you to instruct them. You are to be as a burning and a shining light in the midst of this dark generation. Personal service is for you; it is for you to say, "Though I am content with my minister's labors, I cannot be content with my own. I must have more, and more, and more to do. I desire to spend all that I have in Jesus Christ's cause, and not to keep back a single power which I possess, but to be continually the living servant of the living God."

II. Having thus explained the nature of personal service, let me pass on to observe THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS PERSONAL SERVICE.

Heir of heaven, blood-bought and blood-washed, Jesus did not save thee by another. He did not sit in heaven himself at ease and then array Gabriel in his power and might and send him down to suffer, bleed, and die for you; but "He, his own self,"—mark the strong expression of Scripture—"His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He might send out apostles and seventy disciples to preach, but he never relaxed his service when he employed others. He might kindle other lights, but he did not quench his own. He was himself your servant. He washed the disciples' feet, not through the medium of another disciple, but with his own hands. They fed the hungry, but he himself multiplied the fishes and brake the bread. He sent the gospel into the world, but not by missionaries, but by himself; he became his own preacher, his own expounder and then left the truth to be taken up by others, when he himself had ascended into glory. By the streaming veins, then, of the Lord Jesus Christ; by the blessed body which for your sake endured the curse—the curse of toil, aggravated till it became not the sweat of the face, but the sweat of the heart in very drops of blood—by these I hold the

reasonableness of your personal service to him; and "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

But, again, have you not a personal religion? You are not content with promises that are held in a sort of "joint stock" by the entire community; you long to have in your own heart the personal cry of adoption; nothing but vital personal union to the ton of God can ever satisfy you. You are not content with the general election; you feel that you must have a personal election and a personal calling. You long to read your title clear to mansions in the skies. The charter of free grace, bright as it is, doth not satisfy you unless you can see your name amongst its inheritors. All the broad acres of the promises cannot charm you, you can walk over them and can them your own. You live, if you be a true Christian, you live upon the personal realization of your interest in that covenant of grace. What more reasonable than that you should give personal service? Were I preaching to those who were dolts, this might be seen and felt too; but I speak to those who are wise men, because they have been taught of God, and I say—what can be a more logical conclusion than that personal benefits enjoyed, and personal blessings received, should be reciprocated by personal services rendered?

Further, let me remark to you that this personal service is reasonable, from the fact that personal service is the only kind of service at all available. I scarcely know whether you can serve God except by individual consecration. All that your minister can do is already due from him to God. You could not say before the eternal throne, "Great God, I am thy servant, but I serve thee by another." Might he not reply, "That other was my servant too?" Here is a man who has spent his whole life, and whom you have felt to do so; does he come before God and cry, "Great God, I have done all, and I have a surplus left to supplement the dilatory character of my fellows?" No; when we have done all, we are unprofitable servant; we have done no more than it was our duty to have done. How, then, can you by any means hope that you can serve God through us, when eve ourselves feel we cannot reach the mark to which we would have aspired in our own personal service to Jesus? Oh I brothers and

sisters, if you will but think of it, all your idea of showing your gratitude to God by making another man to carry your burden on his back, is founded on idleness, and cannot be maintained in righteousness. More might I say, but I choose instead thereof to appeal to you thus:—Does not the reasonableness of personal service strike you at once? If it does not, there was a time when it did. E thou be a child of God, there was a season when argument was quite unnecessary to thee. Dost thou remember the time when thy sins lay heavily upon thy breast, and thou didst cry both night and day, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Hast thou forgotten that glad hour when at the foot of Mercy's cross all the strings were loosed that bound that burden to thy back, and thou wast free? Hast thou forgotten, then, those feelings of devout gratitude which made thee fall to the ground and cry, "My Master, take me; make something of me; do what thou wilt with me, only let me serve thee?" Most thou remember that hot haste in which thou didst rush into the world to tell to another the secret which God had whispered in thine ear? Dost thou remember now that first month of thy consecration to God, when thou couldst not do enough, when thou didst long to be rid even of necessary worldly employment's, that thou mightest devote thyself to God? Methinks I hear those sighs of thine now,— "O that I were a doorkeeper in the house of my God I O that I could serve my Master with all my might, and with all my strength!" Ah, brethren I and if thou needest argument now, what doth it betoken but that thou hast lost thy first love, and that thou hast fallen from the height of thy consecration? It seems to be believed by some men, who pretend to deep experience, that the love of Christians necessarily cools after conversion. I am sure it ought not to do so; and if it does, it were a feat which were disgraceful to us. To my mind, it is palpable that if we loved our Master much when we first knew him, we ought to love him with a tenfold degree of fervent attachment after we have known him more. Certain I am, if we have seen Christ, the very Christ, and have verily seen him, we shall be more deeply in love with him every day; whereas at first we thought him lovely, we shall come to know him so; and whereas once we thought anything we could do would be too little, we shall come to think that everything we could do would not be enough. I question that man's love altogether, who has to say of it, that it grew cold after a little season. What! Is the work of God's Spirit but a sort of spasmodic twitching. Is this all the Spirit does, to lay the lash upon the

back of the ass and make it go its jaded journey for an instant with a little more quickened pace? Surely not God doth not thus work. It were an inferior work to any which is exhibited in nature if this were all he did. And shall grace be second to the deeds of nature? Does God send the planets on in their orbits, and do they continue to roll, and after he hath made a creature serve him, will he stop? Does he light the sun and does he blaze for ever, and will he kindle our zeal, and shall it soon be quenched? Is God's grace as the smoke from the chimney, as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away? God forbid that we should harbour the idea! No, brethren; and personal service, personal continued service too, is but the reasonable effect of that grace which God gave us at the first, and which he continues to give us every hour, and will give us till we mount to eternal glory.

III. And now let me advance to my third point—PERSONAL SERVICE—ITS EXCELLENCE.

This excellence is so manifold, that had I some three hours to preach in, I might continue to go through the list and not exhaust it. Among the first of its charms, personal service is the main argument of the Christian religion against the sceptic. The sceptic says the religion of Christ is maintained by men who make a gain of godliness. "Your living is dependent upon your advocating the canes," says the infidel. Even to our missionaries this is often said, and though an unworthy suspicion and utterly untrue of men who sacrifice much even when they gain most, uttered to men who in any other service might soon grow rich—in their Masters service seldom, if ever—yet nevertheless, the taunt being never so unworthy, it has great power over unthinking minds. Let the Church, however, but beam to work unanimously; let every private man have his mission, let every man and woman beam to build nearest to their own house, and from that day scepticism begins to lose, at least; one of its argument; and with it, it loses one of its most formidable elements—one of its deadliest weapons with which it has attacked the Church. "See there, see there," says the infidel, "there is an honest man, though he be an honest fool he does at least believe what he says, for he does it not by word, but personally, he doer it not by another, but by himself; not because he is paid for it, but because he loves it." Oh, sirs! it were greatly

to the confusion of infidelity, if not to in utter destruction, if the whole Church could once see in its proper light, and carry out in its full measure, the grand doctrine of personal service. But further, I am persuaded that while it would be a grand argument against sceptics, it would be one of the greatest means of deciding that glass of waverers, who, although they are not skeptical, are negligent of the things of the kingdom. There is no way to make another man earnest like being earnest one's-self. If I see others who neglect the great salvation, and is I neglect it too, I patronize, and aid, and abet them in their neglect; but if that man sees me earnest about his salvation, he begins at once to put to himself the question, "Why is this? Here am I asleep and going down into hell, and this man who is no relation of mine, and who has no personal interest in me, is grieved, pained, and vexed because I am going wrong, and he cannot rest and be quiet because he fears I am in danger of the wrath to come." Oh! my brethren, there would be more souls, I do believe, moved to earnestness by earnestness, than by aught else. The closest logic, the most mighty rhetoric never convinced a soul so well as that mightiest of logic and of rhetoric—the earnestness of a true Christian. Let men who are now slothful see us in earnest, and they will begin to follow in our wake, God will bless our example to them, and through us they will be saved. But further, the excellency of personal service, it strikes me, is not confined to the good we do, but should be argued from the good we get. We have in our Churches, men and women who are always looking for an opportunity for quarreling. If there be a member who has made the slightest slip, they report it to the public, they tell it in Gath, and publish it in the streets of Askelon. There is nothing that is right. If you do a thing to-day, it is wrong; if you were to alter it to-morrow, it would be just as wrong. They are never consistent in anything but in their inconsistent grumbling. The mightiest cure for the Church is to set them to work. Armies are troublesome things, even emperors find they must allow these hungry things to blunt their appetite with war. The Church itself can never be much blessed while it hath division in its own ranks. Its very activity will cause disorder; the very earnestness in the Christian will cause confusion, unless you lead forth that earnestness to its proper field of development. I have always found that where there is a quarrelsome Church, it is sure to be an idle Church, and where men are always "at it," they have very little time to find fault with one another.

When we fuse iron, the two pieces will soon weld, bring two cold pieces together, and the stoutest arm and the heaviest hammer can never weld them. Let our Churches be united and they will be earnest; let them be cold, and they will be dashed to a thousand shivers. "And moreover, we have a large class of poor creatures, who, while not discontent with others, are discontent with themselves. They don't fight with other people, but they seem to be incessantly quarreling with a personal jealousy of their ownselves. They are not what they like to be, and they are not what they wish to be, and they don't feel as they should feel, and they don't think as they would like to think. They are always plunging their finger into their own eyes a, because they cannot see so well as they would wish, always ripping up the wounds they have, because those wounds smart, making themselves miserable in order that they may be happy, and at last, crying themselves into an inconsolable state of misery, they acquire a habit of mourning, until that mourning seems to be the only bliss they know. To use a homely illustration, and one which will be remembered, if another might not, the swiftest way for these cold souls to warm themselves is by setting them at once to work. When we were boys, we have sometimes gathered round our father's fire in the winter time, and almost sat upon it, yet we could not get wane; we rubbed our fingers, but they stir kept blue, at length our father wisely turned us out of doors and bade us work, and after some healthy pastime we soon came in with limbs no longer benumbed; the blood was circulated, and what tire could not do, exercise soon accomplished. Ministers of Christ, if your people cry to you, "Comfort us! comfort us!—comfort them, and make the fire a good one; at the same time remember that all the fire you can ever kindle, will not warm them so long as they are idle. If they are idle they cannot be warm. God will not have his people eat the fat and drink the sweet, unless they are prepared to carry their burden and give a portion to others as well as seek meat for themselves. The benefit of personal service then is not confined to others, but will come to be enjoyed even by those who engage in it.

An example or two here may tend to enforce the lesson I am anxious to inculcate. If you wish to prove the truth of this, you can begin to make a tolerable experiment in the course of the next half-hour. Do you want to feel grateful? Do not go home and get the hymn-book down. Just go down

this street here, and take the first turning to the left or the right, whichever you please. Go up the first pair of stairs you come to; you see a little room; perhaps the husband has come home by now—come home weary, and there is a swarm of children, all dirty, and so to live and sleep in; perhaps, that one room. Well, if you will only take a view of that with your own eyes, and then go home to your own house, you will begin to feel grateful. Or rise up to-morrow morning, and go to another house, and see a poor creature stretched on the bed of languishing, dependent on the parish allowance, and worse than that, dying with" our hope knowing nothing of God. or of the-way of salvation, and if that does not make you grateful when you think of your own interest in the precious blood of Jesus. I know nothing that will. Again, you want to be zealous and earnest. Next Sabbath morning walk down the New Cut, and if the open depravity does not make you earnest, your blood is fish's blood, and you have not the warmth of man's blood in you. Just see how the street is thronged all day with those who buy and sell, and get gain, while you are meeting in the house of God for prayer and praise. If that should not satisfy you, and you want to feel peculiarly zealous take your walk abroad and not only look on but begin to act. Take your stand amidst the crowd near the Victoria Theatre, and try to preach, and if you do not feel desirous when you hear their clamours and see their anxious eyes, as if they longed to hear you with eyes as wed as ears—if that does not make you zealous, I know of nothing that will make you so. Take a handful of tracts in your hand, and a handful of coppers in your pocket—two good things together, and give some of each to the poor people, and they will recollect you; and after you have gone to those—the poorest and the most depraved—if you do not go home with a feeling of gratitude mingled with one of earnest zeal for the salvation of souls, I do not know what remedy I can prescribe. I wish some of you fine ladies and gentlemen had the walking down some of our courts and alleys—nay; I would wish you to have a special treat that you might always remember. I would like you to sleep one night at a lodging-house, I should like you to eat one meal with the poor man; I should like you to sit in the midst of one drunken brawl, I should wish you to see one poor wife, her face all bleeding, where a brutal and degrading husband has been striking her; I should like you to spend one Sabbath in the midst of sin and debauchery; I should like you to see one scene of vice, and then hurry you away once and for all. Methinks, if I

took you there not only to see, but to act and cooperate in some holy deed of service; book you there that you might thrust your hand into the kennel, and bring up some lost jewel; that you might thrust your finger into the very fire, that you might pluck some bread from the burning, I think that usefulness would not be all on the part of others, but to a great degree react upon your own heart. You would go home and say, "I could not have behaved it; I could not have imagined that the necessities of this city were so great; that the need of praying and preaching, and generous liberality, could have been one-tenth so huge." I am sure if you be Christians, from that time forward, you would be more indefatigable in your industry, and more unlimited in your gifts than before. I must not tarry longer, time reproves me, though if it be that any of you shall carry thou out in practice, the time employed in persuading you will be well spent.

IV. I want now for a minute or two, to come to that Society, for which I stand here to plead to-night, and observe ITS PECULIAR ADAPTATION TO PERSONAL SERVICE.

We love the Missionary Society, both for home and abroad, though it does in measure help us to serve God by proxy. I love the Bible Society, because that enables me to serve God personally. For the same reason, I moat ever love the Religious Tract Society, because that enables me, nay, compels me, if I would do anything, to do it myself. I think I need only just mention one or two particulars. The peculiar form of usefulness which the Religious Tract Society lays hold upon, is admirably adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless, wish to do something for Christ. They have not the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers. They do not feel that they could subscribe their guinea, but they may buy their thousand tracts, and these they can distribute broadcast. How many a little one in Zion has spent his life in doing this good, when he could not perhaps have found any other good within his reach. This however, is but the beginning—the smallest part of the matter. And when men begin with little efforts for Christ, such as the giving away of a tract, they become stronger to do something else

afterwards. I speak personally to-night—and excuse the allusion—I remember the first service which my youthful heart rendered to Christ, was the doing up of tracts in envelopes, that might send them, with the hope that by choosing pertinent tracts, applicable to person. I knew, and then sealing them up, that God would bless them. And I well remember telling them and distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house, and telling in humble language, the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something. I sought to do something more and then from that something more, and now have I got beyond. And so I do not doubt that many of the servants of God have been led on to do something higher and nobler, because the first step was for good.

I look upon the giving away of a religious tract as only the first step for action not to be compared with many another deed done for Christ; but were it not for the first step we might never reach to the second but that first attained, we are encouraged to take another, and so at the last, God helping us, we may be made extensively useful. Besides, there is this to be said for the Society, that it does not make a man perform an act which looks like service but which is not. There is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which heaven alone shall disclose, and the judgment-day alone discover. How many thousands have been carried to heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell. I might say, if it were right to quote such a Scripture, "The leaves were for the healing of the nations,"—verily they are so. Scattered where the whole tree could scarcely be carried, the very leaves have had a medicinal and a healing virtue in them and the real word of truth, the simple statement of a Savior crucified and of a sinner who shall be saved by simply trusting in the Savior, has been greatly blessed, and many thousand souls have been led into the kingdom of heaven by this simple means.

And now what shall I say to bind up what has been already said into a compact form! Let each one of us, if we have done nothing for Christ, begin to do something now. The distribution of tracts is the first thing. Let us do that and attempt something else by-and-bye. Are we, on the

other hand, diligently engaged already in some higher service for Christ, let us not despise those steps which helped us up, but let us now assist others with these steps that they too may rise from the grade of service which is theirs to a higher and a greater one. Let us in fact encourage this society at all times with our contributions and with our prayers. I would remind you that during this year the Tract Society has sent abroad some forty-two millions of tracts—some four and a half millions more than last year. These have been sent throughout the whole earth. Extensive as man, I may say has been the action of this society—not confined to any sect or denomination, or any class or clime. It has labored for all, and an Christians have labored with it, and God has given it a large measure of success.

I think I may leave it in your hands to-night; but permit me this one word ere I bid you farewell. Many of you I shall never see again, and I remember that my own sermon tells me that I have personal service to perform for Christ. It is not enough for me to urge you to do it, I must do it too. My hearers, imagine not that any service you can do for Christ will save your souls if you are unrenewed. If your faith is not fixed in Jesus, your best works will be but splendid sins. All the performance of duties will not affect your salvation. Cease from your own righteousness, cease from all deeds of working out life, and "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust Jesus, and you are saved, trust self, and you are lost. Just as you are, cast yourselves on Christ. I remember Dr. Hawker concluding an admirable discourse with these brief words:—The words were addressed to Rebecca of old: "Wilt thou go with this man?" Let me conclude with the like words:—Souls, will ye go with Christ? Will ye go to Christ?" "I would go with him," saith one, "but would he have me." Did he ever reject one that came to him? "I would go with Christ," saith another, "but I am naked." He will clothe thee. "I would go to him," says a third, "but I am filthy." He can cleanse you; nay, his own blood shall wash you, and his own veins will supply the purifying stream. "I would go with him, saith another, " but I am diseased and leprous, and cannot walk with him." Ah! but he is a great physician, and he can heal thee. Come as thou art to Christ. Many say, "But I cannot come." I remember a raying in the North of Ireland, in the revival, which just hits the mark. The young converts will say to one another, when one says, "I

cannot come." "Brother, come if you can, and if you can't come, come as you can." Will you not come, when by coming to Christ you may save your soul? We do not know what faith is when we say to ourselves, "It is a something so mysterious I cannot reach it." Faith is trusting Christ. It is the end of mystery and the beginning of simplicity; the giving up of all those idle feelings and believings that aught else can save the soul, and the reception of that one master thought, that Christ Jesus is exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins. Never soul perished trusting Jesus, never heart was blasted with perdition that had confidently rested itself upon the cross. There is thy hope, poor shipwrecked mariner, yonder constellation of the cross with those five stars, the wounds of Jesus Look there and live. One glance and thou art saved. Those soul-quickenings words, "Believe and live," comprehend the whole gospel of God. May the Divine Spirit lead you now out of self unto Christ. O Lord! command thy blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Personality Of The Holy Ghost

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. - John 14:16-17

You will be surprised to hear me announce that I do not intend this morning to say anything about the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. I propose to reserve that for a special Sermon this evening. In this discourse I shall endeavor to explain and enforce certain other doctrines, which I believe are plainly taught in this text, and which I hope God the Holy Ghost may make profitable to our souls. Old John Newton once said, that there were some books which he could not read; - they were good and sound enough; but, said he, "they are books of halfpence; - you have to take so much in quantity before you have any value; there are other books of silver, and others of gold; but I have one book that is a book of bank notes; and every leaf is a bank-note of immense value." So I found with this text: that I had a bank-note of so large a sum, that I could not tell it out all this morning. I should have to keep you several hours before I could unfold to you the whole value of this precious promise - one of the last which Christ gave his people.

I invite your attention to this passage because we shall find in it some instruction on four points: first, concerning the true and proper personality of the Holy Ghost; secondly, concerning the united agency of the glorious Three Persons in the work of our salvation; thirdly we shall find something to establish the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of all believers; and fourthly, we shall find out the reason why the carnal mind rejects the Holy Ghost.

I. First of all, we shall have some little instruction concerning the proper *personality of the Holy Spirit*. We are so much accustomed to talk about

the influence of the Holy Ghost and his sacred operations and graces, that we are apt to forget that the Holy Spirit is truly and actually a person - that he is a subsistence - an existence; or, as we Trinitarians usually say, one person in the essence of the Godhead. I am afraid that, though we do not know it, we have acquired the habit of regarding the Holy Ghost as an emanation flowing from the Father and the Son, but not as being actually a person himself. I know it is not easy to carry about in our mind the idea of the Holy Spirit as a person. I can think of the Father as a person, because his acts are such as I can understand. I see him hang the world in ether; I behold him swaddling a new-born sea in bands of darkness; I know it is he who formed the drops of hail, who leadeth forth the stars by their hosts, and calleth them by their name; I can conceive of Him as a person, because I behold his operations. I can realize Jesus, the Son of Man, as a real person, because he is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. It takes no great stretch of my imagination to picture the babe in Bethlehem, or to behold the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," of the king of martyrs, as he was persecuted in Pilate's hall, or nailed to the accursed tree for our sins. Nor do I find it difficult at times to realize the person of my Jesus sitting on his throne in heaven; or girt with clouds and wearing the diadem of all creation, calling the earth to judgment, and summoning us to hear our final sentence. But when I come to deal with the Holy Ghost, his operations are so mysterious, his doings are so secret, his acts are so removed from everything that is of sense, and of the body, that I cannot so easily get the idea of his being a person; but a person he is. God the Holy Ghost is not an influence, an emanation, a stream of something flowing from the Father; but he is as much an actual person as either God the Son, or God the Father. I shall attempt this morning a little to establish the doctrine, and to show you the truth of it - that God the Holy Spirit is actually a person.

The first proof we shall gather from the pool of holy baptism. Let me take you down, as I have taken others, into the pool, now concealed, but which I wish were always open to your view. Let me take you to the baptismal font, where believers put on the name of the Lord Jesus, and you shall hear me pronounce the solemn words, "I baptize thee in the name," - mark, "in the name," not names - "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Every one who is baptized according to the true form

laid down in Scripture, must be a Trinitarian: otherwise his baptism is a farce and a lie, and he himself is found a deceiver and a hypocrite before God. As the Father is mentioned, and as the Son is mentioned, so is the Holy Ghost; and the whole is summed up as being a Trinity in unity, by its being said, not the names, but the "name" the glorious name, the Jehovah name, "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Let me remind you that the same thing occurs each time you are dismissed from this house of prayer. In pronouncing the solemn closing benediction, we invoke on your behalf the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; and thus, according to the apostolic manner, we make a manifest distinction between the persons, showing that we believe the Father to be a person, the Son to be a person, and the Holy Ghost to be a person. Were there no other proofs in Scripture, I think these would be sufficient for every sensible man. He would see that if the Holy Spirit were a mere influence, he would not be mentioned in conjunction with two whom we all confess to be actual and proper persons.

A second argument arises from the fact that the Holy Ghost has actually made different appearances on earth. The Great Spirit has manifested himself to man: he has put on a form, so that, whilst he has not been beheld by mortal men, he has been so veiled in appearance that he was seen, so far as that appearance was concerned, by the eyes of all beholders. See you Jesus Christ our Saviour? There is the river Jordan, with its shelving banks and its willows weeping at its side. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descends into the stream, and the holy Baptist, John, plunges him into the waves. The doors of heaven are opened; a miraculous appearance presents itself; a bright light shineth from the sky, brighter than the sun in all its grandeur, and down in a flood of glory descends something which you recognize to be a dove. It rests on Jesus - it sits upon his sacred head, and as the old painters put a halo round the brow of Jesus, so did the Holy Ghost shed a resplendence around the face of him who came to fulfil all righteousness, and therefore commenced with the ordinance of baptism. The Holy Ghost was seen as a dove, to mark his purity and his gentleness, and he came down like a dove *from heaven* to show that it is from heaven alone that he descendeth. Nor is this the only time when the Holy Ghost has been manifest in a visible

shape. You see that company of disciples gathered together in an upper room; they are waiting for some promised blessing, and bye-and-bye it shall come. Hark! there is a sound as of a rushing mighty wind; it fills all the house where they are sitting; and astonished, they look around them, wondering what will come next. Soon a bright light appears, shining upon the heads of each: cloven tongues of fire sat upon them. What were these marvelous appearances of wind and flame but a display of the Holy Ghost in his proper person? I say the fact of an appearance manifests that he must be a person. An influence could not appear - an attribute could not appear: we cannot see attributes - we cannot behold influences. The Holy Ghost must, then, have been a person; since he was beheld by mortal eyes, and he came under the cognizance of mortal sense.

Another proof is from the fact, that personal qualities are, in Scripture, ascribed to the Holy Ghost. First, let me read to you a text in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of as having *understanding*. In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. ii., you will read, "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepare for them that love him. But God have revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Here you see an understanding - a power of knowledge is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Now, if there be any persons here whose minds are of so preposterous a complexion that they would ascribe one attribute to another, and would speak of a mere influence having understanding, then I give up all the argument. But I believe every rational man will admit, that when anything is spoken of as having an understanding, it must be an existence - it must, in fact, be a person. In the 12th chap., 11th verse of the same Epistle, you will find a *will* ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "But all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." So it is plain that the Spirit has a will. He does not come from God simply at God's will, but he has a will of his own, which is always in keeping with the will of the infinite Jehovah, but is, nevertheless, distinct and separate; therefore, I say he is a person. In another text, *power* is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and power is a thing which can only be ascribed to an existence. In

Romans 15:13, it is written, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." I need not insist upon it, because it is self-evident, that wherever you find understanding, will, and power, you must also find an existence; it cannot be a mere attribute, it cannot be a metaphor, it cannot be a personified influence; but it must be a person.

But I have a proof which, perhaps, will be more telling upon you than any other. Acts and deeds are ascribed to the Holy Ghost; therefore, he must be a person. You read in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the Spirit brooded over the surface of the earth, when it was as yet all disorder and confusion. This world was once a mass of chaotic matter, there was no order; it was like the valley of darkness and of the shadow of death. God the Holy Ghost spread his wings over it; he sowed the seeds of life in it; the germs from which all beings sprang were implanted by him; he impregnated the earth so that it became capable of life. Now, it must have been a person who brought order out of confusion: it must have been an existence who hovered over this world and made it what it now is. But do we not read in Scripture something more of the Holy Ghost? Yes, we are told that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." When Moses penned the Pentateuch, the Holy Ghost moved his hand; when David wrote the Psalms, and discoursed sweet music on his harp, it was the Holy Spirit that gave his fingers their seraphic motion; when Solomon dropped from his lips the words of the proverbs of wisdom, or when he hymned the Canticles of love, it was the Holy Ghost who gave him words of knowledge and hymns of rapture. Ah! and what fire was that which touched the lips of the eloquent Isaiah? What hand was that which came upon Daniel? What might was that which made Jeremiah so plaintive in his grief? or what was that which winged Ezekiel and made him like an eagle, soar into mysteries aloft, and see the mighty unknown beyond our reach? Who was it that made Amos, the herdsman, a prophet? Who taught the rugged Haggai to pronounce his thundering sentences? Who showed Habakkuk the horses of Jehovah marching through the waters? or who kindled the burning eloquence of Nahum? Who caused Malachi to close up the book with the muttering of the word curse? Who was it in each of these, save the Holy Ghost? And must it not have been a person who spake in and through these ancient

witnesses? We must believe it. We cannot avoid believing it, when we read that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

And when has the Holy Ghost ceased to have an influence upon men? We find that still he deals with his ministers and with all his saints. Turn to the Acts, and you will find that the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work." I never heard of an attribute saying such a thing. The Holy Spirit said to Peter, "Go to the Centurion, and what I have cleansed, that call not thou common." The Holy Ghost caught away Philip after he had baptized the Eunuch, and carried him away to another place; and the Holy Ghost said to Paul; "Thou shalt not go into that city, but shall turn into another." And we know that the Holy Ghost was lied unto by Ananias and Sapphira, when it was said, "Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." Again, that power which we feel every day, who are called to preach - that wondrous spell which makes our lips so potent - that power which gives us thoughts which are like birds from a far-off region, not the natives of our soul - that influence which I sometimes strangely feel, which, if it does not give me poetry and eloquence, gives me a might I never felt before, and lifts me above my fellow-man - that majesty with which he clothes his ministers, till in the midst of the battle they cry aha! like the war-horse of Job, and move themselves like leviathans in the water - that power which gives us might over men, and causes them to sit and listen as if their ears were chained, as if they were entranced by the power of some magician's wand - that power must come from a person; it must come from the Holy Ghost.

But is it not said in Scripture, and do we not feel it, dear brethren, that it is the Holy Ghost who regenerates the soul? It is the Holy Ghost who quickens us. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." It is the Holy Spirit who imparts the first germ of life, convincing us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. And is it not the Holy Spirit, who, after that flame is kindled, still fans it with the breath of his mouth and keeps it alive? Its author is its preserver. Oh! can it be said that it is the Holy Ghost who strives in men's souls; that it is the Holy Ghost who brings them into the sweet place that is called Calvary - can it be said that he does all these things, and yet is not a person? It may be said, but it must be said by fools; for he never can be a wise man who can

consider these things can be done by any other than a glorious person - a divine existence.

Allow me to give you one more proof, and I shall have done. Certain feelings are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, which can only be understood upon the supposition that he is actually a person. In the 4th chapter of Ephesians, v. 30, it is said that the Holy Ghost can be grieved: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." In Isaiah, chap. lxiii, v. 10, it is said that the Holy Ghost can be vexed: "But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy., and he fought against them." In Acts, chap. vii. v. 51, you read that the Holy Ghost can be resisted: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." And in the 5th chapter, v. 9, of the same book, you will find that the Holy Ghost may be tempted. We are informed that Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" Now, these things could not be emotions which might be ascribed to a quality or an emanation; they must be understood to relate to a person; an influence could not be grieved, it must be a person who can be grieved, vexed, or resisted.

And now, dear brethren, I think I have fully established the point of the personality of the Holy Ghost; allow me now, most earnestly, to impress upon you the absolute necessity of being sound on the doctrine of the Trinity. I knew a man, a good minister of Jesus Christ he is now, and I believe he was before he turned his eyes unto heresy - he began to doubt the glorious divinity of our blessed Lord, and for years did he preach the heterodox doctrine, until one day he happened to hear a very eccentric old minister preaching from the text, "But there the *glorious Lord* shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail." "Now," said the old minister, "you give up the Trinity, and your tacklings are loosed, you cannot strengthen your masts. Once give up the doctrine of three persons, and your tacklings are all gone; your mast, which ought to be a support to your vessel, is a rickety one, and shakes." A gospel without the Trinity! it is a pyramid built upon its apex. A gospel

without the Trinity! it is a rope of sand that cannot hold together. A gospel without the Trinity! then, indeed, Satan can overturn it. But give me a gospel with the Trinity, and the might of hell cannot prevail against it; no man can any more overthrow it than a bubble could split a rock, or a feather break in halves a mountain. Get the thought of the three persons, and you have the marrow of all divinity. Only know the Father, and know the Son, and know the Holy Ghost to be one, and all things will appear clear. This is the golden key to the secrets of nature; this is the silken clue of the labyrinths of mystery, and he who understands this, will soon understand as much as mortals e'er can know.

II. Now for our second point - the *united agency* of the three persons in the work of our salvation. Look at the text, and you will find all the three persons mentioned. "I" - that is the Son - "will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." There are the three persons mentioned, all of them doing something for our salvation. "I will pray," says the Son. "I will send," says the Father. "I will comfort," says the Holy Ghost. now, let us, for a few moments, discourse upon this wondrous theme - the unity of the three persons with regard to the great purpose of the salvation of the elect. When God first made man, he said, "Let *us* make man," not let *me*, but, "Let us make man in our own image." The covenant Elohim said to each other, "Let us unitedly become the creator of man." So, when in ages far gone by, in eternity, they said, "Let us save man:" it was not the Father who said, "Let *me* save man, "but the three persons conjointly said, with one consent, "Let *us* save man." It is to me a source of sweet comfort to think that it is not one person of the Trinity that is engaged for my salvation; it is not simply one person of the Godhead who vows that he will redeem me; but it is a glorious trio of Godlike ones, and the three declare, unitedly, "*We* will save man."

Now, observe here, that each person is spoken of as performing a separate office. "I will pray," says the Son; that is intercession. "I will send," says the Father; that is donation. "I will comfort," says the Holy Spirit; that is supernatural influence. O! if it were possible for us to see the three persons of the Godhead, we should behold one of them standing before the throne, with outstretched hands, crying day and night, "O, Lord, how long?" We should see one girt with Urim and Thummim,

precious stones, on which are written the twelve names of the tribes of Israel; we should behold him, crying unto his Father, "Forget not thy promises, forget not thy covenant;" we should hear him make mention of our sorrows, and tell forth our griefs on our behalf, for he is our intercessor. And could we behold the Father, we should not see him a listless and idle spectator of the intercession of the Son, but we should see him with attentive ear listening to every word of Jesus, and granting every petition. Where is the Holy Spirit all the while? Is he lying idle? O no; he is floating over the earth, and when he sees a weary soul, he says, "Come to Jesus, he will give you rest;" when he beholds an eye filled with tears, he wipes away the tears, and bids the mourner look for comfort on the cross; when he sees the tempest-tossed believer, he takes the helm of his soul and speaks the word of consolation; he helpeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds; and, ever on his mission of mercy, he flies around the world, being everywhere present. Behold, how the three persons work together. Do not then say, "I am grateful to the Son" - so you ought to be, but God the Son no more saves you than God the Father. Do not imagine that God the Father is a great tyrant, and that God the Son had to die to make him merciful. It was not to make the Father's love towards his people. Oh, no. One loves as much as the other; the three are conjoined in the great purpose of rescuing the elect from damnation.

But you must notice another thing in my text, which will show the blessed unity of the three - the one person promises to the other. The Son says, "I will pray the Father." "Very well," the disciples may have said, "we can trust you for that." "And he will send you." You see, here is the Son signing a bond on behalf of the Father. "He will send you another Comforter." There is a bond on behalf of the Holy Spirit too. "And he will abide with you forever." One person speaks for the other, and how could they, if there were any disagreement between them? If one wished to save, and the other not, they could not promise on another's behalf. But whatever the Son says, the Father listens to; whatever the Father promises, the Holy Ghost works; and, whatever the Holy Ghost injects into the soul, that God the Father fulfils. So, the three together mutually promise on one another's behalf. There is a bond with three names appended - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. By three immutable things, as well as by two, the Christian is secured beyond the reach of death and

hell. A Trinity of securities, because there is a Trinity of God.

III, Our third point is, the *indwelling* of the Holy Ghost in believers. Now, beloved, these first two things have been matters of pure doctrine; this is the subject of experience. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost is a subject so profound, and so having to do with the inner man, that no soul will be able truly and really to comprehend what I say, unless it has been taught of God. I have heard of an old minister, who told a fellow of one of the Cambridge colleges, that he understood a language that *he* never learned in all his life. "I have not," he said, "even a smattering of Greek, and I know no Latin, but thank God, I can talk the language of Canaan, and that is more than you can." So, beloved, I shall now have to talk a little of the language of Canaan. If you cannot comprehend me, I am much afraid it is because you are not of Israelitish extraction; you are not a child of God, nor an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

We are told in the text, that Jesus would send the Comforter, who would abide in the saints forever; who would dwell with them, and be in them. Old Ignatius, the martyr, used to call himself Theophorus, or Godbearer, "because," said he, "I bear about with me the Holy Ghost." And truly every Christian is a Godbearer. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost? for he dwelleth in you?" That man is no Christian who is not the subject of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; he may talk well, he may understand theology, and be a sound Calvinist; he will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child. He may be a man of so profound an intellect, so gigantic a soul, so comprehensive a mind, and so lofty an imagination, that he may dive into all the secrets of nature, may know the path which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and go into depths where the ken of mortals reacheth not, but he shall not be a Christian with all his knowledge, he shall not be a son of God with all his researches, unless he understands what it is to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in him and abiding in him; yea, and that for ever.

Some people call this fanaticism, and they say, "You are a Quaker; why not follow George Fox?" Well, we would not mind that much: we would follow any one who followed the Holy Ghost. Even he, with all his eccentricities, I doubt not, was, in many cases, actually inspired by the

Holy Spirit; and whenever I find a man in whom there rests the Spirit of God, the spirit within me leaps to hear the spirit within him, and we feel that we are one. The Spirit of God in one Christian soul recognizes the Spirit in another. I recollect talking with a good man, as I believe he was, who was insisting that it was impossible for us to know whether we had the Holy Spirit within us or not. I should like him to be here this morning, because I would read this verse to him, "But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Ah! you think you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not. Can I tell whether I am alive or not? If I were touched by electricity, could I tell whether I was or not? I suppose I should; the shock would be strong enough to make me know where I stood. So, if I have God within me - if I have Deity tabernacling in my breast - if I have God the Holy Ghost resting in my heart, and making a temple of my body, do you think I shall know it? Call it fanaticism if you will, but I trust that there are some of us who know what it is to be always, or generally, under the influence of the Holy Spirit - always in one sense, generally in another. When we have difficulties, we ask the direction of the Holy Ghost. When we do not understand a portion of Holy Scripture, we ask God the Holy Ghost to shine upon us. When we are depressed, the Holy Ghost comforts us. You cannot tell what the wondrous power of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is; how it pulls back the hand of the saint when he would touch the forbidden thing; how it prompts him to make a covenant with his eyes; how it binds his feet, lest they should fall in a slippery way; how it restrains his heart, and keeps him from temptation. O ye, who know nothing of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, despise it not. O despise not the Holy Ghost, for it is the unpardonable sin. "He that speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but he that speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, either in this life, or that which is to come." So saith the Word of God. Therefore tremble, lest in anything ye despise the influences of the Holy Spirit.

But before closing this point, there is one little word that pleases me very much, that is "forever." You knew I should not miss that; you were certain I could not let it go without observation. "Abide with you forever." I wish I could get an Armenian here to finish my sermon. I fancy I see him taking that word "forever." He would say, "for - forever;" he would have

to stammer and stutter; for he could never get it out all at once. He might stand and pull it about, and at last he would have to say, "The translation is wrong." And I suppose the poor man would have to prove that the original was wrong too. Ah! but blessed be God we can read it - "He shall abide with you forever." Once give me the Holy Ghost, and I shall never lose him till "forever" has run out; till eternity has spun its everlasting rounds.

IV. Now we have to close up with a brief remark on the reason why the world rejects the Holy Ghost. It is said, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." You know what is sometimes meant by "the world" - those whom God in his wondrous sovereignty passed over when he chose his people: the preterite ones; those passed over in God's wondrous preterition - not the reprobates who were condemned to damnation by some awful decree; but those passed over by God, when he chose out his elect. These cannot receive the Spirit. Again, it means all in a carnal state are not able to procure themselves this divine influence; and, thus it is true, "Whom the world cannot receive."

The unregenerate world of sinners despises the Holy Ghost, "because it seeth him not." Yes, I believe this is the great secret why many laugh at the idea of the existence of the Holy Ghost - because they see him not. You tell the worldling, "I have the Holy Ghost within me." He says, "I cannot see it." He wants it to be something tangible - a thing he can recognize with his senses. Have you ever heard the argument used by a good old Christian against an infidel doctor? The doctor said there was no soul, and asked, "Did you ever see a soul?" "No," said the Christian. "Did you ever hear a soul?" "No." "Did you ever smell a soul?" "No." "Did you ever taste a soul?" "No." "Did you ever feel a soul?" "Yes," said the man - "I feel I have one within me." "Well," said the doctor, "there are four senses against one; you only have one on your side." "Very well," said the Christian, "Did you ever see a pain?" "No." "Did you ever hear a pain?" "No." "Did you ever smell a pain?" "No." "Did you ever taste a pain?" "No." "Did you ever feel a pain?" "Yes." "And that is quite enough, I suppose, to prove there is a pain?" "Yes." So the worldling says there is no Holy Ghost, because he cannot see it. Well, but we feel it. You say that is

fanaticism, and that we never felt it. Suppose you tell me that honey is bitter, I reply, "No, I am sure you cannot have tasted it; taste it and try." So with the Holy Ghost; if you did but feel his influence, you would no longer say there is no Holy Spirit, because you cannot see it. Are there not many things, even in nature, which we cannot see? Did you ever see the wind? No; but ye know there is wind, when you behold the hurricane tossing the waves about, and rending down the habitations of men; or when, in the soft evening zephyr, it kisses the flowers, and maketh dew-drops hang in pearly coronets around the rose. Did ye ever see electricity? No; but ye know there is such a thing, for it travels along the wires for thousands of miles, and carries our messages; though you cannot see the thing itself, you know there is such a thing. So you must believe there is a Holy Ghost working in us, both to will and to do, even though it is beyond our senses.

But the last reason why worldly men laugh at the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is, because they do not know it. If they know it by heartfelt experience and if they recognized its agency in the soul; if they had ever been touched by it; if they had been made to tremble under a sense of sin; if they had had their hearts melted, they would never have doubted the existence of the Holy Ghost.

And now, beloved, it says, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." We will close up with that sweet recollection - the Holy Ghost dwells in all believers and shall be with them.

One word of comment and advice to the saints of God, and to sinners, and I have done. Saints of the Lord! ye have this morning heard that God the Holy Ghost is a person; ye have had it proved to your souls. What follows from this? Why, it followeth how earnest ye should be in prayer *to* the Holy Spirit, as well as *for* the Holy Spirit. Let me say that this is an inference that you should lift up your prayers to the Holy Ghost: that you should cry earnestly unto him; for he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can speak or think. See this mass of people. What is to convert it? See this crowd? Who is to make my influence permeate through the mass? You know this place now has a mighty influence, and, God blessing us, it will have an influence not only upon this city, but upon

England at large; for we now employ the press as well as the pulpit; and certainly, I should say, before the close of the year, more than two hundred thousand of my productions will be scattered through the land - words uttered by my lips, or written by my pen. But how can this influence be rendered for good? How shall God's glory be promoted by it? Only by incessant prayer for the Holy Spirit; by constantly calling down the influence of the Holy Ghost upon us; we want him to rest upon every page that is printed, and upon every word that is uttered. Let us then be doubly earnest in pleading with the Holy Ghost, that he would come and own our labors; that the whole church at large may be revived thereby, and not ourselves only, but the whole world share in the benefit.

Then, to the ungodly, I have this one closing word to say. Ever be careful how you speak of the Holy Ghost. I do not know what the unpardonable sin is, and I do not think any man understands it; but it is something like this: "He that speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him." I do not know what that means; but tread carefully! There is danger; there is a pit which our ignorance has covered by sand; tread carefully! you may be in it before the next hour. If there is any strife in your heart to-day, perhaps you will go to the ale-house and forget it. Perhaps there is some voice speaking in your soul, and you will put it away. I do not tell you will be resisting the Holy Ghost, and committing the unpardonable sin; but it is somewhere there. Be very careful. O, there is no crime on earth so black as the crime against the Holy Spirit! Ye may blaspheme the Father, and ye shall be damned for it, unless ye repent; ye may blaspheme the Son, and hell shall be your portion, unless ye are forgiven; but blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and thus saith the Lord: "There is no forgiveness, either in this world nor in the world which is to come." I cannot tell you what it is; I do not profess to understand it; but there it is. It is the danger signal; stop! man, stop! If thou has despised the Holy Spirit - if thou hast laughed at his revelations, and scorned what Christians call his influence, I beseech thee, stop! This morning seriously deliberate. Perhaps some of you have actually committed the unpardonable sin; stop! Let fear stop you; sit down. Do not drive on so rashly as you have done, Jehu! O slacken your reins! Thou who are such a profligate in sin - thou who hast uttered such hard words against the Trinity, stop! Ah! it makes us all stop. It makes us all draw up, and say,

"Have I not perhaps so done?" Let us think of this; and let us not at any time stifle either with the words or the acts of God the Holy Ghost.

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A Persuasive To Steadfastness

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. - Hebrews 3:14

How is it possible for the preacher to say too much about faith, or to extol this grace too highly! It is of vital importance, not at one stage of the Christian's history only, but throughout the whole of his career, from his setting out even till he reaches the goal where faith is turned to sight. By faith we begin the life of obedience to Christ, and by faith we continue to lead the life of holiness, for "the just shall live by faith." This is the point of honor and of safety with all the just—the justified ones. The whole compass of their well-being, though it take in the sternest sense of duty and the highest grant of privilege, is to believe simply, to rely implicitly, and to confide cheerfully, in their covenant God. The beginning of their confidence is a hopeful sign. Time will test its value. The result of that profession has yet to be shown. Hence it is necessary that the beginning of their confidence should be held fast, steadfast even unto the end. When we begin in the spirit we do not proceed with a hope to be made perfect in the flesh. We do not start with justification by faith, and then look for perfection by works. We do not lean upon Christ when we are little children, and then expect to run alone when we are men; but we live by drawing all our stores from him, while as yet we are naked, and poor, and miserable. When most enriched by his grace, we still have to say and delight to say it, "all my springs are in thee." Faith at the beginning and faith at the close; faith all the way through is the one important matter. A failure in this, as we observed in our reading, shut Israel out of the promised land. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Unbelief is

always the greatest mischief to the saints; hence they have need earnestly to watch against it. Faith is always the channel of innumerable blessings to them: they ought, therefore, most watchfully to maintain it.

We shall have to show the value of faith while we try to open up the text before us, in which I see, first, a high privilege: "we are made partakers of Christ;" and secondly, by implication, a serious question—the question whether or no we have been made partakers of Christ and, then, in the third place, an unerring test. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

I. First, then, here is A VERY HIGH PRIVILEGE. "We are made partakers of Christ."

Observe that the text does not say, "we are made partakers with Christ." That would be true, a very precious truth too, for we are joint-heirs with Christ, and because all things are his, all things are ours. Christ holds for us the entire heritage of the faithful as our representative, and as we are made partakers with him in the Father's favor, and in the world's hatred, so we shall be partakers with him in the glory to be revealed, and in the bliss which endures for ever and ever. But here we have to do with our being partakers of Christ, rather than our being partakers with Christ.

Neither does it say we are made partakers of rich spiritual benefits. That is a fact which we may greet with thorough trust and hearty welcome. But, dear brethren, there is more than that here. To be partakers of pardoning mercy, to be partakers of renewing grace; to be partakers of the adoption, to be partakers of sanctification, preservation, and of all the other covenant blessings, is to possess an endowment of unspeakable value; but to be made "partakers of Christ," is to have all in one. You have all the flowers in one posy, all the gems in one necklace, all the sweet spices in one delicious compound. "We are made partakers of Christ"—of himself. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," and we are made partakers with him of all that he is ordained to be of God unto us—"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." We are partakers of him; this is a privilege that no tongue can ever utter, no thought of finite mortal can ever grasp. But ah, it would need more time

than we can afford, and far more spiritual teaching than we profess to have attained, to dive into this great and profound utterance, "We are made partakers of Christ." Still, as we stand spell-bound on the margin, let us venture to sail out just a little upon the surface of this ocean of goodness and of grandeur.

We are made partakers of Christ, beloved, when first of all by faith in him we procure a share in his merits. Sinful and sad, covered with transgressions and conscious of our shame, we come to the fountain filled with his blood, we washed in it, and were made white as snow. In that hour we became partakers of Christ. Christ is the substitute for sin. He suffered the penalty due from the unjust, for whom he died, to the violated law of God. When we believe in him we become partakers of those sufferings, or rather of the blessed fruit of them. The fact of his having borne what we ought to have borne becomes available to us. We present the memorial thereof at the altar of God, the throne of the heavenly grace, in prayers and professions, and in spiritual worship. The blood pleads our cause. The blood of Jesus, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, intercedes for mercy, not for vengeance. By its rich virtue, its real value, its vital merit, it puts our sins for ever to death and lays our fears for ever to rest. Oh, how blessed to be a partaker of Christ, the sin-atonement sacrifice—to stand before God as a sinner that deserves nothing but damnation in himself, and yet knows by precious faith, that

"Covered is my unrighteousness,
From condemnation I am free—"

—that I am a partaker of the meritorious sacrifice of the great high Priest, who, having once offered one sacrifice for ever, now sits down, his work being done, at the right hand of God. What a privilege is this!

Moreover, we are partakers of Christ, inasmuch as his righteousness also becomes ours by imputation. We are not only freed from sin through his atonement, but we are rendered acceptable to God through his obedience as our responsible surety. We are "accepted in the beloved," we are justified through his righteousness. God seeth not us marred in the likeness of the first Adam who sinned, but he seeth us in Christ, the

second Adam, remade, redeemed, restored, arrayed in garments of glory and beauty, with the Savior's vesture on, as holy as the Holy One. He seeth "no sin in Jacob nor iniquity in Israel." When Jacob learns to trust in the Messiah, and Israel hides behind his representative, the Lord our Righteousness, Jacob ceases to wrestle, for he prevails, and Israel stands in honor, for he is a prince with God. Blessed, thrice blessed, are they who are partakers of Christ in his righteousness.

After we are thus saved from sin, and righteousness is imputed to us by faith, we further become partakers of Christ by living upon him, feeding on him. The sacramental table represents our fellowship. Though it does no more than represent it, it represents it well. At that table we eat bread, and we drink wine, and the body is thus fed, typifying that through meditation upon the incarnate Christ our soul is sustained, and by remembering the passion of the Lord, as the wine cup sets forth his blood, our spirits are comforted and revived, and our hearts are nourished. It is not that the bread is anything or the wine anything, but it is that Christ is everything to us. He is our daily bread, his atonement makes glad our heart—makes us "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Brethren, you know what it is to feed upon Jesus, and what satisfying food it is! When nothing else can give your soul rest and peace, remembering the incarnate God will do it, a study of the suffering Savior will bring the refreshment and consolation you want. Jesus Christ when he is our food makes us to be partakers of himself.

But, is there not a doctrine concealed here of deeper significance? The union of believers with himself was among the latest of all the revelations which our blessed Lord when on earth made known to his disciples. With a parable he showed it, and without a parable he declared it plainly. Every true child of God is one with Christ. This union is set forth in Scripture by several images, to which we will just refer, but upon none of which can we just now enlarge. We are one with Christ and partakers of him as the stone is cemented to the foundation. It is built upon it, rests upon it, and, together with the foundation, goes to make up the structure. So we are built into Christ by coherence and adhesion, joined to him, and made a spiritual house for the habitation of God by the Holy Ghost. We are made partakers with Christ by a union in which we lean and depend upon him.

This union is further set forth by the vine and the branches. The branches are participators with the stem, the sap of the stem is for the branches. It treasures it up only to distribute it to them. It has no sap for itself alone, all its store of sap is for the branch. In like manner we are vitally one with Christ, and the grace that is in him is for us. It was given to him that he might distribute it to all his people. Furthermore, it is as the union of the husband with the wife, they are participators the one with the other. All that belongs to the husband the wife enjoys and shares with him. Meanwhile she shares himself, nay, he is all her own. Thus it is with Christ. We are married unto him—betrothed unto him for ever in righteousness and in judgment, and all that he has is ours, and he himself is ours. All his heart belongs to each one of us. And then, too, as the members of the body are one with the head, as they derive their guidance, their happiness, their existence from the head, so are we made partakers of Christ. Oh, matchless participation! It is "a great mystery" saith the apostle; and, indeed, such a mystery it is as they only know who experience it. Even they cannot understand it fully; far less can they hope to set it forth so that carnal minds shall comprehend its spiritual meaning. The day cometh when we shall be partakers of Christ to the highest and uttermost degree that symbols can suggest, prophecy forestal, faith anticipate, or actual accomplishment bring to pass; for, albeit, though of all that our Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven we have a reversionary interest to-day by faith, we shall have a share in it by actual participation ere long.

Partakers of Christ! Yes, and therefore with him partakers in destiny. When he shall come his holy ones shall come with him. That he has risen from the dead is the earnest of their resurrection. At the day of his appearing they shall rise and participate in the fruition of his mediatorial work. Then, in the judging of the world, in the destruction of all his spiritual foes, in the great marriage-day when the bride shall have made herself ready, and he shall drink of the new wine in the kingdom of his Father, and in all else that is to come, too glorious to be described except by symbols like those of the Apocalypse, his people shall participate with him, for this honor have all his saints. All right and all might, all that can extol or delight, all that for ever and for ever shall contribute to the glory of Christ, shall be shared by all the faithful, for we are partakers not only

with him, but of him—of Christ—therefore of all the surroundings of glory and honor that shall belong to him.

The language of the text reminds us that none of us have any title to this privilege by nature. "We are made partakers of Christ." From our first parentage He derived a very different entail. We all of woman born became partakers of the ruin of the first Adam, of the corruption of humanity, of the condemnation common to the entire race. Oh, to be made partakers! This is a work of grace, of sovereign omnipotent grace—a work which a man cannot sufficiently admire, and for which he can never be sufficiently grateful. "We are made partakers of Christ." This is the Holy Ghost's work in us, to rend us away from the old wild olive, and to graft us into the good olive,—to dissolve the union between us and sin, and to cement a union between our souls and Christ,—to take us out of the Egyptian bondage and the Egyptian night in which we willingly sat, and to bring us into the liberty and the light wherewith Christ makes his people free and glad. This is work as grand and godlike as to create a world. For it let the Lord's name be magnified by each one of us if, indeed, we have been made partakers of Christ. If—I say; and that "if" leads me to the second point I proposed to consider.

II. The privilege of which we have spoken suggests A SOLEMN SEARCHING QUESTION. Are we made partakers of Christ? O beloved, many think they are who are not. There is nothing more to be dreaded than a supposititious righteousness, a counterfeit justification, a spurious hope. Better, I sometimes think, to have no religion than to have a false religion. I am quite certain that the man is much more likely to be saved who knows that he is naked, and poor, and miserable, than the man who says, "I am rich and increased in goods." It were infinitely better to take the road to heaven doubting than to go in another direction presuming. I am far better pleased with the soul that is always questioning, "Am I right?" than with him who has drunk the cup of arrogance till he is intoxicated with selfconceit and says, "I know my lot; the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; there is no need for self-examination in my case." Brethren, be assured of this; all men are not partakers of Christ: all baptised men are not partakers of Christ: all churchmen are not partakers of Christ: all dissenters are not made partakers of Christ: all members of

this church are not made partakers of Christ: all ministers, all elders, all bishops, are not made partakers of Christ. Yea, all apostles were not made partakers of Christ. One of them, Christ's familiar friend, who kept the little purse which held all the Master's earthly store, lifted up his heel against him, betrayed him with a tender treacherous kiss, and became the son of perdition. He was a companion of Christ not a partaker of him?

Am I made a partaker of Christ? Multiply the question till each individual among you makes it his own. In this congregation there are various classes. There are probably some here who are only hearers—hearers about Christ, not partakers of Christ. It is one thing to hear about a banquet, it is quite another thing to be fed at it. It is one thing in the wilderness to hear of rippling streams, and quite another to stoop down and drink the cooling draught—one thing for the prisoner by night to dream of liberty, or by day to read of roaming free through his native country, another thing to get rid of the chain—one thing to hear of pardon, another thing to be pardoned—one thing to hear of heaven, another thing to go there. O my dear hearers! some of you are as familiar with the gospel as you are with the house you live in; yet, though you live in the house, you never live in the gospel, and I fear you never will. You hear it, and hear it, that is all. God grant you may not have to hear of your hearing in another world, where it shall be laid down among the chief of your sins that you were of those who, when they heard did provoke—provoke because they rejected what they ought to have received.

Others go farther than hearing. They become professors. May I remind you—and I would not judge anyone harshly—certainly no man more harshly than I would myself—it is one thing to profess to be a partaker of Christ, and another thing to be made a partaker of Christ. I may profess that I am rich and be all the while a bankrupt, a dishonest bankrupt for having made the profession. I may protest that I am in health, while a deadly cancer may lurk within. I may declare that I am honest, but it will not clear me before the judge if I am proved a thief. I may avow that I am loyal, but it would not save my life if I were convicted of high treason. Professions; ah, I fear they are in many cases but a painted pageantry that makes the road to hell attractive. Professions there are not unfrequently upon which we may gaze with a vacant wonder and turn away with a cold

shudder, as from the sombre gaudiness of a funeral, wherein prancing steeds, stately mutes, nodding plumes, and velvet palls adorn the obsequies of the dead. God save us from a lifeless profession! May we never be like certain trees, of which Bunyan said, that they were green outside, but inwardly they were so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box. Many professors are too fair not to be false; too comely outside not to be loathsome within; for there is an overdoing of the sepulchre's whitewash. You feel convinced that there would not be so much whitewashing without if there were not a good deal of rottenness inside to be concealed. Essence of roses or of lavender is sweet, but much scent excites much suspicion. Oh, let us, each one who professes to-night, say to himself, "I was baptised on a profession of my faith, but was I ever baptised into Christ? When the Sacred name of the triune God was named on me, did I then enter into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? I have come often to the communion table; but have I communed with Christ there? My name is on the church-book, but is it written in heaven? I have said to others I am a Christian, but am I in very deed known unto Christ? Or will he say unto me in that day, 'I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity'?"

These are solemn questionings. Many persons are temporary followers of Christ, and outwardly, as far as the human eye can follow, they appear to be real followers of Christ. I believe in the final perseverance of the saints; but I do not know, nor can any man know, how near a man may approach to the likeness of a saint and yet after all apostatise. Nor is any one of us able to say of himself, or of his fellow members, "We never shall fall away." I remember one whose voice I, and many of your heard in prayer, and we enjoyed the exercise of his gifts. The man had been reclaimed from the lowest class of society, and he distinguished himself by his devotion in such a way that he was accepted as a church officer among us. I remember, when the first charge of sin was brought against him, and of very grievous sin, one among us said, "If that man is not a child of God I am not a child of God." The expression seemed to me too strong, but in my heart I almost joined in it. I was ready to pronounce him innocent before I investigated the charges. I felt certain that there could not be in such a man as that the impurity laid at his door; yet it was there, it was all

there, and worse than tongue can tell. He repented and though not received into the church because the profession of repentance did not seem to be all we could wish it to be, yet there was a turning aside from sin for awhile. But he went into it again, and he wallowed in it. He died in it. As far as we could any of us judge, he perished in it. He went from bad to worse. I feel I might say without uncharitableness this man carried his iniquity, as far as human judgment could track him. Therefore, without prejudice to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, which I implicitly believe, I will not venture to say of any among you—much less will I venture to say it of myself, that I am sure I am so made a partaker of Christ that I shall hold fast my confidence to the end. I hope so. I rest in Christ, trusting in him. The possibility is that I am deceiving myself; the possibility is that you may be self-deceivers. At any rate, it is so far a possibility that I would beseech you to have no confidence but such as the Holy Ghost gives you; to put no reliance as to the future anywhere but in the eternal arms; have no assurance but that assurance which is based upon the word of God and the witness of the Spirit within your soul. That can give you infallible assurance. Apart from that, I repeat it again, I will say neither of you nor of myself, that I can be sure with all the profession that is made, that you are partakers of Christ. Some go even farther than being temporary followers of Christ, and yet after all perish. They maintain a consistent profession before the eye of men throughout the whole of their lives, as vessels that navigate the whole of the sea and go down in the harbour. There are soldiers that have held out and fought valiantly up to the very moment of victory, and then have run away. And there are professors that have been unexceptional in their lives, whose character has been apparently without a blemish, and even those who knew them in private could not detect any serious flaw in their conduct; yet, for all that, there was a worm at the root; a fly in the pot of ointment; a failure as to the sincerity of their grace. They had not, after all, the true faith which hangs upon Christ, and they did not persevere in heart, though they appeared to persevere in life. The difference between the Christian and the professor is sometimes such as only God can discern. There is a path which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and the lion's whelp hath not traversed—a path of life into which God can bring us, end of which it may be said that he knows all who are in it. But, there is a something like it, a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end

thereof are the ways of death. There is a counterfeit of the true metal of grace so well manufactured, that only omniscience itself can tell which is the reprobate silver and which is the pure shekel of the sanctuary. Grave reason have we, then, for raising the question as to whether we are made partakers of Christ or not.

III. Now we come to THE UNERRING TEST. Patience comes to the aid of faith here. Evidences accumulate till the issue is conclusive. "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

This passage may be read in two ways, neither of which violates the literal meaning of the original, either of which may express to us the mind of the Spirit—as we have it in our version, "the beginning of our confidence," or, as I would rather translate it, "the foundation of our confidence," the basis on which our confidence rests.

Take your choice. We will expound and vindicate both. That man is a partaker of Christ who holds fast they he had at first, having received it, not as an education, but as an intuition of his spirit life; not as an argument, but as an axiom he could not challenge, or rather as an oracle he received joyfully and bowed to submissively. The confidence which is based upon the true foundation, even Christ Jesus, is simple and clear as one's own consciousness. It asks no proof because it admits no doubt. In vain the sceptic comes to me now and says, "Sir, you are asleep, and dreaming." I answer, "No, sir, I am speaking to these thousands, and they are listening to me." Even so, when I first believed the Gospel story it was with a childlike feeling that it was so and I knew it. The man who is not a partaker of Christ hears the gospel, professes to believe it, and in some measure acts accordingly; but he perishes because this pure, unwavering faith does not abide in him. He has not the faith of God's elect which never can be destroyed. He has only a notion, a creed of his own making, and not a faith of the Spirit's giving.

Now, beloved, what was the beginning of our confidence? Well, the beginning of my confidence was, "I am a sinner, Christ is a Savior; and I rest on him to save me." Long before I began with Christ he had begun

with me; but when I began with him it was, as the law writers say, "In formâ pauperis," after the style of a wretched mendicant—a pauper who had nothing of his own, and looked to Christ for everything. I know when I first cast my eye to his dear cross and rested in him, I had not any merit of my own, it was all demerit. I was not deserving, except that I felt I was hell-deserving: I had not even a shade of virtue that I could confide in. It was all over with me. I had come to an extremity. I could not have found a farthing's worth of goodness in myself if I had been melted down. I seemed to be all rottenness, a dunghill of corruption, nothing better, but something a great deal worse. I could truly join with Paul at that time, and say that my own righteousnesses were dung. A strong expression he used; but I do not suppose he felt it to be strong enough. He says, "I count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Well, that is how we began with Christ. We were nothing at all, and Jesus Christ was all in all. Now, brethren, we are not made partakers of Christ unless we hold this fast to the end. Have you got beyond that? Are you something creditable in your own estimation? I am afraid of you. Are you richer now in yourselves that you were then? I am afraid of you, brethren. Do you mind the place you used to stand in? you dared not lift your eyes, to heaven, but cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." How in Christ you have a far nobler place than that, for you are made to sit with him in the heavenly places. But, I ask you, apart from Christ, have you any different place from that of deep selfabasement? If you have, you have not held the beginning of your confidence fast even until now. Begin to suspect yourself. This is the position always to take "having nothing and yet possessing all things."

"I the chief of sinners am
But Jesus died for me."

Such is the beginning of our confidence. Brethren, where else was the beginning of your confidence? May we not say of it that it was only and wholly, entirely and exclusively, in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the beginning of your confidence you did not rely upon any ceremonies, nor upon priests, nor upon your Bible readings, nor upon your prayings, nor upon your feelings, nor your experiences, nor your orthodoxy, nor your knowledge of doctrine, nor upon your

works, nor your preachings, your sanctifications or your mortifications. No, in the beginning of your confidence the one foundation was Jesus only. Nothing save Jesus would I know. Oh, if on that day, I had met with a man who had any trust in his own righteousness, I know I should have quarrelled with him. If he had told me that he hoped that Jesus Christ would help him to save himself I could have wept over him to think he should be such a fool. Why, Christ is all or nothing. He must save us from top to bottom, or we never shall be saved at all. If our foundation is partly on the rock of his finished work, and partly on the sand of our own unworthy doing, the whole house totters and it must come down.

Well, brethren, is there any correspondence between the beginning of your confidence and your present look-out? Had you anything except Christ to depend upon in the hour you first believed? Is there ought now added to that one foundation that God has laid, or hath your trust been supplemented by any fresh conceit of your own? Are you faithless? God is faithful. With you, it may be yea and nay; with him it is yea and amen. Some of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt depended upon God. They saw that he had divided the Red Sea, and rained down the manna, and refreshed them with streams in the desert, and so they believed, but their faith did not hold out. While they could see miracles of mercy, they relied on God, with nothing else to rely on; but when they got into a little difficulty they did not hold fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end, for they began to lose faith in Moses, or to confide in a golden calf. So there are some that begin, in a time of weakness, calamity, or despondence, by saying, "I trust in Christ, as a sinner." They get beyond that when they recover from their temporary depression. Then they qualify their confessions after their altered circumstances, and elect their religion after their own deliberate choice. But the God of Israel will not allow it. He will not have us put any trust but in his dear Son. We must be stripped naked of everything but that which Christ spins. We must have all our bread mouldy til we cast it out because we loathe it, and we must feed on nothing but the bread of heaven. If we get beyond that and feed on anything else, we are not made partakers of him, for we have not held fast the beginning of our confidence.

Let me call back your thoughts again, beloved, to the love of your

espousals, when you acknowledged the Lord and went after him into the wilderness. Did you not then have confidence in Christ of a very humble character? Oh, at that time you did not want to be among the first of God's people to play the part of Diotrephes. When you were at the foot of the cross, and looked up as a poor sinner, you had no notion about being a distinguished man in the church. I know it did not come into my head that day that I should be a leader in God's Israel. Ah no, if I might but sit in the corner of his house, or be a door keeper it had been enough for me. If, like the dog under the table, I might get a crumb of his mercy, were it but flavoured by his hand, because he had broken it off that is all I wanted. That is just how we ought always to live—lowly, humbly, gentle, and broken-spirited, and ready to be anything, so that Christ may be glorified. It shows the risings of the old nature when we get to be such consequential people that if anybody should say a hard word, we wonder, or if anybody slanders us, instead of saying, "Ah, if he knew us he could say something a good deal worse," we are in a high and mighty temper because our brilliant character is injured.

Verily, I think, that when I was first converted to God if the Lord had said, "I have taken you into my house" and I am going to make use of you, and you shall be a door-mat for the saints to wipe their feet on," I should have said, "Ah, happy shall I be if I but take the filth off their blessed feet, for I love God's people; and may I minister to them in the slightest degree, it shall be my delight." But when we get away from that position we are in danger. If we are made partakers of Christ, the proof will be in our continuing to be of a meek and lowly spirit—willing to serve him in any capacity—in our becoming like little children, for "except we become as little children, we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." Little children we were in the beginning of our confidence; little children we must continue to be, or else we may gravely question whether we have been made partakers of Christ.

When we were first made partakers of Christ, we received him very gratefully. How thankful we were for one look from Jesus' eye. Half a promise seemed precious in those days. The sermon, though it was uncouth perhaps, if full of Christ, fed us to the full. Now, alas, how many professors despise precious truth if it does not happen to be clothed in

the most polished phrases; they run hither and thither where there is no food for them: not hungering and thirsting after righteousness as of yore, they admire the banquet spread out with all flowers and no fruit: they look after gaudy periods, where pure silver and polished sham do sparkle, though there be no food for the soul to feed on. Did they hold fast the beginning of their confidence they would prize the truth and love the truth, and account that if it were but the truth, it did not matter in what shape it came to them, so long as they could get hold of a promise, have a smile from Christ's face or enjoy one ray of the blessed Spirit's consolation in their souls. But now the starving beggars have become dainty epicures; those who once were glad enough to come and feast on broken crusts from the Master's table, become connoisseurs of their Master's food; their soul "loatheth this light bread," though it is the bread of angels, and drops from the granaries of God. We should suspect ourselves, when we get into that squeamish condition. Such a proud captious state of heart does not evidence that we have been made partakers of Christ at all.

When we first received our confidence, we were obedient in word and deed. I wish all disciples of Christ had the like scrupulous conscience. I speak my own experience. The first week after I was converted to God, I felt afraid to put one foot before another for fear I should do wrong; when I thought over the day if there had been a failure in my temper, or if there had been a frothy word spoken, or something done amiss, I did chasten myself sorely, and had I known at that time anything to be my Lord's will, I think I should not have hesitated to do it; to me it would not have mattered whether it was a fashionable thing or an unfashionable thing, if it was according to his word. Oh, to do his will! to follow him whithersoever he would have me go! Why, then it seemed as though I should never, never, never be slack in keeping his commandments. Dear brethren, have you held fast the beginning of your confidence? I smite upon my own breast when I remember that, in that respect, I have not held fast the beginning of my confidence. To the cross again! Beloved, if any of you have doubts aroused in your mind by such bitter reflections upon yourselves, do not dispute with your doubts; go to the cross again. Never dispute with the devil. He can always beat you. Go straight to the cross. If he says, "Thou art no saint," say then "Very likely I am not, but

there is one thing even thou canst not deny thou canst not say I am not a sinner; a sinner I am. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and if I never trusted him before, I will begin now. If I never yet did know the life of God, I will look to his death forthwith. Oh, if I never was healed of the disease of sin, there is healing in those dear wounds, and I, by faith, will have it while yet it is called to-day." Jesus, I trust thee; I trust thee wholly, and thee alone. I have heard that some years ago there was a coal-pit in work, the shaft of which by some means got blocked up, and the men could not get out of it. They were very nearly perishing. One of them had heard that there was an old working which led to another mine, and though he was afraid it might be blocked up, yet the best thing they could do would be to go along, if, perhaps, they might come to the mouth of another shaft. This old working had not been traversed for some time; it never was very lofty. They had to go along on their hands and knees, and generally needed to crawl lying flat on the ground. At length they came to the mouth of that old shaft, were soon extricated, and they gladly found their way to the upper air again. Peradventure, some of you have been living heretofore by frames and feelings; that experience has been the shaft by which you have been coming and going; and this shaft has been blocked up to-night. Well, I am not sorry for it. Come, now, brethren, let us all go along on our hands and knees where the sinners go. Let us crawl to the old shaft: let us prostrate ourselves, confessing, "Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin. Lord, I am unworthy: Lord, I am earthly, selfish, devilish. Lord, I am a mass of wounds and a mass of loathsomeness. I am unworthy of thy favor and thy love." Let us just creep along in that fashion till we come to Christ, and say,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

You will find that old shaft is not shut up. There is light. Look up! There is the cross above you. Jesus is still willing to receive sinners, still able to save sinners, for he is "exalted" on high "to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins." O come to him just that way; and, brother, when you get back to Christ in that way by which you went years ago, the advice

of the text, with which I will sum up all, is keep on coming to him in that same way always. Keep on coming always. Keep on coming always. Perhaps you have been on the top of a mountain such as the Rigi or as Snowden. You know these mountains do not move. They are good solid rock under your feet. But people erect platforms on the top of them to see the sun rise a little sooner, or something of that sort. From the top of one of those platforms a man may come down with a crash and break his limbs. That is something like our erections which we put up over our simple faith in Christ. Our beautiful frames and feelings and experiences—they will come down with a crash some day, for they are rotten stuff; but, when a man stands upon this—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I am resting upon him: he is all my salvation and all my desire: his precious blood is all my confidence. The love of his heart, the power of his arm, the merit of his plea,—here I rest myself,"—O beloved, there is no fear of that confidence ever giving way beneath your feet. There may you stand and serenely rejoice when worlds shall melt and the pillars of the earth shall reel. God bless you, and keep you ever holding the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end. So shall it be proved beyond question that you are partakers of Christ.

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The Pilgrim's Longings

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. - Hebrews 11:15-16

Abraham left his country at God's command, and he never went back again. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which does run well, but it is soon hindered, and it doth not obey the truth. That is not the faith to which the promise is given. The faith of

God's elect continues and abides. Being connected with the living and incorruptible seed, it lives and abides for ever. Abraham returned not; Isaac returned not; Jacob returned not. The promise was to them as "strangers and sojourners," and so they continued. The apostle tells us, however, that they were not forced so to continue; they did not remain because they could not return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to go back. Frequent opportunities came in their way; there was communication kept up between them and the old family house at Padan-Aram: they had news sometimes from the old quarters. More than that, there were messages exchanged, servants were sometimes sent, and you know there was a new relation entered into—did not Rebekah come from thence? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land, but he could not stay there; he was always unrestful, till at last he stole a march upon Laban and came back into the proper life—the life which he had chosen, the life which God had commanded him, the life of a pilgrim and a stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled comfortably, and tilled the ground as their fathers did before them; but they continued to follow the uncomfortable shifting life of wanderers of the weary foot, who dwelt in tents, who own no foot of land—they were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise.

Now, our position is very similar to theirs. As many of us as have believed in Christ have been called out. The very meaning of a church is, "called out by Christ." We have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth, in this world we have no home, no true home for our spirits; our home is beyond the flood; we are looking for it amongst the unseen things; we are strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were, dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance.

I. I propose, then, first of all this evening, to speak to you upon the opportunities which we have had, and still have, to return to the old house, if we were mindful of it. Indeed, it seems to me as if the word "opportunity" as it occurs in the text, were hardly strong enough to

express the influence and incentive, the provocations and solicitations, by which, in our case, we have been urged. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world, with its sinful pleasures and its idolatrous customs. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints should persevere; but, when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world who could maintain his steadfastness for a single hour. It is nothing short of Godhead's utmost stretch of might that keeps the feet of the saints, and preserves them from going back to their old unregenerate condition. We have had opportunities to have returned. My brethren, we have such opportunities in our daily calling. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men, and those engagements supply you with constant opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excesses, to lapse into their forgetfulness of God, or even to take part in their blasphemies. Oh, have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are? Or, if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brethren, there is one who is pretty sure to intrude upon our privacy, to corrupt our thoughts, to kindle strange desires in our breasts, to tantalise us with morbid fancies, and to seek our mischief. The Tempter he is, the Destroyer he would be, if we were not delivered from his snares. Ah, how frequently will solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring. There are perils in company, but there are perils likewise in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlour, pleasantly conversing, or in the kitchen, perhaps, occupied with the day's work—toiling in the field, or trading on the mart, busy on the land or tossed about on the sea, there are critical seasons on which destiny itself might appear to hang contingent. Where can we fly to escape from these opportunities that haunt us everywhere and peril us in every thing? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find "a lodge in some vast wilderness," think ye, then, we might be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No. Each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptation than his fellow's. It is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all, and all of us might say, that we find in our avocations, from hour to hour, many opportunities to return.

But, dear brethren, it is not merely in our business and in our calling; the

mischief lies in our bone and in our flesh. Opportunities to return! Ah! Who that knows himself does not find strong, incentives to return. Ah! how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colors, and, though we loathe sin and loathe ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say, "had it not been for divine grace, where should I have been?—for my feet had almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped." How strong is the evil in the most upright man! How stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail. You may be diligent in secret prayer, and, perhaps, the devil may have seemed asleep till you began to pray, and when you were most fervent, then will he also become most rampant. When you get nearer to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return, as long as you are in this body, will be with you. To the very edge of Jordan you will meet with temptations. When you sit expectant on the banks of the last river, waiting, for the summons to cross, it may be that your fiercest temptation will come even then. Oh, this flesh, the body of this death—wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? But while it continues with me, I shall find opportunities to return.

So too, dear brethren and sisters, these opportunities to return are adapted to our circumstances and adjusted to any condition of life, and any change through which we may pass. For instance how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return! I sigh to think of many that appeared to be very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread, who have become very dull and cold now that they have grown rich and increased in goods. How often does it happen in this land of ours, that a poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of God at all meetings, and felt proud to be there, but he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, and he could not go with God's people any longer: he must seek out the world's church and join in to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always congregate in the domain of fashion. Henceforth, the man has turned aside from the faith, if not altogether in his heart, at least in his life. Beware of the high places: they are very slippery. There is not all the enjoyment you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease. On the contrary, luxury often pulleth up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity. If any of you are prospering in this world, oh

watch, for you are in imminent danger of being mindful to return to the place whence you came out.

But, the peril is as instant every whit in adversity. Alas, I have had to mourn over Christian men—at least I thought they were such—who have waxed very poor, and when they have grown poor, they hardly felt they could associate with those they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I should lie ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow, because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in Providence. Yet there is a feeling in the human heart, and, though there may be no unkind treatment, yet, oftentimes, the sensitive spirit is apt to imagine it, and I have observed some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God with a sense of shame. It is smoothing the way to return to your old place; and, indeed, I have not wondered when I have seen some professors grow cold, when I have thought where they were compelled to live, and how they have been constrained to pass their time. Perhaps they were living at home before, but now they have to take a room where they can have no quiet, but where sounds of blasphemy greet them, or, in some cases, where they have to go to the workhouse, and be far away from all Christian intercourse or anything that could comfort them. It is only God's grace that can keep your graces alive under such circumstances. You see, whether you grow rich or whether you grow poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities: it will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful and countless.

Opportunities to return! Let me say just one thing more about them. They are often furnished by the example of others.

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas, what numbers do!
Methinks I hear my Savior say,
Wilt thou forsake me too?"

The departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We keenly suspect whether that religion can be true which was feigned so cunningly and betrayed so wantonly, by one who seemed to be a model, but proved to be a hypocrite. It staggers us: we cannot make it out. Opportunities to return you have now; but ah! may grace be given you so that, if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord, and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition.

And ah, my brethren and sisters, if some of us were to return, we should have this opportunity—a cordial welcome from our former comrades. None of our old friends would refuse to receive us. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world await him with open arms. He was the favourite of the ball-room once; he was the wit "that set the table in a roar;" he was the man who above all was courted when he moved in the circles of the vain and frivolous: glad enough would they be to see him come back. What a shout of triumph would they raise, and how would they fraternize with him! Oh, may the day never come to you, you young people especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and professed his name, when you shall be welcomed by the world, but may you for ever forget your kindred and your father's house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for he is the Lord, and worship you him. Separation from the world will endear you to the Savior, and bring you into conscious enjoyment of his presence; but, of opportunities to return there is no lack.

Perhaps, you will say, "Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could he not have kept us from temptation?" There is no doubt he could, but it was never the Master's intention that we should all be hothouse plants. He taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but, at the same time, he does lead us there, and intends to do it, and this for the proving of our faith, to see whether it be true faith or not. Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not true faith. It must be sooner or later exercised. God does not create useless things: he intends that the faith he gives should have its test, should glorify his name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith, and they are sent to you to prove that

you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you, so that you could not leave your Lord; if it had become a physical impossibility to forsake the Savior, there would be no credit in it. He that does not run away because his legs are too weak, does not prove himself a hero; but he that could run, but will not run; he that could desert his Lord, but will not desert him, has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be—the highest, firmest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Savior. By this shall you know whether you are Christ's or not. When you have opportunity to return, if you do not return, that shall prove you are his. Two men are going along a road, and there is a dog behind them. I do not know to which of them that dog belongs, but I shall be able to tell you directly. They are coming to a crossroad: one goes to the right, the other goes to the left. Now which man does the dog follow? That is his master. So when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which you are following; but, when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest and your pleasure seem to go the other way, if you can part with the world and keep with Christ, then you are one of his. After this manner these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose: they prove our faith, while they try our character; thus helping us to see whether we are indeed the Lord's or not.

But, we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text) to notice the second point.

II. We cannot take any opportunity to go back, because we desire something better than we could get by returning to that country from whence we came out. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace which urges us to -

"Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press our way."

Notice how the text puts it:—"But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Brethren, you desire something better than this world, do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart; but ever since you

have known something of better things, and brighter realities, have you been ever contented with earthly things and emptier vanities? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with the daintiest provisions the world can offer; to wit—God has prospered you, and you have said, "Oh, this is well." Your children have been about you, you have had many household joys, and you have said, "I could stay here for ever." Did not you find very soon that there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever gather a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Hare you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, "Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity?" I am sure it has been so with me, with you, with all my kinsfolk in Christ, and with all my yokefellowes in his service. All God's saints would confess that were the Lord to say to them, "You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion," they would be broken-hearted men. "Nay, my Lord," they would reply, "do not put me off with these biding presents; feed me not upon these husks. Though thou shouldst give me Joseph's lot, the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills," "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey;" yea, though thou shouldst confer on me the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, I would prefer before them all the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush. Give me thyself, and take these all away, if so it please thee, but do not, my Lord, do not think I can be content with Egypt since I have set forth for Canaan, or that I can settle down in the wilderness now that I am journeying to the land of promise. We desire something better.

There is this about a Christian that, even when he does not enjoy something better, he desires it; of that, verily, I am quite sure. How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, "Now they desire a better"—The word "country" has been inserted by our translators. It weakens the sense; vague but vast is the craving expressed in the sentence, "They desire a better"—I know I long for something far better, something infinitely preferable to that which my eyes can see or that my tongue can express. I do not always enjoy that something better. Dark is my path; I cannot see my Lord; I cannot enjoy his presence; sometimes I am like one that is banished from him; but I desire his blessing, I desire his presence; and, though to desire may be but a little thing, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew:

grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. "They desire a better country." And, because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which gratified us once.

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled for awhile, he is uneasy by reason of it. Abraham's slips, for he had one or two, were made when he had left the land, and gone down among the Philistines; but he was not easy there: he must come back again. And Jacob—he had found a wife—nay, two—in Laban's land, but he was not content there. No, no child of God can be, whatever he may find in this world. We shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through, and say, "This looks like a little paradise," but there is not any paradise this side of the skies, for a child of God at any rate. There is enough out there in the farm yard for the hogs, but there is not that which is suitable for the children. There is enough in the world for sinners, but not for saints. They have stronger, sharper, and more vehement desires, for they have a nobler life within them, and they desire a better country, and even if they get entangled for awhile in this country, and in a certain measure identified with citizens of it, they are ill at ease—their citizenship is in heaven, and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess to-night, and rejoice in the confession, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight: our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have a title to, that we value, are ours to-day by faith: we do not enjoy them yet. But when our heirship shall be fully manifested, and we shall come to the full ripe age—oh, then shall we come into our inheritance, to our wealth, to the mansions, and to the glory, and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back. Though he has many opportunities he does not embrace any, he shrinks with repugnance from them all, for, through divine grace, he has had produced in his heart desires for something better.

Even when he does not realize as yet, or actually enjoy, that infinite good, which is something better than creature comfort or worldly ambition, the desires themselves become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to his former state. Dear brethren, let us cultivate these desires more and

more. If they have such a separating, salutary, sanctifying influence upon our heart, and effect upon our character, in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it. He has locked it up tonight and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep down the stairs, and he goes to see. He looks to the iron safe: he would be quite sure that it is well secured. He cannot forget his dear gold. Let us think of heaven, of Christ, and of the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake, and stimulate them to active exercise. The more they draw us to heaven, the more they withdraw us from the world.

III. It would be unreasonable if we did not vehemently resist every opportunity and every solicitation to go back.

The men of faith to whom the apostle referred in our text were not only strangers and pilgrims, but it is specially observed that they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They were a grand company. From an unit they had multiplied into a countless host. Sprang there not even of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable? Now, brethren, you see we have here a very strong reason for not returning. It is because you are the descendants, the spiritual descendants, of the patriarchs. Let me try to show you how urgent a motive for steadfastness this is. Practically, it comprises two or three considerations of the highest moment. One thing it implies very obviously is that you thoroughly admire their example and fervently emulate their spirit. As you have glanced over the scroll of history, or narrowly scanned the records of men's lives, the pomp of Pharaoh has not dazzled you, but the purity of Joseph has charmed you; the choice of Moses was to your taste, though it did involve leaving a court where he was flattered, for fellowship with enslaved kinsmen by whom he was suspected; and, you would rather have been with Daniel in the lions' den than with Darius on the throne of empire. You have transferred their strong will to your own deliberate choice. And, when the jeer has been raised against canting methodists, you have said, "I am one of them." You have confessed as occasion served before the world, you have professed as duty called

before the church, you have accepted the consequences as honesty demanded before angels and men. Therefore, in your heart of hearts you feel that you cannot go back. The vows of God are upon you. It is well they are. Review them often: refresh your memory with them frequently; recur to them and renew them in every time of trial and temptation. Howbeit, repent of them never, or woe betide you. There is a secret virtue in the confession, if it be steadfastly adhered to and zealously maintained. It is a talisman, believe me, against the contagion of an evil atmosphere that might otherwise instil poison into your constitution.

Again, there is another thing; you have joined yourself to an ancient fraternity that has something more than rules to guide or legends to captivate; for it has a combination of both, seeing it is rich in poetic lore. Why, it is on this that patriotism feeds as its daintiest morsel. "Thy statutes," said David, "have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Brother! there hath no sorrow befallen thee but what thy noble ancestors have celebrated in cheery tones, and set to music in cheerful strains. Oh, beloved! if you could forget the statutes, can you ever fail to remember the songs? There has never been a revival in the church that has not witnessed to the value of our psalmody. God be praised for our psalms and spiritual songs. Oh, how often they have made melody in our hearts to the Lord! While our voices blend, do not our very souls become more and more richly cemented? They are, in truth, the pilgrim's solace.

Another thing strikes me. I should not like you to overlook it. There is, in this chapter, a special commendation for faith in a pleasing variety of operations. But the speciality of the strangers and pilgrims is that they all died in faith. So, then, you cannot go back, because you cannot accomplish the end for which you went forward till you die. You have joined the company that makes the goal of life the object for which you live. Your aim is to make a noble exit. "Prepare to meet thy God" was the motto you started with. To go back can hardly cross your thoughts, when to look back seems to you charged with peril. Our lease of mortal life is fast running out. The time of our sojourn on earth is getting more and more brief. Therefore, because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed, it is but meet that our desire to reach the better country, and to

enter the heavenly city should become more and more vehement, as "we nightly pitch our roving tent a day's march nearer home." It comes to this, brethren. You feel that you have little to show for your faith. It never built an ark like Noah; it never offered a sacrifice like Abraham; it never subdued kingdoms like Joshua; it never quenched the violence of fire as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Well, be it so; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved; and all those that die in faith are gathered with the great cloud of witnesses. Is not this enough to cheer the rank and file of the church?

IV. But, I must close with the sweetest part of the text, wherein it is shown that we have a great and blessed assurance vouchsafed to us as an acknowledgment, on the part of God, of those opportunities, and those yearnings persisted in. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Because they are strangers, add because they will not go back to their old abode, "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." He might well be ashamed of that. What poor people God's people are—poor, many of them, in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things. I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has, we should ever have patience with them. We cannot, when we judge ourselves rightly, have patience with ourselves; but, how is it that God bears with the ill manners of such a froward, weak, foolish, forgetful generation as his people are. He might well be ashamed to be called their God, if he looked upon them as they are, and estimated them upon their merits. Own them! How can he own them? Does he not himself sometimes say of them, "How can I put them among the children?" Yet he devises means, and brings about the purposes of his grace. Viewed as they are, they may be compared to a rabble in so many respects, that it is marvellous he is not ashamed of them. Still, he never does discountenance them, and he proves that he is not ashamed of them, for he calls himself their God. "I will be your God," saith he, and he oftentimes seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to his own heart. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." While he calls himself their God, he never forbids them to call him their God. In the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God—anywhere—and he is not ashamed to be so called. Matchless condescension this! Have you not sometimes heard of a man

who has become rich and has risen in the world, who has had some poor brother or some distant relative. When he has seen him in the street, he has been obliged to speak to him and own him. But oh, how reluctantly it was done. I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if he had some haughty acquaintance with him at the time, who would perhaps turn round, and say, "Why, who is that wretched, seedy-looking fellow you spoke to?" He does not like to say, "That's my brother;" or, "That's a relative of mine." Not so our Lord Jesus Christ. However low his people may sink, he is not ashamed to call them brethren. They may look up to him in all the depths of their degradation. They may call him a brother. He is in very fact a brother, born for their adversity, able and ready to redress their grievances, he is not ashamed to call them brethren. One reason for this seems to me to be, because he does not judge of them according to their present circumstances, but much rather according to their pleasant prospects. He takes account of what he has prepared for them. Notice the text, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." They are poor now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. All you can see in that poor child of God is a hard-working laboring man, mocked and despised of his fellows. But what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory assimilated to his own. He hath put all things under the feet of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honor in the person of Christ, and the angels themselves are ministering servants to such. You see his outward attire, not his inner self—you see the earthly tabernacle, but the spirit newborn, immortal and divine—you see not that. Howbeit, God does. Or, if you have spiritual discernment to perceive the spiritual creature, you only see it as it is veiled by reason of the flesh, and beclouded by the atmosphere of this world; but he sees it as it will appear, when it shall be radiant like unto Christ, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest, the least proficient disciple as a man in Christ; a perfect man come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; such indeed as he will be in that day when he shall see Christ, for then he shall be like him as he is. It seems too, in the text, that God looks to what he had prepared for these poor people. He hath prepared for them a city. Methinks, that by what he has prepared for them, we may judge how he esteems and loves them—estimating them by what he

means them to be, rather than by what they appear to be at present. Look at this preparation just a minute. "he hath prepared for them"—"them." Though I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven, we must never forget to remind you of the speciality. "He hath prepared for them a city"—that is, for such as are strangers and foreigners—for such as have faith, and, therefore, have left the world, and gone out to follow Christ. "He hath prepared for them"—not "for all of you"—only for such of you as answer the description on which we have been meditating has he prepared "a city."

Note what it is he has made ready for them. It is a city. This indicates a permanent abode. They dwelt in tents—Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—but he has prepared for them a city. Here we are tent dwellers, and the tent is soon to be taken down. "We know that this earthly house of our" tent "shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "He hath prepared a city." A city is a place of genial associations. In a lonely hamlet one has little company. In a city, especially where all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood, the true communism of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity may be realised in the purest sense and highest possible degree. In a city such as this there are plentiful occasions for intercourse, where mutual interests shall enhance mutual joy. "He hath prepared a city." It is a city too possessing immunities, and conferring dignity upon its residents. To be a burgess of the City of London is thought to be a great honor, and upon princes is it sometimes conferred; but, we shall have the highest honor that can be given, when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared.

I must not dwell on this theme, delightful as it is; I want a few words with you, my friends, direct and personal, before I close. Do not wonder, those of you who are the children of God, do not wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers: you do not expect men of this world to treat you as members of their community. If they do, be afraid. Dogs don't bark as a man goes by that they know: they bark at strangers. When people persecute you and slander you, no marvel. If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Do not expect to find the comforts in this world that you crave after, that

your flesh would long for. This is our inn, not our home. We tarry for a night: we are away in the morning. We may bear the annoyances of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break so soon. Remember that your greatest joy, while you are a pilgrim, is your God. So the text says, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Do you want a richer source of consolation than you have? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the created streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and find it ever springing up. Your joy is your God: make your God your joy.

Now, what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigners? Ah, you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose; but I have heavy tidings for you. This land in which you dwell, and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is a City of Destruction, and, as is its name, such will be its end. The King will send his armies against that guilty city and destroy it, and if you are citizens of it, you will lose all you have—you will lose your souls—lose yourselves. "Whither away?" saith one—"Where can I find comfort then and security?" You must do as Lot did, when the angels presses him and said, "Haste to the Mount lest thou be consumed." To what mountain, say you, shall I go? The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live. There is death everywhere else but there. But there is life arising from his death. Oh, fly to him. "But how?" saith one. Trust him. God gave his Son, equal with himself, to bear the burden of human sin; and he died, a substitute for sinners,—a real substitute, an efficient substitute, for all who trust in him. If thou wilt trust thy soul with Jesus, thou art saved. Thy sin was laid on him: it is forgiven thee. It was blotted out when he nailed the handwriting of ordinances that were against thee to his cross. Trust him now and you are saved; you shall become, henceforth, a stranger and a pilgrim. In the better land you shall find the rest which you never can find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted; let us away from it. The curse has fallen: let us get away to the country that never was cursed, to the city that is for ever blessed, Where Jesus dwells there may we find a home and abide for aye. God add his blessing to this discourse, and give a blessing to your souls, for Jesus Christ' sake. Amen.

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The Plea Of Faith

Do as thou hast said. - 2 Samuel 7:25

Nathan had been giving to David, on God's behalf, sundry exceeding great and precious promises. David expresses his gratitude to God for having so promised, and he says, "Now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said."

It is a prayer to God. Those words naturally flowed from his lips: after hearing such precious promises, he was anxious for their fulfilment. Such words will be equally in place, if they shall be adopted by us in these modern times, and if, after reading a promise, on turning to God's Word, we should finish by saying, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," it will be a practical application of the text, "Do as thou hast said."

I shall not commence my sermon to-night by endeavoring to prove that this Bible is what God has said; I do not come here to give you arguments to prove the inspiration of Scripture; I assume that I speak to a Christian congregation, and I assume, therefore, at starting, that this is God's word and none other. Leaving that matter, then, altogether, permit me to proceed at once to the text, understanding by what God has said, the Scriptures of his truth; and I trust there are some here who will be led, to-night, to cry to God in behalf of some promise made to their souls, "O Lord, do as thou hast said."

I. Our first remark shall be HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS SAID, for unless we know what God has said, it will be folly to

say, "*do as thou hast said.*" Perhaps there is no book more neglected in these days than the Bible. I do verily believe there are more mouldy Bibles in this world than there are of any sort of neglected books. We have stillborn books in abundance; we have innumerable books which never see any circulation except the circulation of the butter shop, but we have no book that is so much bought, and then so speedily laid aside, and so little used, as the Bible. If we buy a newspaper, it is generally handed from one person to another, or we take care to peruse it pretty well; indeed some go so far as to read advertisements and all. If a person purchases a novel, it is well known how he will sit and read it all the way through, till the midnight candle is burnt out; the book must be finished in one day, because it is so admirable and interesting; but the Bible, of course, in the estimation of many, is not an interesting book; and the subjects it treats of are not of any very great importance. So most men think; they think it is a very good book to carry out on a Sunday, but never meant to be used as a book of pleasure, or a book to which one could turn with delight. Such is the opinion of many; but no opinion can be more apart from the truth; for what book can treat of truths one-half so important as those that concern the soul. What book can so well deserve my attention as that which is written by the greatest of all authors, God himself? If I must read a valuable book with attention, how much more ought I to give my mind to the study of that book which is invaluable, and which contains truth without the slightest admixture of error? And if books upon my health, or books which only concern the doings of my fellow creatures occupy some of my time, and deservedly so, how much more time should I spend in reading that which concerns my everlasting destiny; which reveals to me worlds hitherto unknown; which tells me how I may escape from hell and fly to heaven? But I must remark, that even among Christian people, the Bible is one of the least read books that they have in their house. What with our innumerable magazines, our religious newspapers, and our perpetual controversies about the Bible, it is too seldom that people read the Bible. There certainly is not that reading of it that there used to be. Our predecessors, the ancient Puritans, would scarcely read any book but that; and if a book was not concerning the Bible, they did not care about reading it at all. Perhaps therein they may have been too strait and narrow, and may somewhat have cramped their minds; but I would rather have a little

truth, and have a mind filled with that, though that mind should only be as large as a nutshell, than have the most gigantic intellect, and have that crammed with error. It is not the greatness of our intellect, it is the rightness of it, that makes us men in this world, and right men before God. I beseech you, therefore, you who are members of Christian churches, if you have but little time, do not expend it in reading ephemeral books, but take your Bible and read it constantly; and I promise you one thing, that if you are already Christians, the more you read the Bible the more you will love it. You may find it hard, perhaps, at present, to read a short passage and meditate upon it all day; but as you proceed you will see such depths unfathomable, such heights beyond your ken; and you will discover such unutterable sweetness in this precious honey-comb dropping with drops of honey, that you will say, "I must have more of it," and your spirit will always cry, "Give, give;" nor will it be content until you can have God's statutes upon your mind daily, to be your songs in the house of your pilgrimage.

The errors of this present age have sprung from a non-reading of the Bible. Do you think, my brethren, that if we all read the Scriptures with judgment, and desired to know them rightly, there would be so many sects as there are? Heresies and schisms have sprung from this; one man has gone a little astray upon a point; another man, without referring to Scripture, has endorsed all he has said; another one has added something else to it; and then another one, being cunning, full of subtlety of the devil, has twisted passages of Scripture, and has woven them into a system, which has been fashioned in the first place by mistake, has accumulated and become more colossal by sundry other mistakes which naturally accrued to it, and at last has been perfected by the craft of designing heretics.

And, again: *bigotry, ill feeling, and uncharitableness, must all be traced, in a large degree, to our want of reading the Bible.* What is the reason why yon man hates me, because I preach what I believe to be right? If I do speak the truth am I responsible for his hating me? Not in the least degree. I am sometimes told by my people that I attack certain parties very hard. Well, I cannot help it; if they are not right, it is not my fault - if they come in my way, that I am compelled to run over them. Suppose two

of you should be driving in the road to-morrow, and one of you should be on the right side of the road, and some accident should occur, you would say, "Sir, the other man ought to have pulled up, he must pay the damages, for he had no business there at all on his wrong side." And it will be the same with us if we preach God's truth; we must go straight on; if the greatest ill-feeling in the world rise up we have nothing to do with it. God's truth will sometimes bring about warfare; Jesus Christ, you know, said himself that he came to put warfare between man and man; to set the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; and that a man's foes should be those of his own household. But if there be ill-feeling, if there be clamouring of sects, to whom is it due? Who is responsible for it? Why, the man who makes the new sects, not the man who abides fast and firm by the old one. If I am safely moored by a good strong anchor of fundamental truth, and some other shall strike my vessel and sink himself, I will not pay the damages. I stand firm: if others chose to go away from the truth, to cut their cables and slip their moorings; then let them. God grant that we may not do the same. Hold the truth, my friends, and hold it as the easiest method of sweeping away heresies and false doctrines. But now-a-days, you know, you are told, "Oh, it does not matter what you believe; doctrines are nothing;" and they have tried lately to make a very happy family of us, like the happy family near Waterloo Bridge, where all kinds of creatures are shut up together; but they are only kept in order by a lath which the man, when we turn our heads, applies between the bars of the cage. Just so with denominations; they want to amalgamate us all. We differ in various doctrines, and therefore some of us must be wrong, if we hold doctrines which are directly hostile to each other. But we are told, "It does not signify; doubtless, you are all right." Now, I cannot see that. If I say one thing, and another man says another, how, by all that is holy, can both speak the truth? Shall black and white be the same colour? Shall falsehood and truth be the same? When they shall be, and fire shall sleep in the same cradle with the waves of the ocean, then shall we agree to amalgamate ourselves with those who deny our doctrines, or speak evil of what we believe to be the gospel. My brethren, no man has any right to absolve your judgment from allegiance to God; there is liberty of conscience between man and man, but there is none between God and man. No man has a right to believe what he likes; he is to believe what

God tells him; and if he does not believe that though he is not responsible to man, or to any set of men, or to any government, yet mark you, he is responsible to God. I beseech you, therefore, if you would avoid heresies, and bring the church to a glorious union, read the Scriptures. Read not so much man's comments, or man's books, but read the Scriptures, and keep your faith on this, - "God has said it." If you cannot make all God's truths agree, yet remember God has not made two sets of truth opposite to each other; that were an impossibility which even God himself could not accomplish mighty though he be. My brethren, always stand by what God has said, and do not be turned aside from it by all the arguments that can be brought to bear against you. "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Christ."

II. And now for our second point, ALL THAT FAITH WANTS TO BUILD UPON IS WHAT GOD HAS SAID. "Do as thou hast said." The only solid foothold that faith has is, "*It is written*, God hath said it." When a sinner comes to God he must have nothing else to rely upon except this, "Do as thou hast said." There is a tendency in most men's minds to bring before God something which he did not say. Many of you, I dare say, will go and ask God in prayer for something for which you cannot prove a positive promise that he will ever give it to you. You go to God and say, "Lord, do as John Bunyan said, do as Whitfield said, let me have an experience like theirs." Now, that is all wrong. We must, when we come to God, say only, "Lord, do as *thou* hast said." And then, again, I do believe that many of those who are members of our churches have not put their faith simply in what God has said. If I were to go round to some of you and ask you why you believe yourselves to be Christians, it is marvellous what strange reasons many of you would bring. It is very singular what strange views persons often have as to the way of salvation. It is hard to bring a sinner to God simply with this, - "Lord, do as thou hast said."

I know some who think themselves to be God's children, because they dreamed they were. They had a very remarkable dream one night, and if you were to laugh at them they would be unutterably indignant; they would cut you at once out of the family of God, and call you an "accuser of the brethren." They do not rely upon what God has said in the Bible; but they had some singular vision, when deep sleep had fallen upon them,

and because of that vision, they reckon they are children of God. In the course of my seeing persons who come to me, I hear every now and then a story like this, "Sir, I was in such-and-such a room, and suddenly I thought I saw Jesus Christ, and heard a voice saying such-and-such a thing to me, and that is the reason why I hope I am saved." Now, that is not God's way of salvation; the sinner is not to say, "Lord, do as I dreamed, do as I fancy;" but "Do as thou hast said." And if I have any one here who has never had a dream, or vision, he does not want to have, if he goes to God with this, "Lord, thou hast said Christ died to save sinners, I am a sinner, save me," that is faith, "Do as thou hast said." But there are other persons far more rational, who if they were asked the reason for their supposing that they are saved, would speak of some remarkable rhapsody which, on a particular occasion they had when hearing a certain minister; or of a particular text which struck them suddenly, and transported them to the seventh heaven, and they had such thoughts as they never had before. "Oh! sir," they say, "it is marvellous, I thought my heart would break, it was so full of joy and gladness; I never felt so before in all my life; and when I went out of the house, I felt so light and so ready to run home, I thought I should sing all the way; so I know I must be a child of God." Well, *you* may know it, but *I* don't, because there are many persons who have been deluded by the devil in that fashion, who never had faith in Christ. Faith in Christ never rests in rhapsody; it rests on a "thou hast said it." Ask faith whether it will ever take its standing on anything but a "thou hast said," and faith will answer, "No; I cannot climb to heaven on a ladder made of dreams, they are too flimsy to bear my feet." Faith, why dost thou not march on? Why dost thou not cross that bridge? "No," says faith, "I cannot; it is made up of rhapsodies, and rhapsodies are intoxicating things, and I cannot place my feet upon them." Faith will stand on a promise, though it be no bigger than grain of mustard seed; but it could not stand on a rhapsody if it was as large as the everlasting mountains. Faith can build on a "thou hast said it;" but it cannot build on frames and feelings, on dreams and experiences - it only relies on this - "Thou hast said it." Let me caution my hearers against suppositions, which some of them have as to salvation. Some persons think that the Holy Spirit is a kind of electric shock working in the heart; that there is some mysterious and terrible thing they cannot understand, which they must feel, not only very different from what they ever felt

before, but even superior to anything described in God's Word. Now, I beg to tell you, that so far from the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit being a dark thing in its manifestation, it is, because it is the Holy Spirit, a thing of simplicity and light. The way of salvation is no great mystery, it is very plain; it is "believe and live." And faith needs no mysteries to hang itself upon; it catches hold of the bare naked promise, and it says, "Lord, do as thou hast said."

My faith can on this promise live; I know that on this promise it never can die. But faith wants neither testimonies of man, nor learning of philosophers, nor eloquence of orators, nor rhapsodies, nor visions, nor revelations. It wants nothing else but what God has said applied to the heart; and it goes to God, and says, "Lord, do as thou hast said."

III. And now for the third remark. We see that faith is a very bold thing; when God says a thing it goes to God, and says, "Lord, do as thou hast said."

My third remark is, that FAITH IS QUITE RIGHT IN SO DOING. The Lord always meant, when he said a thing, that we should remind him of it. God's promises were never meant to be waste paper; he meant that they should be used. Whenever God gives a promise, if a man does not use that promise, the promise fails in effect to that man, and God's great intention therein is in some measure frustrated. God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh! my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said." And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises. Do you think that God will be any the poorer for giving you the riches he has promised? Do you think he will be any the less holy for giving holiness to you? Do you think he will be any the less pure for washing you from your sins? And he has said, "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red, they shall be whiter than snow." Faith gets hold of that promise, and it does not stand saying, "this is a precious promise, I will look at it;" it goes right up to the throne, and says, "Lord,

here is the promise, do as thou hast said." And God says, "Oh! faith, I am as glad to see the promise brought to me, as thou art to bring it; I meant my promise to be used, and the using of it glorifies me." Why, if any one gave us a cheque, and we did not go to have it cashed, though we might want the money badly enough, suppose we said, "I don't like to go," there would be some slur cast upon the character of the man whose signature had made it valid. And so when a Christian gets a promise, if he does not take it to God, he dishonors him. But when faith in all its raggedness and poverty, and sickness about it, goes to God and says, "Lord, I have nothing to recommend me but this, 'thou hast said it:' there is the promise, Lord, give me the fulfilment." God smiles, and says, "Ay, my child, I love to see thee trust me; there, take back the fulfilment, and go on thy way rejoicing." Never think that God will be troubled by your asking him about his promises so much. God likes to be troubled, if I may use such an expression; he likes you to go to his door, and say, "Great Banker, cash this note; great Promiser, fulfil this promise; great covenant God, fulfil thy covenant, and send me not empty away." "Do as thou hast said," is a legitimate request; we ought to say it; it honors God, and God meant that we should so use his promises, "Do as thou hast said."

Another remark. *Faith has very good reasons for appealing to God to do as he has said.* If you should say to faith, "Faith, why do you expect God to do as he has said it, why do you expect it?" Faith would answer, "I have a whole bundle of reasons that justify the act. And in the first place, I have a right to expect him to do as he has said, because he is a true God; I know he cannot lie. He has said he will give me such-and-such a thing; if he was not a truthful God, I would not say, 'do as thou hast said!' but since he is a *true* God, and never was known to break his promise, and since, moreover, by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie - his oath and his promise - he has made the thing secure; and since I know that in Christ all the promises are yea and amen, I think I have good reason enough for going to him and saying, 'do as thou hast said.' If he were some fallible being who promised and would not perform, I might hesitate somewhat; but since he is always true and constantly precious, I will go and say to him, 'Lord, do as thou hast said.'" Poor sinner! God has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy." Now, if you go to God, you want no other plea than this, - "Lord, do as

thou hast said;' 'I have confessed my sins;' 'do as thou hast said.'" "But, sinner, why should I do as I have said? you do not deserve it." "Lord, thou art a true God."

"Thou hast promised to forgive,
All who on thy Son believe;
Lord I know thou canst not lie,
Give me Christ or else I die."

Go, poor sinner, tell the Lord that, and as truly as he is God, he will never send you empty away. Faith has good reasons to feel that God is true, and therefore he will do as he has said. And not only so, but he is *able* to do it; his ability is infinite. His intentions also are the *same*, his promises never get worn out by being circulated, and they become all the more sure for being tried. Poor sinner, here again is a joyful thought: thou canst go to God, and say, "Lord thou hast promised to wash away all our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea. Lord, if thou hadst been a changeable God, I might have thought thou wouldst not wash away mine, but thou didst wash Manasseh, and thou didst wash Paul; now, Lord, because thou art unchangeable, 'do as thou hast said.' For thou art just the same now, just as merciful, just as powerful, and just as kind as ever thou wert. What, wilt thou break thy promise, Lord? 'Do as thou hast said.'"

But faith puts it on stronger ground than this: it says, "Lord, if thou dost not do as thou hast said, thou wilt be dishonored, thou wilt be disgraced." If a man does not carry out his promise, he is cashiered; men care not to associate with one who breaks his promise; and what would become of God's great name if he were to break his promise? Poor black sinner! thou art coming to the fountain; God has given the promise that he will wash every sinner that comes to the fountain. Now, with reverence, let me speak it poor sinner; if Christ did not wash you, it would be a dishonor to his truth. If you were to go to Christ, and he were to cast you out, surely the devils in hell would despise the name of him who breaks his promise. Beloved, to suppose that God could violate his promise, is to suppose him divested of his Godhead. Take away God's honour from him, and he becomes less than man. Take away the honour which even man holds

dear, and what do you make of God? "Oh! sir," you say, "but I do not deserve it; I am such a poor worthless creature, he will not keep his promise to me." I tell you that does not make a whit difference in God's promise; if he has promised, he is divinely bound to perform his promise, in whatever state you may be. Though you have slandered God, though you may have hated him and despised him, and run away from him, and in every way ill-treated him - if he has made a promise to you here, I will be bound for my God. He would keep a promise to the devil if he had made one; and if he has made a promise to you who are ever so vile, he will keep that promise to you. Hear the promise, then, once more, Are you a sinner? "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner, even the chief." And, again: "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." And, again: "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And let me say again, with the profoundest reverence, that if Christ did not give rest to every weary heavy laden sinner that came to him, he would be un-Christed, he would lose his truthfulness, he would be undeified, he would lose his veracity, and the loss of one poor believing sinner would be the loss of God's own godhead; it would be the dethroning of the immortal; it would be the pulling down of heaven, the breaking asunder of the universe, and the dissolution of creation's own earth, and of creation's self. Faith may well go to God, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said; for if thou dost not, it will be a dishonor to thyself."

And now let us conclude by asking, *what has God said?* I cannot tell you all that he has said to you, because I cannot mark out all the different characters here. But, my dear friends, whatever may be your character, from the earliest stage of religion up to the last, there is always some special promise to you; and you have only to turn your Bible over and find it out, and then go to God with "Do as thou hast said." Let me just select a few characters. There is one here, exceeding faint in the ways of the Lord. "Oh!" he says, "I am faint, though I hope I am pursuing." Now, here is the promise, - "He giveth power unto the faint;" When you get such a promise, stick hard and fast to it; do not let the devil cheat you out of it, but keep on saying, "Lord, thou hast said, He giveth power unto the faint." "Do as thou hast said." Let it ring and ring again in the ears of the promiser, and he will be a performer yet. "Ah!" says another, "I am not

faint; I am afraid I scarcely have life at all; I am a hungry and thirsty soul; I want Christ, but I cannot get at him." Hear this: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Take that promise to God, and keep to it: do not plead anything else, but go to God over and over again with this, - "Lord, thou hast said it; do as thou hast said." Are you covered all over with sin, and under a deep sense of your iniquities? Go and tell him this: "Thou hast said, 'I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea.' Lord, I know I have these sins; I do not deny it; but thou hast said, 'I will pardon them.' I have no reason why thou shouldst pardon them; I cannot promise that I shall be better; but, Lord, thou hast said it, and that is enough; 'Do as thou hast said.'" Another one here is afraid lest he should not be able to hold on to the end, and lest after having been a child of God he should be a cast-away. Then, if that be thy state, go and take this to God: "The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not depart from you;" and when you are thinking that Saviour is going away, catch hold of his skirts, and say, "Jesus, do as thou hast said. Thou hast said, 'I will never leave thee;' 'do as thou hast said.'" Or, if thou hast lost his presence, remember the promise, "I will come again to you." Go and say, "Lord, I have lost the sweet comfort of thy presence in my heart, but thou hast said, 'I will come again to you.'" And if Satan says, "He is gone away, and will never come back again," tell Satan he has nothing to do with it; God has said it, and keep to this, "Do as thou hast said." If you do that, you will want no other argument and no other reason.

Let us suppose a case, and having tried to illustrate the truth by it, we will have done. There is a desperate ruffian; he has been concerned in twenty burglaries; it is said he has committed several murders; the police are on his track, they are hunting after him; he cannot be discovered. The principal point is to discover him, for it is hoped that by his discovery and his pardon more good might be done than even by his execution. Persons come to this desperately bad fellow, and they tell him, "If you give yourself up, I dare say you will get a free pardon." "I do not give myself up on daresays," he says. Another comes, and says, "If you were to give yourself up, I would intercede for you; I know my lord so-and-so, and such a man, member of parliament, would intercede for you." "No," he would say, "let well alone. I am pretty safe now; I am not going to give

myself up on the mere speculation that some one will intercede for me." But by-and-bye there comes out a huge placard, "V.R. Free pardon to such a man if he surrenders himself." He walks straight up to the place. Some one says to him, "Stop, my dear fellow; they will hang you, perhaps." "No," says he, "they won't." Some one says, "They have been many years looking after you; you do not think that if you get into the fangs of the law now the Queen will pardon you?" "Yes," he says, "I can trust her? she has never given a free pardon, and then executed anyone." He goes to the office, and they say, "We are astonished to see this fellow; he might have kept away; he had no necessity to give himself up." "See," says one, "there is a policeman, are you not afraid? There are the handcuffs; are you not afraid that they will be put on your wrists and that you will be put into jail?" "No," he says, "I will walk all through the prison, but there is not a cell in which I may be locked up. The Queen has said she will pardon me, and I do not want any thing else." "But look at your conduct; you know you deserve to be hanged." "I know I do, but I have received a free pardon, and I will surrender myself." "But who can tell how many burglaries you will commit if you are allowed to go free." "Never mind," she has promised to pardon me, and I know well that her word will not be violated. Sure the majesty of England will not lie against such an offender as I am." Now, you would not wonder at that, would you? It would be no very marvellous thing, because we can trust her Majesty pretty fairly. But it is the hardest thing to get sinners to come to God. "No," says one, "I have been a drunkard, God will not forgive me." My dear fellow, it is said, "All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven to man." "Oh," says another, "I have been a swearer, I have been an infidel, I have blasphemed God, and broken all his statutes." My dear fellow-creature, it is said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," Cannot you believe it? God means what he says; and can you not come to God, trembling, though you be, and cast yourself before his feet, and say, "Lord, if thou dost damn me, I deserve it; if thou shouldst cast me down to hell, I know thou wouldst be just: but then Lord thou hast said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" I tell you God will do as he has said. If you have but faith to believe that promise, you never need fear.

Worthless, vilest of the vile, sweepings of the universe, the very offal of

creation, if you come to God he will take you in, for his promise is not to be broken by reason of your vileness; he will receive you, if you can but plead a promise of your own case, and say to him, "Do as thou hast said." Now, then, I will say in conclusion, it will be easy enough for every poor sinner, for every penitent sinner, for every weak saint, to go home, and turn his Bible over; and by a little diligence he will be able to find out a promise that will exactly suit his case; and if he does not find such a promise, it will be because he did not look long enough, for there is one that just fits, and when he has got hold of it let him go to God, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said," and let him keep to that; and the heavens would sooner fall than one of God's promises should be broken. Oh! trust my Master! oh! trust my Master; trust your souls to him! trust your bodies to him, I beseech you; do it, for his own name's sake! Amen and Amen.

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Pleading

But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying. - Psalm 70:5

Young painters were anxious, in olden times, to study under the great masters. They concluded that they should more easily attain to excellence if they entered the schools of eminent men. Men have paid large premiums that their sons may be apprenticed or articed to those who best understood their trades or professions; now, if any of us would learn the sacred art and mystery of prayer, it is well for us to study the productions of the greatest masters of that science. I am unable to point out one who understood it better than did the psalmist David. So well did he know how to praise, that his psalms have become the language of good men in all ages; and so well did he understand how to pray, that if we catch his spirit, and follow his mode of prayer, we shall have learned to

plead with God after the most prevalent sort. Place before you, first of all, David's Son and David's Lord, that most mighty of all intercessors, and, next to Him, you shall find David to be one of the most admirable models for your imitation.

We shall consider our text, then, as one of the productions of a great master in spiritual matters, and we will study it, praying all the while that God will help us to pray after the like fashion.

In our text we have the soul of a successful pleader under four aspects: we view, first, the soul confessing: "I am poor and needy." You have next, the soul pleading, for he makes a plea out of his poor condition, and adds, "Make haste unto me, O God!" You see, thirdly, a soul in it's urgency, for he cries, "Make haste," and he varies the expression but keeps the same idea: "Make no tarrying." And you have in the fourth and last view, a soul grasping God, for the psalmist puts it thus: "Thou art my help and my deliverer"; thus with both hands he lays hold upon His God, so as not to let Him go till a blessing is obtained.

I. To begin with, then, we see in this model of supplication, A SOUL CONFESSING. The wrestler strips before he enters upon the contest, and confession does the like for the man who is about to plead with God. A racer on the plains of prayer cannot hope to win, unless, by confession, repentance, and faith, he lays aside every weight of sin.

Now, let it be ever remembered that confession is absolutely needful to the sinner when he first seeks a Saviour. It is not possible for thee, O seeker, to obtain peace for thy troubled heart, till thou shalt have acknowledged thy transgression and thine iniquity before the Lord. Thou mayest do what thou wilt, ay, even attempt to believe in Jesus, but thou shalt find that the faith of God's elect is not in thee, unless thou art willing to make a full confession of thy transgression, and lay bare thy heart before God. We do not usually think of giving charity to those who do not acknowledge that they need it: the physician does not send his medicine to those who are not sick. The blind man in the gospels had to feel his blindness, and to sit by the wayside begging; if he had entertained a doubt as to whether he were blind or not, the Lord would have passed

him by. He opens the eyes of those who confess their blindness, but of others, He says, "Because ye say we see, therefore, your sin remaineth." He asks of those who are brought to Him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" in order that their need may be publicly avowed. It must be so with all of us: we must offer the confession, or we cannot gain the benediction.

Let me speak especially to you who desire to find peace with God, and salvation through the precious blood: you will do well to make your confession before God very frank, very sincere, very explicit. Surely you have nothing to hide, for there is nothing that you can hide. He knows your guilt already, but He would have you know it, and therefore He bids you confess it. Go into the details of your sin in your secret acknowledgments before God; strip yourself of all excuses, make no apologies; say, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Acknowledge the evil of sin, ask God to make you feel it; do not treat it as a trifle, for it is none. To redeem the sinner from the effect of sin Christ Himself must needs die, and unless you be delivered from it you must die eternally. Therefore, play not with sin; do not confess it as though it were some venial fault, which would not have been noticed unless God had been too severe; but labour to see sin as God sees it, as an offence against all that is good, a rebellion against all that is kind; see it to be treason, to be ingratitude, or be a mean and base thing. Do not think that you can improve your condition before God by painting your case in brighter colours than it should be. Blacken it: if it were possible blacken it, but it is not possible. When you feel your sin most you have not half felt it; when you confess it most fully you do not know a tithe of it; but oh, to the utmost of your ability make a clean breast of it, and say, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Acknowledge the sins of your youth and your manhood, the sins of your body and of your soul, the sins of omission and of commission, sins against the law and offenses against the gospel; acknowledge all; neither for a moment seek to deny one portion of the evil with which God's law, your own conscience, and his Holy Spirit justly charge you.

And oh, soul, if thou wouldst get peace and approval with God in prayer,

confess the ill desert of thy sin. Submit thyself to do whatever divine justice may sentence thee to endure: confess that the deepest hell is thy desert, and confess this not with thy lips only, but with thy soul. Let this be the doleful ditty of thine inmost heart—

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death
And, if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

If thou wilt condemn thyself, God will acquit thee; if thou wilt put the rope about thy neck, and sentence thyself, then he who otherwise would have sentenced thee will say, "I forgive thee, through the merit of my son." But never expect that the King of heaven will pardon a traitor, if he will not confess and forsake his treason. Even the tenderest father expects that the child should humble himself when he has offended, and will not withdraw his frown from him till with tears he has said, "Father, I have sinned." Darest thou expect God to humble Himself to thee, and would it not be so if He did not constrain thee to humble thyself to Him? Wouldst thou have Him connive at thy faults and wink at thy transgressions? He will have mercy, but He must be holy. He is ready to forgive, but not to tolerate sin; and, therefore, He cannot let thee be forgiven if thou huggest thy sins, or if thou presumest to say, "I have not sinned." Hasten, then, O seeker, hasten I pray thee, to the mercy seat with this upon thy lips: "I am poor and needy, I am sinful, I am lost; have pity on me." With such an acknowledgment thou beginnest thy prayer well, and through Jesus thou shalt prosper in it.

Beloved hearers, the same principle applies to the church of God. We are praying for a display of the Holy Spirit's power in this church, and, in order to successful pleading in this matter, it is necessary that we should unanimously make the confession of our text, "I am poor and needy." We must own that we are powerless in this business. Salvation is of the Lord and we cannot save a single soul. The Spirit of God is treasured up in Christ, and we must seek Him of the great head of the church. We cannot command the Spirit, and yet we can do nothing without Him. He bloweth where He listeth. We must deeply feel and honestly acknowledge this.

Will you not heartily assent to it my brethren and sisters at this hour. May I not ask you unanimously to renew the confession this morning? We must also acknowledge that we are not worthy that the Holy Spirit should condescend to work with us and by us. There is no fitness in us for his purposes, except he shall give us that fitness. Our sins might well provoke him to leave us: he has striven with us, he has been tender towards us, but he might well go away and say, "I will no more shine upon that church, and no more bless that ministry." Let us feel our unworthiness, it will be a good preparation for earnest prayer; for mark you, brethren, God will have His church before He blesses it know that the blessing is altogether from Himself. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The career of Gideon was a very remarkable one, and it commenced with two most instructive signs. I think our heavenly Father would have all of us learn the very same lesson which He taught to Gideon, and when we have mastered that lesson, He will use us for His own purposes. You remember Gideon laid a fleece upon the barn floor, and in the morning all round was dry and the fleece alone was wet. God alone had saturated the fleece so that he could wring it out, and its moisture was not due to its being placed in a favourable situation, for all around was dry. He would have us learn, that, if the dew of His grace fills any one of us with its heavenly moisture, it is not because we lie upon the barn-floor of a ministry which God usually blesses, or because we are in a church which the Lord graciously visits; but we must be made to see that the visitations of His Spirit are fruits of the Lord's sovereign grace, and gifts of His infinite love, and not of the will of man, neither by man. But then the miracle was reversed, for, as old Thomas Fuller says, "God's miracles will bear to be turned inside out and look as glorious one way as another." The next night the fleece was dry and all around was wet. For sceptics might have said, "Yes, but a fleece would naturally attract moisture, and if there were any in the air, it would be likely to be absorbed by the wool." But, lo, on this occasion, the dew is not where it might be expected to be, even though it lies thickly all around. Damp is the stone and dry is the fleece. So God will have us know that He does not give us His grace because of any natural adaptation in us to receive it, and even where He has given a preparedness of heart to receive, He will have us understand that His grace and His Spirit are most free in action, and sovereign in operation: and that He is not bound to work after any rule of

our making. If the fleece be wet He bedews it, and that not because it is a fleece, but because He chooses to do so. He will have all the glory of all His grace from first to last. Come then, my brethren, and become disciples to this truth. Consider that from the great Father of lights every good and perfect gift must come. We are His workmanship, he must work all our works in us [Isa 26:12]. Grace is not to be commanded by our position or condition: the wind bloweth where it listeth, the Lord works and no man can hinder; but if He works not, the mightiest and most zealous labour is but in vain.

It is very significant that before Christ fed the thousands, He made the disciples sum up all their provisions. It was well to let them see how low the commissariat had become, for then when the crowds were fed they could not say the basket fed them nor that the lad had done it. God will make us feel how little are our barley loaves, and how small our fishes, and compel us to enquire, "What are they among so many?" When the Saviour bade His disciples cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they dragged such a mighty shoal to land, He did not work the miracle till they had confessed that they had toiled all the night and had taken nothing. They were thus taught that the success of their fishery was dependent upon the Lord, and that it was not their net, nor the way of dragging it, nor their skill and art in handling their vessels, but that altogether and entirely their success came from their Lord. We must get down to this, and the sooner we come to it the better.

Before the ancient Jews kept the passover, observe what they did. The unleavened bread is to be brought in, and the paschal lamb to be eaten; but there shall be no unleavened bread and no paschal lamb, till they have purged out the old leaven. If you have any old strength and self-confidence; if you have anything that is your own, and is, therefore, leavened, it must be swept right out; there must be a bare cupboard before there can come in the heavenly provision, upon which the spiritual passover can be kept. I thank God when He clears us out; I bless His name when He brings us to feel our soul poverty as a church, for then the blessing will be sure to come.

One other illustration will show this, perhaps, more distinctly still.

Behold Elijah with the priests of Baal at Carmel. The test appointed to decide Israel's choice was this—the God that answereth by fire let him be God. Baal's priests invoked the heavenly flame in vain. Elijah is confident that it will come upon his sacrifice, but he is also sternly resolved that the false priests and the fickle people shall not imagine that he himself had produced the fire. He determines to make it clear that there is no human contrivance, trickery, or maneuver about the matter. The flame should be seen to be of the Lord, and of the Lord alone. Remember the stern prophet's command, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it a second time; and they did it a second time. And he said, Do it a third time; and they did it a third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water." There could be no latent fire there. If there had been any combustibles or chemicals calculated to produce fire after the manner of the cheats of the time, they would all have been damped and spoiled. When no one could imagine that man could burn the sacrifice, then the prophet lifted up his eyes to heaven, and began to plead, and down came the fire of the Lord, which consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood, and the altar stones and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. Then when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and they said, "Jehovah is the God; Jehovah is the God." The Lord in this church, if He means greatly to bless us, may send us trial of pouring on the water once, and twice, and thrice; He may discourage us, grieve us, and try us, and bring us low, till all shall see that it is not of the preacher, it is not of the organization, it is not of man, but altogether of God, the Alpha and the Omega, who worketh all things according to the council of His will.

Thus I have shown you that for a successful season of prayer the best beginning is confession that we are poor and needy.

II. Secondly, after the soul has unburdened itself of all weights of merit and self-sufficiency, it proceeds to prayer, and we have before us A SOUL PLEADING. "I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God. Thou art my help and my deliverer: O Lord, make no tarrying." The careful reader will perceive four pleas in this single verse.

Upon this topic I would remark that it is the habit of faith, when she is praying, to use pleas. Mere prayer sayers, who do not pray at all, forget to argue with God; but those who would prevail bring forth their reasons and their strong arguments and they debate the question with the Lord. They who play at wrestling catch here and there at random, but those who are really wrestling have a certain way of grasping the opponent—a certain mode of throwing, and the like; they work according to order and rule. Faith's art of wrestling is to plead with God, and say with holy boldness, "Let it be thus and thus, for these reasons." Hosea tells us of Jacob at Jabbok, "that there he spake with us"; from which I understand that Jacob instructed us by his example. Now, the two pleas which Jacob used were God's precept and God's promise. First, he said, "Thou saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred": as much as if he put it thus:—"Lord, I am in difficulty, but I have come here through obedience to thee. Thou didst tell me to come hither, into the very teeth of my brother Esau, who comes to meet me like a lion, Lord, Thou canst not be so unfaithful as to bring me into danger and then leave me in it." This was sound reasoning, and it prevailed with God. Then Jacob also urged a promise: "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Among men, it is a masterly way of reasoning when you can challenge you opponent with his own words: you may quote other authorities, and he may say, "I deny their force" but, when you quote a man against himself, you foil him completely. When you bring a man's promise to his mind, he must either confess himself to be unfaithful and changeable, or if he holds to being the same, and being true to his word, you have him, and you have won your will of him. Oh brethren, let us learn thus to plead the precepts, the promises, and whatever else may serve our turn; but let us always have something to plead. Do not reckon you have prayed unless you have pleaded, for pleading is the very marrow of prayer. He who pleads well knows the secret of prevailing with God, especially if he pleads the blood of Jesus, for that unlocks the treasury of heaven. Many keys fit many locks, but the master-key is the blood and the name of Him that died but rose again, and ever lives in heaven to save unto the uttermost.

Faith's pleas are plentiful, and this is well, for faith is placed in diverse positions, and needs them all. She hath many needs, and having a keen eye she perceives that there are pleas to be urged in every case. I will not,

therefore, tell you all faith's pleas, but I will just mention some of them, enough to let you see how abundant they are. Faith will plead all the attributes of God. "Thou art just, therefore spare thou the soul for whom the Saviour died. Thou art merciful, blot out my transgressions. Thou art good, reveal thy bounty to thy servant. Thou art immutable—thou hast done thus and thus to others of thy servants, do thus unto me. Thou art faithful, canst thou break thy promise, canst thou turn away from thy covenant?" Rightly viewed, all the perfections of Deity become pleas for faith.

Faith will boldly plead all God's gracious relationships. She will say to Him, "Art Thou not the creator? Wilt Thou forsake the work of thine own hands? Art Thou not the Redeemer, Thou hast redeemed thy servant, wilt Thou cast me away?" Faith usually delights to lay hold upon the fatherhood of God. This is generally one of her master points: when she brings this into the field she wins the day. "Thou art a Father, and wouldst Thou chasten us [as] though thou wouldst kill? A Father, and hast Thou no sympathy and no bowels of compassion? A Father, and canst Thou deny what Thine own child asks of Thee?" Whenever I am impressed with the divine majesty, and so, perhaps, a little dispirited in prayer, I find the short and sweet remedy is to remember that, although He is a great King, and infinitely glorious, I am His child, and no matter who the father is, the child may always be bold with his father. Yes, faith can plead any and all of the relationships in which God stands to His chosen.

Faith too, can ply heaven with the Divine Promises. If you were to go to one of the banks in Lombard Street, and see a man go in and out and lay a piece of paper on the tables and take it up again and nothing more; if he did that several times a day, I think there would soon be orders issued to the porter to keep the man out, because he was merely wasting the clerk's time, and doing nothing to purpose. Those city men who come to the bank in earnest present their cheques, they wait till they receive their money and then they go, but not without having transacted real business. They do not put the paper down, speak about the excellent signature and discuss the correctness of the document, but they want their money for it, and they are not content without it. These are the people who are always

welcome at the bank, and not the triflers. Alas, a great many people play at praying, it is nothing better. I say they play at praying, they do not expect God to give them an answer, and thus they are mere triflers, who mock the Lord. He who prays in a businesslike way, meaning what he says, honours the Lord. The Lord does not play at promising, Jesus did not sport at confirming the word by His blood, and we must not make a jest of prayer by going about it in a listless unexpecting spirit.

The Holy Spirit is in earnest, and we must be in earnest also. We must go for a blessing, and not be satisfied till we have it; like the hunter, who is not satisfied because he has run so many miles, but is never content till he takes his prey.

Faith, moreover, pleads the performances of God, she looks back on the past and says, "Lord, thou didst deliver me on such and such an occasion; wilt thou fail me now?" She, moreover, takes her life as a whole, and pleads thus:—

"After so much mercy past,
Wilt thou let me sink at last?"

"Hast thou brought me so far that I may be put to shame at the end?" She knows how to bring the ancient mercies of God, and make them arguments for present favours. But your time would all be gone if I tried to exhibit, even a thousandth part of faith's pleas.

Sometimes, however, faith's pleas are very singular. As in this text, it is by no means according to the proud rule of human nature to plead: "I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God." It is like another prayer of David: "Have mercy upon mine iniquity, for it is great." It is not the manner of men to plead so, they say, "Lord, have mercy on me, for I am not so bad a sinner as some. But faith reads things in a truer light, and bases her pleas on truth. "Lord, because my sin is great, and thou art a great God, let Thy great mercy be magnified in me." You know the story of the Syrophenician woman; that is a grand instance of the ingenuity of faith's reasoning. She came to Christ about her daughter, and He answered her not a word. What do you think her heart said? Why, she

said in herself, "It is well, for He has not denied me: since He has not spoken at all, He has not refused me." With this for an encouragement, she began to plead again. Presently Christ spoke to her sharply, and then her brave heart said, "I have gained words from Him at last, I shall have deeds from Him by-and-by." That also cheered her; and then, when He called her a dog. "Ah," she reasoned, "but a dog is a part of the family, it has some connection with the master of the house. Though it does not eat meat from the table, it gets the crumbs under it, and so I have thee now, great Master, dog as I am; the great mercy that I ask of Thee, great as it is to me, is only a crumb to Thee; grant it then I beseech Thee." Could she fail to have her request? Impossible! When faith hath a will, she always finds a way, and she will win the day when all things forebode defeat.

Faith's pleas are singular, but, let me add, faith's pleas are always sound; for after all, it is a very telling plea to urge that we are poor and needy. Is not that the main argument with mercy? Necessity is the very best plea with benevolence, either human or divine. Is not our need the best reason we can urge? If we would have a physician come quickly to a sick man, "Sir," we say, "it is no common case, he is on the point of death, come to him, come quickly!" If we wanted our city firemen to rush to a fire, we should not say to them, "Make haste, for it is only a small fire"; but, on the contrary, we urge that it is an old house full of combustible materials, and there are rumours of petroleum and gunpowder on the premises; besides, it is near a timber yard, hosts of wooden cottages are close by, and before long we shall have half the city in a blaze." We put the case as bad as we can. Oh for wisdom to be equally wise in pleading with God, to find arguments everywhere, but especially to find them in our necessities.

They said two centuries ago that the trade of beggary was the easiest one to carry on, but it paid the worst. I am not sure about the last at this time, but certainly the trade of begging with God is a hard one, and undoubtedly it pays the best of anything in the world. It is very noteworthy that beggars with men have usually plenty of pleas on hand. When a man is hardly driven and starving, he can usually find a reason why he should ask aid of every likely person. Suppose it is a person to whom he is already under many obligations, then the poor creature argues, "I may safely ask of him again, for he knows me, and has been

always very kind." If he never asked of the person before, then he says, "I have never worried him before; he cannot say he has already done all he can for me; I will make bold to begin with him." If it is one of his own kin, then he will say, "Surely you will help me in my distress, for you are a relation"; and if it be a stranger, he says, "I have often found strangers kinder than my own blood, help me, I entreat you." If he asks of the rich, he pleads that they will never miss what they give; and if he begs of the poor, he urges that they know what want means, and he is sure they will sympathize with him in his great distress. Oh that we were half as much on the alert to fill our mouths with arguments when we are before the Lord. How is it that we are not half awake, and do not seem to have any spiritual senses aroused. May God grant that we may learn the art of pleading with the eternal God, for in that shall rest our prevalence with Him, through the merit of Jesus Christ.

III. I must be brief on the next point. It is A SOUL URGENT: "Make haste unto me, O God. O Lord, make no tarrying." We may well be urgent with God, if as yet we are not saved, for our need is urgent; we are in constant peril, and the peril is of the most tremendous kind. O sinner, within an hour, within a minute, thou mayest be where hope can never visit thee; therefore, cry, "Make haste, O God, to deliver me: make haste to help me, O Lord!" Yours is not a case that can bear lingering: you have not time to procrastinate; therefore, be urgent, for your need is so. And, remember, if you really are under a sense of need, and the Spirit of God is at work with you, you will and must be urgent. An ordinary sinner may be content to wait, but a quickened sinner wants mercy now. A dead sinner will lie quiet, but a living sinner cannot rest till pardon is sealed home to his soul. If you are urgent this morning, I am glad of it, because your urgency, I trust, arises from the possession of spiritual life. When you cannot live longer without a Saviour, the Saviour will come to you, and you shall rejoice in Him.

Brethren, members of this church, as I have said on another point, the same truth holds good with you. God will come to bless you, and come speedily, when your sense of need becomes deep and urgent. Oh, how great is this church's need! We shall grow cold, unholy and worldly; there will be no conversions, there will be no additions to our numbers; there

will be diminutions, there will be divisions, there will be mischief of all kinds; Satan will rejoice, and Christ will be dishonoured, unless we obtain a larger measure of the Holy Spirit. Our need is urgent, and when we feel that need thoroughly, then we shall get the blessing which we want. Does any melancholy spirit say, "We are in so bad a state that we cannot expect a large blessing"? I reply, perhaps if we were worse, we should obtain it all the sooner. I do not mean if we were really so, but if we felt we were worse, we should be nearer the blessing. When we mourn that we are in an ill state, then we cry the more vehemently to God, and the blessing comes. God never refused to go with Gideon because he had not enough valiant men with him; but he paused because the people were too many. He brought them down from thousands to hundreds, and he diminished the hundreds before he gave them victory. When you feel that you must have God's presence, but that you do not deserve it, and when your consciousness of this lays you in the dust, then shall the blessing be vouchsafed.

For my part, brethren and sisters, I desire to feel a spirit of urgency within my soul as I plead with God for the dew of His grace to descend upon this church. I am not bashful in this matter, for I have a license to pray. Mendicancy is forbidden in the streets, but, before the Lord I am a licensed beggar. Jesus has said, "men ought always to pray and not to faint." You land on the shores of a foreign country with the greatest confidence when you carry a passport with you, and God has issued passports to His children, by which they come boldly to His mercy seat; He has invited you, He has encouraged you, He has bidden you come to Him, and He has promised that whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Come, then, come urgently, come importunately, come with this plea, "I am poor and needy; make no tarrying, O my God," and a blessing shall surely come; it will not tarry. God grant we may see it, and give Him the glory of it.

IV. I am sorry to have been so brief where I had need to have enlarged, but I must close with the fourth point. Here is another part of the art and mystery of prayer—THE SOUL GRASPING GOD. She has pleaded, and she has been urgent, but now she comes to close quarters; she grasps the covenant angel with one hand, "Thou art my help." and with the other,

"Thou art my deliverer." Oh, those blessed "my's," those blessed potent "my's." The sweetness of the Bible lies in the possessive pronouns, and he who is taught to use them as the psalmist did, shall come off a conqueror with the eternal God. Now sinner, I pray God thou mayest be helped to say this morning to the blessed Christ of God, "Thou art my help and my deliverer." Perhaps you mourn that you cannot get that length, but, poor soul, hast thou any other help? If thou hast, then thou canst not hold two helpers with the same hand. "Oh, no," say you, "I have no help anywhere. I have no hope except in Christ." Well, then, poor soul, since thy hand is empty, that empty hand was made on purpose to grasp thy Lord with: lay hold on Him! Say to Him, this day, "Lord, I will hang on thee as poor lame Jacob did; now I cannot help myself, I will cleave to Thee: I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." "Ah, it would be too bold," says one. But the Lord loves holy boldness in poor sinners; He would have you be bolder than you think of being. It is an unhallowed bashfulness that dares not trust a crucified Saviour. He died on purpose to save such as thou art; let Him have His way with thee, and do thou trust Him. "Oh," saith one, "but I am so unworthy." He came to seek and save the unworthy. He is not the Saviour of the self-righteous: He is the sinners' Saviour—"friend of sinners" is His name. Unworthy one, lay hold on Him! "Oh," saith one, "but I have no right." Well, since you have no right, your need shall be your claim: it is all the claim you want. Methinks I hear one say, "It is too late for me to plead for grace." It cannot be: it is impossible. While you live and desire mercy, it is not too late to seek it. Notice the parable of the man who wanted three loaves. I will tell you what crossed my mind when I read it: the man went to his friend at midnight; it could not have been later; for if he had been a little later than midnight, it would have been early in the morning, and so not late at all. It was midnight, and it could not be later; and so, if it is downright midnight with your soul, yet, be of good cheer, Jesus is an out of season Saviour; many of His servants are "born out of due time." Any season is the right season to call upon the name of Jesus; therefore, only do not let the devil tempt thee with the thought that it can be too late. Go to Jesus now, go at once, and lay hold on the horns of the altar by the venturesome faith, and say, "Sacrifice for sinners, Thou art a sacrifice for me. Intercessor for the graceless, Thou art an intercessor for me. Thou Who distributest gifts to the rebellious, distribute gifts to me, for a rebel I have been." When we were yet without

strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. "Such am I, Master; let the power of Thy death be seen in me to save my soul."

Oh, you that are saved and, therefore love Christ, I want you, dear brethren, as the saints of God, to practice this last part of my subject; and be sure to lay hold upon God in prayer. "Thou art my help and my deliverer." As a church we throw ourselves upon the strength of God, and we can do nothing without Him; but we do not mean to be without Him, we will hold Him fast. "Thou art my help and my deliverer." There was a boy at Athens, according to the old story, who used to boast that he ruled all Athens, and when they asked him how, he said, "Why, I rule my mother, my mother rules my father, and my father rules the city." He who knows how to be master of prayer will rule the heart of Christ, and Christ can and will do all things for His people, for the Father hath committed all things into His hands. You can be omnipotent if you know how to pray, omnipotent in all things which glorify God. What does the Word itself say? "Let him lay hold of my strength." Prayer moves the arm that moves the world. Oh for grace to grasp Almighty love in this fashion. We want more holdfast prayer; more tugging, and gripping, and wrestling, that saith, "I will not let thee go." That picture of Jacob at Jabbok shall suffice for us to close with. The covenant angel is there, and Jacob wants a blessing from him: he seems to put him off, but no put-offs will do for Jacob. Then the angel endeavours to escape from him, and tugs and strives; so he may, but no efforts shall make Jacob relax his grasp. At last the angel falls from ordinary wrestling to wounding him in the very seat of his strength; and Jacob will let his thigh go, and all his limbs go, but he will not let the angel go. The poor man's strength shrivels under the withering touch, but in his weakness he is still strong: he throws his arms about the mysterious man, and holds him as in a death-grip. Then the other says, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Mark, he did not shake him off, he only said, "Let me go"; the angel will do nothing to force him to relax his hold, he leaves that to his voluntary will. The valiant Jacob cries, "No, I am set on it, I am resolved to win an answer to my prayer. I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Now, when the church begins to pray, it may be, at first, the Lord will make as though he would have gone further [Luk 24:28], and we may fear that no answer will be given. Hold on, dear brethren. Be ye steadfast, unmovable, notwithstanding all. By-and-by, it

may be, there will come discouragements where we looked for a flowing success; we shall find brethren hindering, some will be slumbering, and others sinning; backsliders and impenitent souls will abound; but let us not be turned aside. Let us be all the more eager. And if it should so happen that we ourselves become distressed and dispirited, and feel we never were so weak as we are now; never mind, brethren, still hold on, for when the sinew is shrunk the victory is near. Grasp with a tighter clutch than ever. Be this our resolution, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Remember the longer the blessing is coming the richer it will be when it arrives. That which is gained speedily by a single prayer is sometimes only a second rate blessing; but that which is gained after many a desperate tug, and many an awful struggle, is a full weighted and precious blessing. The children of importunity are always fair to look upon. The blessing which costs us the most prayer will be worth the most. Only let us be persevering in supplication, and we shall gain a broad far-reaching benediction for ourselves, the churches, and the world. I wish it were in my power to stir you all to fervent prayer; but I must leave it with the great author of all true supplication, namely, the Holy Spirit. May He work in us mightily, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Pleading And Encouragement

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? - Ezekiel 18:23

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. - Ezekiel 18:32

As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways for why will ye die, O house of Israel? - Ezekiel 33:11

Sin having a thorough possession of the human heart, entrenches itself within the soul, as one who has taken a stronghold speedily attends to the repairing of the breaches, and the strengthening of the walls, lest haply he should be dislodged. Among the most subtle devices of sin to keep the soul under its power, and prevent the man's turning to God, is the slandering of the Most High by misrepresenting his character. As dust blinds the eye, so does sin prevent the sinner from seeing God aright. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"; but the wicked only see what they think to be God, and that, alas, is an image as unlike to God as possible! They say, for instance, that God is unmerciful, whereas he delighteth in mercy. The unfaithful servant in the parable was quite sure about it, and said most positively, "I knew that thou wast an austere man:" whereas the nature of God is as opposite to overbearing and exaction as light is from darkness.

When men once get this false idea of God into their minds they become hardened in heart: believing that it is useless to turn to God, they go on in their sine with greater determination. Either they conceive that God is implacable, or that he is indifferent to human prayers, or that if he should hear them yet he is not in the least likely to grant a favorable answer. Men darkly dream that God will not attend to the guilty and the miserable when they cry to him; that their prayers are not good enough for him: that he expects so much from his creatures that they cannot even pray so as to please him; that, in fact, he seeketh a quarrel against us, and is a taskmaster who will grind all he can out of us. Being themselves slow to forgive, they judge it to be highly unlikely that the Lord will pardon such sins as theirs. As they will not smile on the poor or the fallen, they conceive that the Lord will never receive unworthy ones into his favor. Thus they belie the Host High: they make him who is the best of Kings to be a tyrant; him who is the dearest of friends they regard as an enemy; and him whose very name is love they look upon as the embodiment of hate.

This is one of Satan's most mischievous, devices to prevent repentance. As in the old times of plague they fastened up the house-door, and marked a red cross upon it, and thus the inhabitants of that dwelling were sealed unto death, even so the devil writes upon the man's door the words, "no hope," and then the sick soul determines to die, and refuses admission to the Physician. No man sins more unreservedly than he who sins in desperation, believing that there is no pardon for him from God. An assault where the watchword is "No quarter" usually provokes a terrible defense. The pirate who is hopeless of pardon becomes reckless in his deeds of blood. Many a burglar in the old time actually went on to murder without remorse, because he thought he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. When a man believes that there is no hope for him in the right way, he determines that he will get what he can out of the wrong way; and if he cannot please God, he will, at least, please himself. If he must go to hell, he will be as merry as he can on the road, and, as he puts it, he will "die game." All this comes of a mistaken view of God. Do you not see the likeness between sin and falsehood? They are twin brothers. Holiness is truth, but sin is a lie, and the mother of lies. Sin brings forth falsehood, and then falsehood nourishes sin. Especially in this fashion doth falsehood maintain sin, by calumniating the God of love. He is a God ready to pardon, and by no means hard to be moved to forgiveness; why do men stand off from confessing their wrong, and finding mercy? He is not a God who taketh pleasure in the miseries of men; why do they think so ill of him? His ear is not dull to the cry of sorrow, his heart is not slow to compassionate distress; on the contrary, he waiteth to be gracious, "his mercy endureth for ever," he delighteth in mercy; why will men run from him? God is love immeasurable, love constant, boundless, endless.

"Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who hath grace so rich and free?"

Part of our business as ministers of Christ is to bear witness to the loving-kindness of the Lord against the falsehood with which sin dishonors his goodness. I desire to do so this morning, and to do it in right down

earnest, in the hope that those of you who are convinced of sin may this day be able to rest in the mercy of God,—even that exceeding mercy which he has revealed in Jesus Christ, his Son.

I have been very much struck with several letters which I have this week received from deeply-wounded souls. God is at work among us with the sword of conviction. I have felt a great degree of joy in receiving these letters; painful as they are to their writers, they are very hopeful to me. I am sorry that any persons should be near despair, and should continue in that condition; but anything is better than indifference. I am not sorry to see souls shut up in the prison of the law, for I hope they will soon come out of the prison-house into the full liberty of faith in Christ. I must confess my preference for these old-fashioned forms of conviction: it is my judgment that they produce better and more stable believers than the modern superficial methods. I am glad to see the Holy Spirit overturning, throwing down, digging out the foundations, and making you like cleared ground, that he may build upon you temples for his praise. How earnestly do I pray that the Lord may make of these convinced ones champions for the doctrines of free grace, comforters for his mourners, and consecrated servants of his kingdom! I look for large harvests from this deep subsoil ploughing. The Lord grant it, for his name's sake!

I can see in several who have written to me that their main idea is erroneous, that they have fallen into a wrong notion about God: they do not conceive of him as the good and gracious God which he really is. This error I am eager to correct. Listen to me, ye mourners. I desire to tell you nothing but sober truth. God forbid that I should misrepresent God for your comfort! Job asked his friends, "Will ye talk deceitfully for God?" and my answer to that question is,—"Never." I would not utter what I believed to be falsehood concerning the Lord, even though the evil one offered me the bait of saving all mankind thereby. I have noticed in certain Revival Meetings a wretched lowering of the truth upon many points in order to afford encouragement to men; but all such sophistry ends in utter failure. Comfort based upon the suppression of truth is worse than useless. Lasting consolation must come to sinners from the sure truth of God; or else in the day when they most want it their hopes will depart from them, as the giving up of the ghost. I will therefore speak

to you the truth in its simplicity concerning the blessed God, whose servant I am. I beseech you no longer to persevere in your slander of his infinite love. Oh, you that feel your sin, and dare not put your trust in your forgiving God, I pray you to learn of him, and know him aright, for then shall that text be fulfilled in you,—“They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.” May the Holy Spirit come now in all his brightness, that you may see God in his own light! As for me, I feel my duty to be one in which nothing can avail me but that same Spirit. Chrysostom used to wonder that any minister could be saved, seeing our responsibilities are so great; I am entirely of his mind. Pray for me that I may be faithful to men's souls.

Notice, that in each one of my texts the Lord declares that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but in each following passage the statement is stronger. The Lord puts it first as a matter of question. As if he were surprised that such a thing should be laid to his door, he appeals to man's own reason, and asks, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” Oh, souls, can you really think that God desires your damnation? Can you be so demented as soberly to believe such a calumny? Will such a theory hold water for a single minute? After all the goodness of God to multitudes of rebellious men, can you allow such a dark thought to linger near your mind, that God can have pleasure in men's being sinners, and ultimately destroying themselves by their iniquities? Your own common-sense must teach you that the good God is grieved to see men sin, that he would be glad to see men of a better mind, and that it is sad work to him to punish the finally obstinate and impenitent. He cries most plaintively “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.” He puts it here as a question of wonderment, that men should so grossly malign him as to think that the God of love could have any pleasure in men's perishing by their sins.

But then, in the next place, in our second text, God makes a positive assertion. Knowing the human heart, he foresaw that a question would not be enough to end this matter, for man would say, “He only asked the question, but he did not give a plain and positive statement to the contrary.” He gives us that clear assurance in our second text: “I have no

pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." When the Lord speaks he is to be believed, for he is God that cannot lie. We know that this speech of his is authentic; it comes to us by an inspired prophet, concerning whose call by God we entertain no doubt whatever. Let us, then, believe it heartily. If I were to state this as my own opinion, you might do as you pleased about believing it; but since God saith this, then we claim of you all, as God's creatures, that you believe your Creator, and that this statement be never questioned again. "Where the word of a king is, there is power,"—power, I trust, to silence all further debate upon the willingness of God to save.

But still, as if to end for ever the strange and ghastly supposition that God takes delight in human destruction, my third text seals the truth with the solemn oath of the Eternal. He lifts his hand to heaven, and swears; and because he can swear by no greater he swears by himself,—not by his temple, nor by his throne therein, nor by his angels, nor by anything outside of himself; but he sweareth by his own life. Jehovah that liveth for ever and ever saith, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." The man who dares to doubt the oath of God will be guilty of an arrogant presumption which I would not like to impute to one of you. Shall God be perjured? I tremble at having even suggested such a thing; and yet if you do not believe the Lord's own oath you will not only have made him a liar, but you will have denied the value of his oath when he swears by his own life. What he thus affirms must be true; let us bow before it, and never entertain a doubt about it. Most miserable of all men that breathe must they be who will dare to attack the veracity of God, when God to confirm their confidence doth put himself upon an oath. Let us hear the voice of the Lord in its majesty, like a peal of distant thunder,— "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

I invite your earnest consideration of this utterance thus given in the form of a question, an assertion, and a solemn oath.

I. And I notice, first, the assertion that GOD FINDS NO PLEASURE IN A SINNER'S DEATH. Really I feel ashamed to have to answer the cruel libel

which is here suggested; yet it is the English of many a man's doubts. He dares not come to God and trust him because he darkly dreams that God is a terrible being who does not wish to save him, who is unwilling to forgive him, unwilling to receive him into his favor. He suspects that God finds some kind of terrible delight in a soul's damnation. That cannot be. I need not disprove the falsehood. God swears to the contrary, and the falsehood vanishes like smoke. I will only bring forward certain evidence by which you who are still under the deadly influence of the falsehood may be delivered.

First, consider the great paucity of God's judgments among the sons of men. There are people who are always talking of judgments, but they are in error. If a theater is burnt down, or if a boat is upset on the Sabbath, they cry "Behold a judgment!" Yet churches and meetinghouses are burned, and missionaries are drowned when upon the Lord's own business. It is wrong to set down everything that happens as a judgment, for in so doing you will fall into the error of Job's friends, and condemn the innocent. The fact is there are but few acts of divine providence to individuals which can definitely be declared to be judgments. There are such things, but they are wonderfully rare in this life, considering the way in which the Lord is daily provoked by presumption and blasphemy. It was a judgment when Pharaoh's hosts were drowned in the Red Sea; that was a judgment when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down alive into the pit. There were judgments later on in the church of God when Ananias and Sapphira fell dead for lying against the Holy Ghost, and when Elymas the sorcerer was blinded for opposing Paul. Still, these are few; and in later days the authentic instances are equally rare. Does not the Lord himself say that "judgment is his strange work"? Among his own people there is a constant judgment of fatherly discipline, but the outer world is left to the gentle regime of mercy. This is the age of patience and long-suffering. If God had taken any pleasure in the death of the wicked, some of you who are now present would long ago have gone down to hell; but he hath not dealt with you after your sins, nor rewarded you according to your iniquities. If God were constantly dealing out judgment for lying, how many who are now here would by this time have received their portion in the burning lake! If judgments for Sabbath-breaking had been commonly dealt out, this city of London would have been destroyed

like Sodom and Gomorrah. But God reserveth his wrath till the day of wrath, for a while he winketh at man's obstinacy, for this is not the place of judgment, but of forbearance and hope. The fewness of visible deeds of judgment upon ungodly men in this life proves that God takes no delight in them.

And then, secondly, the length of God's long-suffering before the Day of Judgment itself comes proves how he wills not the death of men. The Lord spares many guilty men throughout three-score years and ten, bearing with their ill-manners in a way which ought to excite our loving gratitude. Youthful folly is succeeded by manhood's deliberate fault, and that, by the persistence of mature years, and yet the Lord remains patient! Some of you have rejected Christ after having heard the gospel for many years; you have stifled your conscience when it has cried against you, and you have done despite to the Spirit of God. You have rebelled against the light, and have committed greater and yet greater sin, but God has not cut you down. If he had found pleasure in your death, would he have suffered you to live so long? You have cumbered the ground, not two or three years, as the barren fig-tree did, but two or three scores of years you have stood fruitless in the vineyard of God; and yet he spares you! Some have gone beyond all this, for they have provoked God by their open unbelief, and by their abominable speeches against himself, his Son, and his people. They have tried to thrust their finger into the eye of God, they have spit in the face of the Well-beloved, and persecuted him in the person of his people. Yet the Lord has not killed them out of hand, as he might justly have done. Have you not heard his sword stirring in its scabbard? It would have leaped forth from its sheath if mercy had not thrust it back, and pleaded, "O thou sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!" It is only because his compassions fail not that you are favored with the loving invitations of the gospel. Only because of his infinite patience doth grace still wrestle with human sin and unbelief. Let us each one cry—

"Lord, and am I yet alive,
Not in torments, not in hell!
Still doth thy good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell?
Tell it unto sinners, tell,

I am, I am out of hell!"

Furthermore, remember the perfection of the character of God as the moral Ruler of the Universe. He is the Judge of all, and he must do right. Now, if a judge upon the bench were known to take delight in the punishment of offenders, he ought to be removed at once, for it would be clear that he was thoroughly unfit for his office. A man who would take pleasure in hanging, or imprisoning, would be of the foul breed of Judge Jeffreys, and other monsters, from whom I trust our bench is for ever purged. But if I heard it said that a judge never pronounced the sentence of death without tears, that when he came home from the court, and remembered that some had been banished for life by the sentences which he had been bound to deliver, he sat in a moody, unhappy state all the evening, I should say, "Yes, that is the kind of person to be a judge." Aversion to punishment is necessary to justice in a judge. Such an one is God, who taketh no pleasure either in sin, or in the punishment which is the consequence of sin; he hates both sin and its consequence, and only comes at last to heavy blows with men when everything else has failed. When the sinner must be condemned, or else the foundations of society would be out of course, then he delivers the terrible sentence, but even then it is with unfeigned reluctance, and he cries, "How can I give thee up?" The Great Judge of all seems to descend from the glory of his judgment-seat, and show his more familiar face to you in the text, as in effect he cries, "I have judged, and I have condemned, and I have punished; but, as I live, I find no pleasure in all this, my pleasure comes when men turn unto me and live."

If any further thoughts were necessary to correct your misbelief, I would mention the graciousness of his work in saving those who turn from their evil ways. The care which the Most High has taken to produce repentance, the alacrity with which he accepts it, and the abounding love manifested to returning prodigals, are all evidences indisputable that God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in their salvation. To prevent the death of the wicked the Lord devised a plan of salvation before all worlds; and those who accept that plan find that the Lord has provided for them a Substitute in the person of his own dear Son, who is

indeed his own self, and that in his person God himself has borne the penalty due to sin, that thus the law might be solemnly honored, and the divine justice vindicated. The Lord has gone up to the tree, and bled his life away thereon, that God might be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus: does not this prove his delight in salvation? The Holy Spirit comes on purpose to renew the heart, and take the stone away from it, that men may become tender and penitent—does not this show that God delights to save? The whole resources of the Godhead go forth with spontaneous delight for the salvation of those who turn from their sin. Yea, they go forth before men turn, to turn them that they may be turned. God is even found of them that sought him not, and he sends his grace to those who cried not after it. As if God were indignant that such a charge should be laid against him that he delighteth in the death of any, he preferred to die himself upon the tree rather than let a world of sinners sink to hell. To prove the desire of God that men should live, his Son abode for thirty years and more on this poor earth as a man among men, and his Holy Spirit has dwelt in men for all these centuries, bearing all the provocations of an erring and ungrateful people. God has proved himself in multitudes of ways to be not the Destroyer, but the Preserver of men. "He that is our God is the God of salvation." "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord."

Thus would I try to vindicate the ways of God to men. When men are to be tried for their lives, if their friends are able to do so, they come to them in prison, and say, "It is a very hopeful thing for you that it is not Judge So-and-So, who is terribly severe; you are to be tried before the kindest man on the bench." Many a prisoner has plucked up courage at such news; and oh, poor sinner, you who dare not trust God, let me chide you into hope by reminding you that Love sits embodied on the throne of judgment this day; and that he who must and will condemn you, if you turn not from your sins, nevertheless will find no pleasure in that condemnation, but will be loth to make bare the axe of execution. Will you not turn to him and live? Do not his compassions beckon you to make a full surrender, and find grace in his sight?

II. But now, secondly, GOD FINDS NO ALTERNATIVE BUT THAT MEN MUST TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS, OR DIE. "I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." It is one or the other: turn or burn. God, with all his love to men, cannot discover any third course: men cannot keep their sins and yet be saved. The sin must die or the sinner must die.

Be it known to you, first, that when God proclaims mercy to men upon this condition, that they turn from their ways, this proclamation is issued out of pure grace. As a matter of bare right, repentance does not bring mercy with it. Does a murderer receive pardon because he regrets his deed? Does a thief escape from prison because at last he comes to be sorry that he was not honest? Repentance makes no available amends for the evil which is done; the evil still remains, and the punishment must be executed. It is of grace, then, that I am permitted to say, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways." It is because at the back of it there is a great sacrifice; it is through an all-sufficient atone ment that repentance becomes acceptable. The Son of God has bled and died, and made expiation for sin; and now he is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins. To-day the word of the Lord is, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is not according to the law, which gives no space for repentance, but it is a pure matter of grace. God saves you, not because of any merit in your turning, but because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he has decreed to save all who turn from the paths of evil.

Note, next, that if there be no repentance men must be punished, for on any other theory there is an end of moral government. The worst thing that could happen to a world of men would be for God to say "I retract my law; I will neither reward virtue, nor punish iniquity; do as you like." Then the earth would be a hell indeed. The greatest enemy to civil government among men is the man who preaches universal salvation,—salvation apart from a change of heart and life. Such teachers are a danger to national order, they remove the foundation of the commonwealth. They practically say, "Do just as you like; it may make a slight difference to you for a little while, but it will soon be over, and villains and saints will share an equal heaven." Such talk is damnable! I can say no less. If there is to be a government at all, it is necessary that

sin should not go unpunished; leniency to the dishonest is cruelty to those whom they injure. To save the murderer is to kill the innocent. It were an evil day for heaven and earth if it could once be proven that God would reward the depraved in the same way as the sanctified: then would the foundation be removed, and what would the righteous do? A God who was not just would be a poor Ruler of the universe.

Yes, my hearers, sin must be punished; you must turn from it or die, because sin is its own punishment. When we talk to you of the fire that never can be quenched, and the worm that dieth not, we are supposed to mean those literal things, but indeed these are figures, figures representing something more terrible than themselves: the fire is the burning of a furious rebellion in the soul, and the worm is the torture of a never-dying conscience. Sin is hell. Within the bowels of disobedience there lieth a world of misery. God has so constituted us, and rightly so, that we cannot long be evil and happy; we must, if we go wrong, ultimately become wretched; and the more wrong we are, and the longer we continue in that wrong, the more assuredly are we heaping up sorrow for ourselves throughout eternity. Holiness and right produce happiness, but iniquity and wrong must, by a necessity of nature which never can be changed, produce tribulation and anguish. It must be so. Even the omnipotence of God cannot make an impenitent sinner happy. You must turn from sin, or turn to misery; you must either renounce your sins, or else renounce all hope of a blissful eternity. You cannot be married to Christ and heaven until you are divorced from sin and self.

I believe that every man's conscience bears witness to this if it be at all honest. There are consciences of a very curious kind about at this time—abortions, and not true consciences at all. I find men deliberately acting upon crooked policy, and yet they talk of truth and holiness. Yet every conscience that is not drunken with the mixed wine of pride and unbelief, will tell a man that when he does evil he cannot expect to be approved; that if he neglects to do good he cannot expect to have the same reward as if he had done the good,—that, in fact, there must be, in the nature of things, a penalty attached to crime. Conscience says as much as that, and now God himself, who taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked, puts it to you,—you must repent or perish. If you go on in your evil ways, you

must be lost. There must be a turning from sin, or the Most High God can never look upon you with favor. Do you hear this? Oh, that you would let it sink into your heart, and work repentance in you!

III. This leads me on to the third point, which is a joyful one: GOD FINDS PLEASURE IN MEN'S TURNING FROM SIN. Read the passage again:—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Among the highest of the divine joys is the pleasure of seeing a sinner turn from evil. God delights in those first thoughts which men have towards himself, when being careless heretofore they on a sudden begin to reflect upon their ways, and consider their condition before God. He looks with pleasure upon you who have aforetime been wild and thoughtless, who at last meditate upon Eternity, and weigh the future of sin and judgment. When you listen to that inviting word, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near," God is pleased to observe your attention. When you begin to feel, "I am sorry for my sin; oh, that I had never committed it!" he hears your sigh. When your heart is sick of sin, when you loathe all evil, and feel that though you cannot get away from it, yet you would if you could, then he looks down on you with pitying eye. When there is a new will springing up in your heart, by his good grace,—a will to obey and believe, then also the Father smiles. When he hears within you a moaning and a sighing after the Father's house and the Father's bosom; you cannot see him, but he is behind the wall listening to you. His hand is secretly putting your tears into his bottle, and his heart is feeling compassion for you. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Mark that last character: the man has only a little hope, but the Lord taketh pleasure in him. When yet the good work is only in the twilight, God is as pleased with it as watchmen are pleased with the first beams of morning light, a, he is more glad than they that watch for the morning. When at last you come to prayer, and begin to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," God is well pleased; for here he sees clear signs that you are coming to yourself and to him. His Spirit saith, "Behold, he prayeth!" and he takes this as a token for good. When you unfeignedly forsake sin God sees you do it, and he is so glad that his holy angels spy out his joy.

I am sure that God watches the struggles of those who endeavor to escape from old habits and evil ways. When you try to conquer vile thoughts, when at the end of the day you sit down and cry over the day's failures because you did not get as well through the day as you hoped to do, the Lord observes your desires and your lamentations. Just as a mother tenderly watches her child when it begins to walk, and smiles as she sees it toddling from chair to chair, and puts out her finger to help it, so doth God take pleasure in your early attempts after holiness, your longings to overcome sin, your sighings and cryings to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. God saith, "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms," and in the same way he is teaching you.

I will tell you what pleases him most of all, and that is when you come to his dear Son, and say, "Lord, something tells me that there is no hope for me, but I do not believe that voice. I read in thy word that thou wilt cast out none that come unto thee, and lo, I come! I am the biggest sinner that ever did come, but Lord, I believe thy promise; I am as unworthy as the devil himself, but Lord, thou dost not ask for worthiness, but only for childlike confidence. Cast me not away—I rest in thee." "Without faith it is impossible to please God," but it gives God a divine pleasure to see the first grain of mustard seed of faith in a poor, turning sinner's heart. Oh, I wish you would think of this, you that keep on condemning yourselves! When you write me those letters, full of self-condemnation, you please me; and if you please me, I am sure you much more please God, who is so much more tender than ever I can be, though I would fain try and humbly imitate him. How I wish I could bring you to trust my Lord this morning, and end those cruel doubts and fears!

"Artful doubts and reasonings be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree."

God's great convincing argument is his dying, bleeding Son. Oh, ye chief of sinners, turn to him, and God will have pleasure in your turning! Do you not know that all these thoughts towards him are breathed into you by his Spirit? All those regrets for sin, those desires after holiness, and specially those trustings in Christ, those hopings in his mercy, are all his work: they would never have been found in your soul if the Spirit had not

put them there. If I saw a fair flower growing on a dunghill, I should conclude that a gardener had been there some day or other, and had cast seed upon the heap. And when I see your soul commencing to pray, and hope, and trust, I say to myself, "God is there. The Holy Spirit has been at work there, or else there would not have been even that feeble trusting, and that faint hoping." Wherefore, be of good courage, you are drawing near to a gracious God.

During the rest of your life, when you go on fighting with sin, and when you consecrate yourself to Jesus, when you wash your Savior's feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head with the Magdalen, or when you break your alabaster-box of myrrh, and pour it on the Master's head with Mary, the Lord hath great pleasure in you for Jesus' sake. He taketh no pleasure in the groans and cries of hell, but in the repentance of sinners he hath joy. The fires of Gehenna give him no delight, but penitents smiting on their breasts, and believers beholding Christ with tearful eyes, are a royal spectacle to him. It must be so, he swears it, and it must be true. Cease your quibbling, and believe unto eternal life.

IV. Lastly, since he hath pleasure in men's turning to him, GOD THEREFORE EXHORTS TO IT, AND ADDS AN ARGUMENT. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" He perceives his poor creature standing with his back to him, looking to idols, looking to sinful pleasures, looking towards the city of destruction, and what does God say to him? He says, "Turn!" It is a very plain direction, is it not? "Turn," or "Right about face!" That is all. "I thought," saith one, "I was to feel so much anguish and so much agony." I should not wonder if you do feel it, but all that God says is, "Turn." You now face the wrong way; "Turn," and face the right way. That turning is true repentance. A changed life is of the essence of repentance, and that must spring from a changed heart, from a changed desire, from a changed will. God saith, "Turn ye." Oh, that you would hear and obey!

Notice how he puts it in the present tense—"Turn ye, turn ye," not to-morrow, but now. Nobody will be saved to-morrow: all who are saved, are saved to-day. "Now is the accepted time." "Turn ye." Oh, by the infinite

mercy of God, who will enable you to turn, I do pray you to turn from every evil, from every self-confidence, unto God. No turning but turning to God is worth having. If the Lord turn you, you will turn to himself, and to confidence alone in him, and to his service and his fear.

"Turn ye, turn ye." See, the Lord puts it twice. He must mean your good by these repeated directions. Suppose my man-servant was crossing yonder river, and I saw that he would soon be out of his depth, and so in great danger; suppose I cried out to him, "Stop! stop! If you go another inch you will be drowned. Turn back! Turn back!" Will anybody dare to say, "Mr. Spurgeon would feel pleasure if that man were drowned"? It would be a cruel cut. What a liar the man must be who would hint such a thing when I am urging my servant to turn and save his life! Would God plead with us to escape unless he honestly desired that we should escape? I trow not. Every sinner may be sure that God takes no pleasure in his death when he pleads with him in these unrivalled words, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" There is what the old divines used to call an ingemination, an inward groaning, a reduplication of pleading in these words, "Turn ye, turn ye." He pleads each time with more of emphasis. Will you not hear?

Then he finishes up with asking men to find a reason why they should die. There ought to be a weighty reason to induce a man to die. "Why will ye die?" This is an unanswerable question in reference to death eternal. Is there anything to be desired in eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power? Can there be any gain in losing your own soul? Can there be any profit in going away into everlasting punishment? Can there possibly be anything to be wished for and desired in being cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. O souls, be not unreasonable! Do not neglect this great salvation. It must be the most awful thing in all the world to die in your sins; why do you choose it? Do you desire shipwreck? Why hug that rocky shore, and tempt destruction? Will you eat the poisoned dainties of sin because they are sugared with a little present pleasure? In the end, the gall of bitterness will fill your bowels. I am no flatterer: I dare not be, for I love you, and would persuade you to turn unto the Lord. There is a flower which always turns to the sun; oh, that you would in the same manner

turn to God! Why turn away from him? "WHY?" is a little word, but how much it takes to answer its demands! WHY do you continue in sin? Why do you refuse to believe your Savior? Why will you provoke God? WHY will you die? Turn round and say, "Oh, God, I cannot bear to perish everlastingly, and therefore I cannot endure to live in sin. May thy rich grace help me!"

Oh, that you would trust in the Lord Jesus! Repose in him, and in his finished work, and all is well. Did I hear you say, "I will pray about it"? Better trust at once. Pray as much as you like after you have trusted, but what is the good of unbelieving prayers? "I will talk with a godly man after the service." I charge you first trust in Jesus. Go home alone, trusting in Jesus. "I should like to go into the enquiry-room." I dare say you would, but we are not willing to pander to popular superstition. We fear that in those rooms men are warmed into a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of enquiry-rooms turn out well. Go to your God at once, even where you now are. Cast yourself on Christ, now, at once; ere you stir an inch! In God's name I charge you, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

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Plenteous Redemption

With him is plenteous redemption. - Psalm 130:7

Redemption is a word which has gladdened many ears, when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one, and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow Christian subjects were caught by corsairs, and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be redemption. His cruel master, who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him; but a rumour came, that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow-countrymen; that the king himself upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the moors might return to their home. Truly I can suppose the hours run happily along, and the dreariness of their toil would be assuaged, when once that word "redemption" had sounded in their ears. So with our fellow-subjects and our fellow-men, who once were slaves in our West India settlements. We can well conceive that to their lips the word redemption must have been a very pleasing song. It must have been well nigh as sweet to them as the marriage peals to a youthful bridegroom, when they knew that the noble British nation would count down the twenty millions of their redemption money; that on a certain morning their fetters should be snapped asunder, so that they should no more go out to the plantations to sweat in the sun, driven by the whip, but they should call themselves their own, and none should be their masters to possess their flesh, and have property in their souls. You can conceive when the sun of that happy morn arose, when emancipation was proclaimed from sea to sea, and the whole land was at liberty, how joyful must their new-found freedom have appeared.

O there are many sonnets in that one word "redemption."

Now, ye who have sold for nought your glorious heritage; ye who have been carried bondslaves into Satan's dominion; ye who have worn the fetters of guilt and groaned under them; ye who have smarted beneath the lash of the law; what the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you to-night. It will cheer your souls and gladden your spirits, and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—"plenteous redemption."

This evening I shall consider the subject of redemption, and then notice the adjective appended to the word: "plenteous redemption."

I. First, then, we shall consider the subject of REDEMPTION.

I shall commence in this way, by asking, What has Christ redeemed? And in order to let you know what my views are upon this subject, I would announce at once what I conceive to be an authoritative doctrine, consistent with common sense, and declared to us by Scripture, namely, that whatever Christ has redeemed, Christ will most assuredly have. I start with that as an axiom, that whatever Christ has redeemed, Christ must have. I hold it to be repugnant to reason, and much more to revelation, that Christ should die to purchase what he never shall obtain; and I hold it to be little less than blasphemy to assert that the intention of our Saviour's death can ever be frustrated. Whatever was Christ's intention when he died—we lay it down as a very groundwork truth, which ought to be granted to us by every reasonable man—that Christ will most certainly gain. I cannot see how it can be that the intention of God in anything can be frustrated. We have always thought God to be so superior to creatures, that when he has once intended a thing, it must most assuredly be accomplished; and if I have that granted to me, I cannot for a moment allow you to imagine that Christ should shed his blood in vain; that he should die with an intention of doing something, and yet should not perform it; that he should die with a full intention in his heart, and with a promise on the part of God, that a certain thing should be given to him as a reward of his sufferings, and yet should fail to obtain it. I start with that; and I think that everyone who will weigh the

matter, and truly consider it, must see it to be so, that Christ's intention in his death must be fulfilled, and that the design of God, whatever that may be, must certainly be carried out. Well then, I believe that the efficacy of Christ's blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God. I believe that the efficacy of Christ's atonement is just as great as God meant it should be, and that what Christ redeemed is precisely what he meant to redeem, and exactly what the Father had decreed he should redeem. Therefore I cannot for one moment give any credence whatever to that doctrine which tells us that all men are redeemed. Some may hold it, as I know they do, and hold it very strongly, and even urge it as being a fundamental part of the doctrine of revelation. They are welcome to it; this is a land of liberty. Let them hold their views, but I must tell them solemnly my persuasion, that they cannot hold such doctrine if they do but well consider the matter; for if they once believe in universal redemption, they are driven to the blasphemous inference that God's intention is frustrated, and that Christ has not received what he died to procure. If, therefore, they can believe that, I will give them credit for being able to believe anything; and I shall not despair of seeing them landed at the Salt Lake, or in any other region where enthusiasm and credulity can flourish without the checks of ridicule or reason.

Starting, then, with this assumption, I beg now to tell you what I believe, according to sound doctrine and Scripture, Christ has really redeemed. His redemption is a very compendious redemption. He has redeemed many things; he has redeemed the souls of his people; he has redeemed the bodies of his people; he has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam; he has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which he will have the world at last.

Christ has redeemed the souls of all his people who shall ultimately be saved. To state it after the Calvinistic form, Christ has redeemed his elect; but since you do not know his elect until they are revealed, we will alter that, and say, Christ has redeemed all penitent souls; Christ has redeemed all believing souls; and Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy, seeing it is to be received, that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb's book of life, and are graciously

privileged by God to go at once to heaven, instead to toiling through this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb's book of life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way, and ultimately attain to heaven; these, I believe, were redeemed, and I must firmly and solemnly believe the souls of none other men were in that sense subjects of redemption. I do not hold the doctrine that Judas was redeemed; I could not conceive my Saviour bearing the punishment for Judas, or if so how could Judas be punished again. I could not conceive it possible that God should exact first at Christ's hands the penalty of his sin, and then at the sinner's hands again. I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed his blood in vain; and though I have read in the books of certain divines, that Christ's blood is fuel for the flames of hell, I have shuddered at the thought, and have cast it from me as being a dreadful assertion, perhaps worthy of those who made it, but utterly unsupported by the Word of God. The souls of God's people, whoever they may be, and they are a multitude that no man can number—and I could fondly hope they are all of you—are redeemed effectually. Briefly, they are redeemed in three ways. They are redeemed from the guilt of sin, from the punishment of sin, and from the power of sin. The souls of Christ's people have guilt on account of sin, until they are redeemed; but when once redemption is applied to my soul, my sins are every one of them from that moment for ever blotted out.

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified Lord,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through his blood."

The guilt of our sin is taken away by the redemption of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, the moment you believe in Christ, not only will you never be punished for that sin, but the very guilt of that sin is taken from you. You cease to be in God's sight any longer a guilty person; you are reckoned by God as a justified believer to have the righteousness of Christ about you; and therefore, you can say—to recal a verse which we often repeat -

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Saviour's blood's my full discharge;
At his dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Every sin, every particle of guilt, every atom of transgression, is by the redemption of Christ, effectually taken away from all the Lord's believing family.

And mark, next: not only the guilt, but the punishment of sin is taken away. In fact, when we cease to be guilty, we cease to be the objects of punishment altogether. Take away the guilt, the punishment is gone; but to make it more effectual, it is as it were written over again, that condemnation is taken away, as well as the sin for which we might be condemned. "There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." None of those who were redeemed by Christ can ever be damned; they can never be punished on account of sin, for Christ has suffered their punishment in their stead, and therefore, they cannot, unless God be unjust, be sued a second time for debts already paid. If Christ their ransom died, they cannot die; if he, their surety, paid their debt, then unto God's justice they owe no longer anything, for Christ hath paid it all. If he hath shed his blood, if he hath yielded up the ghost, if he hath "died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," how, then, would God be just, and yet the punisher of those whom he has already punished once in the person of Jesus Christ their Saviour? No beloved, through the plenteous redemption of Christ we are delivered from all punishment on account of sin, and from all guilt which we had incurred thereby.

Moreover the believing family of Christ—or rather, all for whom he died—are most effectually delivered from the power of sin. Oh! there are some who suck in the two truths I have been mentioning, as if they were honey; but they cannot endure this other point—Christ delivers us from the power of sin. Mark you this, then—we affirm it very strongly—no man can ever be redeemed from the guilt of sin, or from the punishment of sin, unless he be at the same time delivered from the power of sin. Unless he is made by God to hate his own sin, unless he is enabled to cast it to the

ground, unless he is made to abhor every evil way, and to cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, walking before him in the land of the living, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, such a man has no right to believe himself redeemed. If thou art still under the dominion of thy lusts, O wicked sinner, thou hast no right to think thyself a purchased heir of heaven. If thou canst be drunk, if thou canst swear, if thou canst curse God, if thou canst lie, if thou canst profane the Sabbath, if thou canst hate his people, if thou canst despise his Word, then thou hast no right whatever, any more than Satan in hell, to boast that thou art redeemed; for all the Lord's redeemed are in due time brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt, and they are taught the evil of sin, the horrible penalty of it and the desperate character of it in the sight of God. Art thou delivered from the power of sin, my hearer? Hast thou mortified it? Art thou dead unto it? Is it dead unto thee? Is it crucified unto thee, and thou unto it? Dost thou hate it as thou wouldst a viper? Dost thou tread on it as thou wouldst tread upon a serpent? If thou dost, albeit there be sins of frailty and infirmity, yet if thou hatest the sin of thy heart, if thou hast an unutterable enmity to it, take courage and comfort. The Lord hath redeemed thee from the guilt and penalty, and also from the power of sin. That is the first point of redemption. And hear me distinctly again, lest any should mistake me. I always like to preach so that there can be no mistake about it. I do not want so to preach that you will say in the judgment of charity, he could not have meant what he said. Now, I mean solemnly again to say what I have said—that I do believe that none others were redeemed than those who are or shall be redeemed from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, because I say again, it is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of Scripture, to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed, and that the lost in perdition were ever washed in the Saviour's blood, or that his blood was ever shed with an intention of saving them.

2. Now let us think of the second thing Christ has redeemed. Christ has redeemed the bodies of all his children. In that day when Christ redeemed our souls, he redeemed the tabernacles in which our souls dwell. At the same moment when the spirit was redeemed by blood, Christ who gave his human soul and his human body to death, purchased the body as well as the soul of every believer. You ask, then, in what way

redemption operates upon the body of the believer. I answer, first, it ensures it a resurrection. Those for whom Christ died, are ensured by his death a glorious resurrection. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive." All men are by virtue of the death of Christ quickened to a resurrection, but even here there is a special property of the elect, seeing that they are quickened to a blessed resurrection, whilst others are quickened only to a cursed resurrection; a resurrection of woe, a resurrection of unutterable anguish. O Christian, thy body is redeemed.

"What though thine inbred sins require
Thy flesh to see the dust,
Yet, as the Lord thy Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

What! though in a little time I shall slumber in the tomb, though worms devour this body, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and because he lives I know that in my flesh I shall see God. These eyes which soon shall be glazed in death, shall not be always closed in darkness; death shall be made to give back his prey; he shall restore all that he has taken. Lo, I see him there! He hath the bodies of the just locked up in his dungeons; they are wrapped up in their cerements, and he thinks they are secure: he has sealed their tombs and marked them for his own. O death! foolish death! thy caskets shall be rifled; thy storehouses shall be broken open. Lo, the morning is come! Christ hath descended from on high. I hear the trump, "Awake! Awake!" and lo! from their tombs, the righteous start; while death sits in confusion howling in vain, to find his empire all bereft of its subjects, to find all his dungeons rifled of their prey. "Precious shall their blood be in his sight;" precious shall be their bones! their very dust is blessed, and Christ shall raise them with himself. Think of that, ye that have lost friends—ye weeping children of sorrow! your redeemed friends shall live again. The very hands that grasped yours with a death clutch, shall grasp them in paradise; those very eyes that wept themselves away in tears, shall, with eye-strings that never shall be broken, wake up in the noon-day of felicity. That very frame which thou didst sorrowfully convey, with dread attire of funeral, to bury in its tomb—yes, that selfsame body, made like the image of Jesus Christ, spiritualized and changed, but nevertheless the selfsame body, shall rise again; and thou, if

thou art redeemed, shalt see it, for Christ has purchased it, and Christ shall not die in vain. Death will not have one bone of the righteous—nay, not a particle of their dust—nay, not a hair of their heads. It shall all come back. Christ has purchased all our body, and the whole body shall be completed, and united for ever in heaven with the glorified soul. The bodies of the righteous are redeemed, and redeemed for eternal happiness.

3. In the next place, all the possessions of the righteous which were lost in Adam are redeemed. Adam! where art thou? I have a controversy with thee, man, for I have lost much by thee. Come thou hither. Adam! thou seest what thou art now, tell me what thou once wast; then I shall know what I have lost by thee, and then I shall be able to thank my Master that all thou didst lose he has freely bought back to all believers. What didst thou lose? "Alas!" cries Adam, "I had a crown once; I was king of all the world; the beasts crouched at my feet and did me reverence; God made me, that I might have supreme command over the cattle upon the hills, and over all fowls of the air; but I lost my crown. I had a mitre once," said Adam, "for I was a priest to God, and oftentimes in the morning did I climb the hills, and sing sweet orisons of praise to him that made me. My censer of praise hath often smoked with incense, and my voice has been sweet with praise.

'These are thy glorious works, parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then;'

Oft have I bidden misty exhalations, sun, and moon, and stars, sing to his praise; daily have I bidden the herds upon the hills low out his glories, and the lions roar his honours; nightly have I told the stars to shine it out, and the little flowers to blossom it forth: but ah! I lost my mitre, and I, who was once a priest to God, ceased any longer to be his holy servant." Ah! Adam, thou hast lost me much; but yonder I see my Saviour; he takes his crown off his head, that he may put a crown on my head; and he puts a mitre on his head, to be a priest, that he may put a mitre on my head too, and on the head of all his people; for, as we have just been singing,

"Thou hast redeemed our souls with blood,
Hast set the prisoners free;
Hast made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with thee."

Just what Adam lost: the kingship and the priesthood of Christ, is won for all his believing people. And what else didst thou lose, Adam? "Why, I lost paradise." Hush, man! say nothing upon that; for Christ hath bought me a paradise worth ten thousand such Edens as thine. So we can well forgive thee that. And what else didst thou lose? "Why, I lost the image of my Maker." Ah! hush, Adam! In Jesus christ we have something more than that; for we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and sure that is even better than the image of the Maker, for it is the very dress and robe that the Maker wore. So, Adam, all that thou hast lost I have again. Christ has redeemed all that we sold for nought. I, who have sold for nought a heritage divine, shall have it back unbought,—the gift of love, says Christ, e'en mine. Oh! hear it, then! The trump of Jubilee is blown; Christ hath redeemed the lost possessions of his people.

4. And now I come to the last thing that Christ has redeemed, though not the last point of the discourse. Christ has redeemed this world. "Well, now," says one, "that is strange, sir; you are going to contradict yourself flatly." Stop a moment. Understand what I mean by the world, if you please. We do not mean every man, in it; we never pretended such a thing. But I will tell you how Christ has redeemed the world. When Adam fell God cursed the world with barrenness. "Thorns also and briars shall it bring forth unto thee, and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." God cursed the earth. When Christ came into the world they twisted a crown made of the cursed thorn, and they put that on his head, and made him king of the curse; and in that day he purchased the redemption of the world from its curse; and it is my very belief, and I think it is warranted by Scripture, that when Christ shall come a second time, this world will become everywhere as fertile as the garden of Paradise used to be. I believe that Sahara, the literal desert, shall one day blossom like Sharon, and rejoice like the garden of the Lord. I do not conceive that this poor world is to be a forlorn planetary wanderer for ever; I believe that she is yet to be clothed with verdure, such as she once wore. We have evidences

in the beds of coal underneath the earth, that this world was once much more fertile than it is now. Gigantic trees once spread their mighty arms, and I had almost said one arm of a tree in that day would have builded half a forest for us now. Then mighty creatures, far different from ours, stalked through the earth; and I believe firmly that a luxuriant vegetation, such as this world once knew shall be restored to us, and that we shall see again a garden such as we have not known. No more cursed with blight and mildew, with no more blast and withering, we shall see a land like heaven itself -

"Where everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers."

When Christ cometh he shall do even this.

In the day of the fall, too, it is currently believed that animals for the first time received their ferocious temperament, and began to fall on each other; of this we are not sure; but if I read Scripture rightly, I find that the lion shall lie down with the kid, and that the leopard shall eat straw like the ox, and that the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. I do believe that in millennial years that are coming, and coming soon, there shall be known no more devouring lions, no blood-thirsty tigers, no creatures that shall devour their kind. God shall restore to us again, and even to the beasts of the field, the blessing which Adam lost.

And, my friends, there is a worse curse than that which has fallen on this world. It is the curse of ignorance and sin: that, too, is to be removed. Seest thou yonder planet? It is whirling along through space—bright, bright and glorious. Hearest thou the morning stars sing together, because this new sister of theirs is made? That is the earth; she is bright now. Stay! Didst remark that shadow sweep across her? What caused it? The palnet is dimmed, and on her face there lies a sorrowful shadow. I am speaking, of course, metaphorically. See there the planet; she glides along in ten-fold night; scarce doth a speck of light irradiate her. Mark again, the day is not come, when that planet shall renew her glory, but it is hastening amain. As the serpent slips its slough, and leaves it behind it in the valley, so yon planet hath slopped its coulds, and shone forth bright

as it was before. Do you ask who hath done it? Who hath cleared away the mist? Who hath taken away the darkness? Who hath removed the clouds? "I have done it," says Christ, the sun of righteousness; "I have scattered darkness, and made that world bright again." Lo, I see a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. To explain myself, lest I should be mistaken, I mean this. This world is now covered with sin, ignorance, mistake, idolatry, and crime; the day is coming when the last drop of blood shall be drunk by the sword; it shall be no more intoxicated with blood; God shall make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The day is coming—oh that it were now!—when the feet of Christ shall tread this earth. Then down shall go idols from their thrones; down superstitions from their pinnacles; then slavery shall cease; then crime shall end; then peace shall spread its halcyon wings over all the world; and then shall you know that Christ hath died for the world, and that Christ hath won it. "The whole creation," says Paul, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;" waiting for what? "waiting for the redemption;" and by the redemption, I understand what I have just explained to you, that this world shall be washed of all her sin; her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away and this world shall be as fair as when God first struck her from his mind; as when, like a glowing spark, smitten from the anvil by the eternal hammer she first flashed in her orbit. This Christ has redeemed; this, Christ shall, and most assuredly must have.

II. And now, a word or two concerning the last thought—"PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION."

It is plenteous enough, if you consider what I have already told you Christ has bought. Sure I should have made it no more plenteous, if I had lied against my conscience, and told you that he had bought every man; for of what avail is it that I am bought with blood, if I am lost? Of what use is it to me that Christ has died for me, if I yet sink in the flames of hell? How will that glorify Christ, that he hath redeemed me, and yet failed in his intentions? Surely it is more to his honour to believe, that according to his immutable, sovereign, and all-wise will, he laid the foundation as wide as he intended the structure to be, and then made it just according to his will. Nevertheless, it is "plenteous redemption." Very briefly, lend me

your ears just a moment.

It is "plenteous," when we consider the millions that have been redeemed. Think if ye can, how great that host who have already "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and then think how many now with weary feet are plodding their way to Paradise, all of them redeemed. They all shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Is it not "plenteous redemption," when you reflect that it is a "multitude that no man can number" that will be gathered in? Let us close that by saying, "And why not you?" If so many are redeemed, why should not you be? Why should you not seek for mercy on the strength of that, knowing that all who seek will most assuredly receive, for they would not have sought unless it had been prepared for them?

It is "plenteous," again, if we consider the sins of all who are redeemed. However great the sins of any redeemed soul, this redemption is enough to cover it all to wash it all away -

"What though your numerous sins exceed
The stars that spread the skies,
And aiming at th' eternal throne,
Like pointed mountains rise;"

Yet this plenteous redemption can take all your sins away. They are no greater than Christ foresaw, and vowed to remove. Therefore, I beseech you, fly to Jesus, believing that however great your guilt, his atonement is great enough for all who come to him, and therefore you may safely come.

Remember, again, that this "plenteous redemption" is plenteous, because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your wants are almost infinite; but this atonement is quite so. Your troubles are almost unutterable; but this atonement is quite unutterable. Your needs you can scarce tell; but this redemption I know you cannot tell. Believe, then, that it is "plenteous redemption." O believing sinner, what a sweet comfort it is for you, that there is "plenteous redemption," and that you have a lot in it. You will most certainly be brought safely home, by Jesu's grace. Are you seeking Christ? Or rather, do you know yourselves to be sinners? If

you do, I have authority from God to say to every one who will confess his sins, that Christ has redeemed him. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Are you a sinner? I do not mean a sham sinner; there are lots of them about, but I have no gospel to preach to them just now. I do not mean one of those hypocritical sinners, who cry, "Yes, I am a sinner,"—who are sinners out of compliment, and do not mean it. I will preach another thing to you: I will preach against your self-righteousness another day; but I shall not preach anything to you just now about Christ, for he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But are you a sinner, in the bona fide sense of the word? Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined, undone sinner? Then in God's name I urge you to believe this—that Christ has died to save you; for as sure as ever he has revealed to you your guilty by the Holy Ghost, he will not leave you till he has revealed to you your pardon by his only Son. If you know your lost estate, you shall soon know your glorious estate. Believe in Jesus now; then thou art saved, and thou mayest go away happy,—blest beyond what kings could dream. Believe that since thou art a sinner, Christ hath redeemed thee—that just because thou knowest thyself to be undone, guilty, lost and ruined, thou hast this night a right, a privilege, and a title, to bathe in the fountain filled with blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins." Believe that, and then thou shalt know the meaning of this text—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement." God dismiss you with a blessing, for Jesus' sake!

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A Poor Man's Cry, And What Came Of It

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. - Psalm 34:6

In the morning of last Lord's Day we labored to bring sinners to their

God; and the Lord graciously made the Word effectual. We gave voice to the invitation to return, and we entreated men to take with them words, and turn unto the Lord. God's people found it a happy time. It is a very singular fact, but an undoubted one, that the simple gospel which saves sinners also feeds saints. Saints are never better pleased than when they hear those first truths which instruct sinners in the way to God. The Lord be thanked that it is so!

On this occasion I want to speak of what happens to those who do return to God; because many have newly been brought, through mighty grace. Some of them I have seen; and I have rejoiced over them with exceeding great joy. They tell me that they did distinctly lay hold on eternal life last Sabbath day; and they are clear about what it means. They came out of darkness into his marvellous light; they knew it, and could not resist the impulse at once to tell those with whom they sat in the pews, that God had brought them up out of the horrible pit, and had set their feet upon the rock of salvation. For this joyful reason, I think we will go a step further, and talk of the happiness of those who have come back to their Father, have confessed sin, have accepted the great sacrifice, and have found peace with God. It is my heart's desire that those sheep who have come into the fold may be the means of inducing others to enter. You know how one sheep leads another; and perhaps when some come to Christ, many others will follow. When one of our professional beggars knocks at a door, and gets well received, he is very apt to send another. I have heard that vagrants make certain marks near the door by way of telling others of the confraternity which are good houses to call at. If you want many beggars at your house, feed one and another of them well, and birds of the same feather will flock to you. Perhaps while I am telling how Christ has received poor needy ones, others may pluck up courage and say, "We will go also." If they try it, they may be sure of receiving the same generous welcome as others have done; for our Lord keeps open house for coming sinners. He has distinctly said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." That does not refer merely to those who have come, but to those who are coming; and to you, dear hearers, who will come at this hour. Jesus bids every hungry and thirsty soul come to him at once, and be satisfied from his fullness. Our text tells how they have sped who have cried to God. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard

him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

I. The first lesson we shall learn, this morning, is upon THE NATURE AND THE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER: This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him."

"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God ordains to give."

He gives us prayer as a basket, and then he pours the blessings of his grace into it. We shall learn from the text much about prayer.

Evidently it is a dealing with the Lord. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He cried to the Lord that the Lord might hear him. His prayer was not intended for men, nor was it mainly meant to be a relief to his own mind; it was intended for the ear of God, and it went where it was intended to go. The arrow of desire was shot towards heaven. It reached the mark it was designed to reach. This poor man cried to the Lord; and the Lord is the right person to whom to appeal in prayer. I am afraid that many public prayers are a performance to please the congregation; and when they are mixed with music, it is hoped that they will influence men of taste. Even private prayer is not always directed to God as it should be. I have heard ignorant people sometimes use the expression, "The minister came and prayed to me." That is a great mistake. We do not pray to you; we pray to God. We pray for you, but not to you. Yet I am afraid that the blunder reveals a mournfully dark state of mind as to what prayer is and does. I fear that many prayers are meant for the ears of men, or have no meaning at all beyond being regarded as a sort of incantation which may mysteriously benefit the utterer of them. Believe me, to repeat good words is a small matter: to go over the best composed forms of devotion will be useless, except the heart rises into real dealings with God. You must speak with God, and plead with him. I often question those who come to join the church in this fashion: "You say there is a great difference in you: is there a difference in your prayers"? I very frequently get such an answer as this: "Yes, sir; I now pray to God. I hope that he hears me. I know that he is near, and I speak to him; whereas before I did not seem to care whether God was there or not. I said my

prayer by rote, and it did not seem like speaking to anybody."

Prayer is dealing with God. The best prayer is that which comes to closest grips with the God of mercy. Prayer is to ask of God, as a child asks of its father, or as a friend makes request to his friend. O my hearer, thou hast forgotten God; thou hast lived without speaking to him: this has been the case for years. Is not this a wrong state of things? Thou art now in need: come and spread thy case before thy God; ask him to help thee. Thou needest to be saved; beg of him to save thee. Let thy prayer reach from thine heart to the throne of God: else, however long it may be, it will not reach far enough to bless thee.

From this psalm we learn that prayer takes various shapes. Notice, in the fourth verse, David writes, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me." Seeking is prayer. When you cannot get to God, when you feel as if you had lost sight of him, and could not find him, your seeking is prayer. "I sought the Lord, and he heard me"; he heard me seeking him; heard me feeling after him in the dark; heard me running up and down if haply I might find him. To search after the Lord is prayer such as God hears. If your prayer is no better than a seeking after one you cannot as yet find, the Lord will hear it. In the next verse David puts it, "They looked unto him." Then a looking unto God is a prayer. Often the very best prayer is a look towards God—a look which says, "Lord, I believe thee: I trust thee; be pleased to show thyself to me." If there is "life in a look," then there is the breath of life in a look, and prayer is that breath. If you cannot find words, it is oftentimes a very blessed thing to sit still, and look towards the hills whence cometh our help. I sometimes feel that I cannot express my desires; and at other seasons I do not know my own desires, except that I long for God; in such a case I sit still and look up. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." A look is a choice prayer, if it is the look of a tearful eye towards a bleeding Saviour.

We might describe prayer in many other ways; as for instance, in this one—"O taste and see that the Lord is good," which you meet with in verse 8. Tasting is a high kind of prayer; for it ventures to take what it asks for. When we come boldly to the throne of grace, we have a taste of grace in the act of coming. That is a very acceptable prayer which boldly ventures

to believe that it has the petition which it has asked of God. Believe that God has heard thee, and thou art heard. Take the good thy God provides thee: take it to thyself boldly, and fear not. Come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace, that you may find and receive. Lay hold upon the blessing which you need so much, and it will be neither robbery nor presumption.

But frequently according to our text, prayer is best described as a cry. What means this? "This poor man cried." This poor man did not make a grand oration; he took to crying. He was short: it was only a cry. In great pain a man will cry out; he cannot help it, even if he would. A cry is short, but it is not sweet. It is intense, and painful, and it cannot be silenced. We cry because we must cry. This poor man cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is not a long collect, but it collects a great deal of meaning into a few words. That was a short cry, "Lord, save, or I perish"; and that other, "Lord, help me." "Save, Lord," is a notable cry, and so is "Lord remember me." Many prevailing prayers are like cries because they are brief, sharp, and uncontrollable. A cry is not only brief, but bitter. A cry is a sorrowful thing; it is the language of pain. It would be hard for me to stand here and imitate a cry. No; a cry is not artificial, but a natural production: it is not from the lips, but from the soul, that a man cries. A cry, attended with a flood of tears, a bitter wail, a deep-fetched sigh—these are prayers that enter into the ears of the Host High. O penitent, the more thou sorrowest in thy prayer, the more wings thy prayer has towards God! A cry is a brief thing, and a bitter thing. A cry has in it much meaning, and no music. You cannot set a cry to music. The sound grates on the ear, it rasps the heart, it startles, and it grieves the minds of those who hear it. Cries are not for musicians, but for mourners.

Can you expound a child's cry? It is pain felt, a desire for relief naturally expressed, a longing forcing itself into sound; it is a plea, a prayer, a complaint, a demand. It cannot wait, it brooks no delay, it never puts off its request till to-morrow. A cry seems to say, "Help me now! I cannot bear it any longer. Come, O come, to my relief!" When a man cries, he never thinks of the pitch of his voice; but he cries out as he can, out of the depths of his soul. Oh, for more of such praying!

A cry is a simple thing. The first thing a new-born child does is to cry; and he usually does plenty of it for years after. You do not need to teach children to cry: it is the cry of nature in distress. I never heard of a class at a Board School to teach babes to cry. All children can cry; even those who are without their reasoning faculties can cry. Yea, even the beast and the bird can cry. If prayer be a cry, it is clear that it is one of the simplest acts of the mind. O my hearer, whatever thou needest, pray for it in the way which thy awakened heart suggests to thee. God loves natural expressions when we come before him. Not that which is fine, but that which is on fire, he loves. Not that which is dressed up, but that which leaps out of the soul just as it is born in the heart, he delights to receive. This poor man did not do anything grand, but from his soul he cried.

A cry is as sincere as it is simple. Prayer is not the mimicry of a cry, but the real thing. You need not ask a man or woman, when crying, "Do you mean it?" Could they cry else? A true cry is the product of a real pain, and the expression of a real want; and therefore it is a real thing. Dear souls, if you do not know how to pray, cry. Cry because you cannot pray. Cry because you are lost by nature and by practice, and will soon be lost for ever unless grace prevent. Cry with a strong desire to be saved from sin, and to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus. Pour out your hearts like water before the Lord. Just as a man takes a pitcher, and turns it upside down, and pours the water all out, so turn your hearts upside down, and let them flow out until the last dreg has run away. "Ye people, pour out your heart before him." Such an outpouring of heart will be a cry and a prayer.

But now note, further, concerning the nature and excellence of prayer, that prayer is heard in heaven. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He was all alone, so that nobody else heard him; but the Lord heard him: yes, the Lord, even Jehovah of hosts, the All glorious, bowed his ear to him. In God's ear the songs of angels are continually resounding; yea, he heareth all the voices of all the creatures he has made: yet he stooped from his eternal glory, and gave attention to the poor man's cry. Never imaging that a praying heart ever pleads to a deaf God; or that God is so far removed from men that he takes no note of their desires. God does hear prayer: he does grant the desires and requests of lowly men. I do not

think that we shall ever pray in downright earnest unless we believe that God hears. I have been told that prayer is an excellent devotional exercise, highly satisfying and useful, but that there its result ends; for we cannot imagine that the Infinite Mind can be moved by the cries of men. Do not believe so gross a falsehood, or you will soon cease to pray. No man will pray for the mere love of the act, when he has arrived at the opinion that there is no good in it so far as God is concerned. Brethren, amidst all the innumerable goings forth of divine power the Lord never ceases to listen to the cries of those who seek his face. It is always true: "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth." Wonderful fact this! Truly marvelous! It might surpass our faith if it were not written in his Word, and experienced in our lives. Many of us know that the Lord has heard us. Doubt about this matter has long been buried under a pyramid of evidence. We have often come from the throne of grace as sure that God had heard us as we were sure that we had prayed; in fact, our doubts all lie around our own praying, and do not touch our assurance that God hears true prayer. The abounding answers to our supplications have been proofs positive that prayer climbs above the region of earth and time, and touches God and his infinity. Yes, it is still the case that the Lord hearkens to the voice of a man. It is still Jehovah's special title—the God that heareth prayer. The Lord will hear your prayer, my hearer, even if you cannot put it into words: he has an ear for thoughts, and sighs, and longings. A wordless prayer is not silent to him. God reads the intents of the heart, and cares more for these than for the syllables of the lips. This poor man could not speak: his heart was so full that he could only cry; but Jehovah heard him.

Once more, prayer has this excellence: that it wins answers from God. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." God does put forth power in answer to prayer. I know the difficulties which are started concerning this. There is a fixed purpose, from which God does not depart; but this is by no means inconsistent with the prevalence of prayer; for the God who decrees to give us blessings has also decreed that we shall ask for them. The prayer and the providence are alike appointed by the predestination of God. Our praying is the shadow of God's giving. When he is about to bestow a blessing he first of all works in us earnest prayer for it. God moves us to pray; we pray; God hears, and answers:

this is the process of grace. The Lord does in very deed answer prayer. I read yesterday certain notes taken by an interviewer, who called on me some years ago. He reports that he said to me, "Then you have not modified your views in any way as to the efficacy of prayer?" In his description he says—"Mr. Spurgeon laughed, and replied, Only in my faith growing far stronger and firmer than ever. It is not a matter of faith with me, but of knowledge and every-day experience. I am constantly witnessing the most unmistakable instances of answers to prayer. My whole life is made up of them. To me they are so familiar as to cease to excite my surprise; but to many they would seem marvelous, no doubt. Why, I could no more doubt the efficacy of prayer than I could disbelieve in the law of gravitation. The one is as much a fact as the other, constantly verified every day of my life. The interviewer reported me correctly, and I would repeat the testimony. I could speak with even deeper confidence to-day. More than forty years I have tried my Master's promise at the mercy-seat, and I have never yet met with a repulse from him. In the name of Jesus I have asked and received; save only when I have asked amiss. It is true I have had to wait, because my time was ill-judged, and God's time was far better; but delays are not denials. Never has the Lord said to me, or to any of the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face" in vain. If I were put into the witness-box, and knew that I should be cross-examined by the keenest of lawyers, I should not hesitate to bear my testimony, that by many infallible proofs the Lord has proved to me that he heareth prayer. But, my hearers, if you need evidence on this point, try it yourselves. Remember, the Lord has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Here is a fair test. Make an honest experiment concerning it. I have no doubt that at this moment I could call upon hundreds in this congregation who would not refuse to stand up and say that the Lord heareth prayer. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." I might call on many a man and woman here who could solemnly declare that they cried, and the Lord heard them." Are you at this service, Hannah? You were here the other morning with a sorrowful spirit; and now I see by your countenance that the Lord has smiled upon you, and your soul is magnifying his name. Prayer has done this for you. Is it not so? God answers the supplications of his believing people; and of this we are witnesses. Thus have I set the matter before you; and I would remind you of the words of the Lord

Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Thus have we been instructed by our text as to the nature and excellence of prayer.

II. Let us move on, and note, secondly, that our text leads us to think upon THE RICHNESS AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE. Great grace is revealed in this statement—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

You will see the richness and the freeness of grace, when you consider the character of the man who prayed: "this poor man cried." Who was he? He was a poor man; how terribly poor I cannot tell you. There are plenty of poor men about. If you advertised for a poor man in London, you might soon find more than you could count in twelve months: the supply is unlimited, although the distinction is by no means highly coveted. No man chooses to be poor.

David, on the occasion which suggested this psalm, was so poor that he had to beg bread of the Lord's priests; and though he was a soldier he had to borrow a sword from their treasures. He had no house, no home; no calling, no income, no country, no safes, for his life. He was poor indeed who wrote these words—"This poor man cried." Why should men imagine that poverty is an injury to prayer? Will the Lord care about the age of your coat? What is it to him that you have a shallow pocket, and a scanty cupboard? "This poor man cried." Does God hear poor men? Ay, that he does, the poorest of the poor, the poor in spirit. He hears those who are so poor that even hope has dropped out of their box; and that is the last thing to go.

This poor man was also a troubled man, for the text speaks of "all his troubles"—a great "all," I warrant you. He did not know what to do; he could not see his way in his blizzard of trials; he was surrounded with difficulties, as with an iron net, and he could not hope for a deliverer. He was a troubled man, and because he was a troubled man he cried. People wondered what he cried about, but they would not have done so had they

known his inward griefs. His old companions thought he had gone out of his mind: they said religion had turned his brain, and they kept out of his way. This poor man cried, and no man noticed him because he was so poor and so wretched; but "the Lord heard him." He does not turn away from the doleful and the desolate: he takes delight in coming to them, and binding up their wounds.

This poor man was a mournful man: a man altogether broken down, a man who could not hold his head up; he blushed and was ashamed, both before God and man. All he did, when alone, was to cry; and if one watched him closely in company, the tears might be seen forcing their way from his heart through the eye, and down the cheek. This poor man cried: for he was so feeble, so faint, so forlorn, that he could not do otherwise; but "the Lord heard him." The Lord so heard him as to make that poor man rich in grace.

I feel sure, also, that "this poor man" was a strange fellow. What did he want with crying when others were laughing? It is not a pleasant nor a usual sight to see strong men weep. Some men weep because they are very tender-hearted; but many others do so, I am persuaded, because they have been given to drink. This man was given to inward crying: he cried day and night unto the Lord because of a secret wound which never ceased to bleed. People could not make him out, and they came to despise him, or at least to be shy of him: but "the Lord heard him."

He was also a changed man. Why, he used to come in of an evening, and to be a thoroughly jolly companion; but now he looks as miserable as an owl, and nobody desires his company, he is such a kill-joy. "Poor miserable creature!" people say. Even his wife sighs and says, "What has become of my poor dear husband?" He was a poor man, and as sad and singular as he was poor. He sought out secret places, and there he sighed and cried before the Lord.

But yet he was a hopeful man. There must have been some hope in him, though he could not perceive it; for people do not cry for help unless they have some hope that they will be heard. Despair is dumb: where there is a cry of prayer there is a crumb of hope. A cry is a signal of distress, and

people will not hoist a rag on a pole unless they have a little hope that a passing vessel may spy it out, and come to their rescue. There is not only hope for a man, but hope in a man as long as he can pray; ay, as long as he can cry. If you do but long, and look, and seek, and sigh after God, you are one of those poor men whom I have tried to describe, and good will come to you. I can see that poor man now. I used to know him, for he was born in my native town, and he went to the school where I was a scholar. He was hardly a man, but only a youth; and then I used to sleep with him, or rather to lie awake at nights with him, and hear him groan. He has prayed in my hearing many a time, and very poor praying it was; but he meant what he said. I have been with him in the fields, and he used to tell me that he was such a vile creature that he feared that he must be cast into hell for ever; he was afraid that he was not one of the chosen and redeemed people of God, and that he should never be able to believe in Jesus. I knew him when he gave himself up for lost. I know him now. I see him whenever I use the looking-glass, and I must say on his behalf this morning—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Oh, the freeness and the richness of grace, that God should hear nobodies, that God should look upon those who are less than the least of all saints, and the very chief of sinners!

If you desire further to see the richness and freeness of grace, by the help of the Holy Spirit, I beg you to remember the character of the God to whom this poor man cried. He who prayed was poor, and his prayer was poor; but he did not pray to a poor God. This poor man was powerless; but he did not cry to a feeble God. This poor man was empty; but he went to God's fullness. He was unworthy; but he appealed to God's mercy. Our God delighteth in mercy; he waiteth to be gracious; he takes pleasure in blessing the weary sons of men. This poor man cried to that Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost. O my friend, never mind how poor you are: you are not crying to your own poor self. Remember, you have not to draw water out of your own emptiness; you come to God, who is the fountain of grace. Your merit is poverty itself; but the mercies of God are unsearchable riches. The power by which you are to be saved lies not in your own spirit, but in the Holy Spirit. Therefore cry with great hope, and believe that God is as great in his grace as in his power and wisdom.

While we are thinking of the freeness and richness of this grace in the text, I would have you notice the character of the blessing. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He gave him salvation from the whole of his troubles. His sins were his great troubles; the Lord saved him out of them all through the atoning sacrifice. The effects of sin were another set of grievous troubles to him; the Lord saved him out of them all by the renewal of the Holy Ghost. He had fallen into a perilous position by his own fault, and troubles came upon him thick and heavy; but in answer to prayer the Lord made a way of escape for him, out of them all, and led him into peace. He had troubles without and within, troubles in the family and in the world, and he felt ready to perish because of them; but the Lord delivered him out of them all. Note that word "all"; it is large and comprehensive. If you will kindly look at the psalm, you will see the range of this delightful deliverance. We read in verse 4: "He delivered me from all my fears." Sometimes our fears are more painful than our troubles. We suffer more in dreading troubles than in enduring them; but prayer banishes such fears. We see that all shame was removed in the same way: "They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Happy men; for the shame of their sin is gone! Their shame and their fears went when their prayers were heard. They were no longer distressed about the past, and no longer under apprehension of wrath in the future: he saved them out of all their fears." If you will look further on you will find that the Lord saved them out of all their wants (verse 9): "There is no want to them that fear him"; "they that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing." Oh, to be saved from the pinch of dire necessity within the soul—saved from all fear, all shame, all trouble, and then from all want! This is a grand salvation! But this is not all; for this poor man was saved from all dangers (verse 20): "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." He saved him out of all real peril. And, lastly, he saved him from all apprehension of desertion—"None of them that trust in him shall be desolate." The salvation that God gives in answer to prayer is a perfect one; and he gives it freely, gives it in answer to a poor man's cry, without money or merit. How complete is God's deliverance!

Did you ever notice how perfect was the answer which God gave to the prayer of Moses when he cried to God for Pharaoh in the day of the

plagues? When the locusts covered the land, Moses prayed, and we read, "There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt" (Exodus 10:19). So was it with the frogs, and even with the flies: "He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one." Pharaoh could not have found a specimen of locust, or fly, in all Egypt. So you may be devoured with troubles as the land by locusts, and they may be croaking in your ears like the frogs in the bed-chambers of Egypt; but when the Lord bids them go," they will depart from you, and you will be in quiet. He who puts away as a cloud your iniquities, and as a thick cloud your sins, will soon drive away your troubles like a swarm of buzzing flies. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Is not this free grace? Is not this rich mercy?

And, once more, think that this all came through a cry. A cry is all that the poor man brought. He did not go through a long performance; he did not perform a laborious set of ceremonies—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." What can be simpler? Oh, you think you want a priest, do you?—a priest on whom a bishop has laid his hands? Or you dream that you must go to a holy place, a pile of stones put together in architectural form. Possibly you even dream that you must pine all through Lent, and not expect joy till you reach Easter. What folly is all this! You have but to cry, and the Lord will hear you. There is but one priest—even the Lord Jesus. There is but one holy place—his glorious person. There is but one holy time, and that is to-day. When the Spirit of God works a cry in the heart of the poor man, that cry climbs up to heaven by the way of Jacob's ladder, and at the same instant mercy comes down by the same ladder. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that ladder which joins earth and heaven together; so that our prayers go up to heaven, and God's mercy comes down to us on earth. Oh, that men would be content with the blessedly simple apparatus of grace: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"!

III. I must be brief on my last head; but it is a very important one. Consider **THE NEED AND THE USEFULNESS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY**. It is David who says, "This poor man cried." You see he tells the story: he writes it down in a book for us to read; he weaves it into a psalm for us to sing.

Testimony is a weighty thing for the persuasion and winning of men; but it must be of the right kind. It should be personal, concerning things which you yourself know: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Never mind if you should be charged with being egotistical. That is a blessed egoism which dares to stand out and bear bold witness for God in its own person. "This poor man cried"; not somebody over the water—"and the Lord heard him," not a man down the next street. The more definite and specific your testimony, the better and the more convincing. One of our evangelists writes me, that when he was praying with an inquirer, and trying to lead him to Jesus, he was much helped by a working man coming in, and kneeling down by their side, and saying, "Lord, save this poor soul, even as thou didst save me at two o'clock this morning!" Afterwards the evangelist asked him how he came to use such an expression. "Well," said the man, "I was saved then; just as the clock struck two I found the Saviour, and I always like to tell when a thing happens." Somehow or other, that "two o'clock in the morning" helped the inquirer mightily; it put such a reality into the transaction. He thought, "This man knows that he was saved at two o'clock in the morning, why should I not be saved now, at eight o'clock in the evening." I do not say that we can all tell the date of our conversion: many of us cannot. But if we can throw in such details, let us do so; for they help to make our testimony striking.

Our witness should be an assured one. We must believe, and therefore speak. Do not say, "I hope that I prayed; and I—I—trust that the Lord heard me." Say, "I prayed, and the Lord heard me." If you begin to stutter when you are giving your evidence for the Lord Jesus, worldlings will not believe you. Are you sure? If you are not sure yourself, you cannot assure others. The accent of conviction is indispensable if you would convince. Be sure that you have cried, and be sure that God has heard you, and then bear testimony to what you have tried and proved.

Give your testimony cheerfully. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Do not say it as if it were a line from "the agony column"; but write it as a verse of a psalm—of such a psalm as this, which begins with, "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Your testimony must have for its sole aim the glory of God. Do not wish to show yourself off as an interesting person, a man of vast experience. We cannot allow the grace of God to be buried in ungrateful silence. When he made the world the angels sang for joy, and when he saves a soul we will not be indifferent. Let us call together our friends and our neighbors, and charge them to rejoice with us, for our Lord has found us, though we were lost. Remember how the father, when the prodigal came back, said to his household, "Let us eat, and be merry." So, dear friends, be glad at heart that the Lord has saved you, and tell others of what he has done, saying, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him."

Testimonies to facts have weight with men. Those who live to win souls have learned from experience that facts are grand things to use in their holy service. When you are teaching people doctrines they will often be inattentive and unmoved; but when you come to facts they listen and feel their force. I sat not long ago with one whom I would fain win for my Lord, and I told him certain facts with regard to the Lord's hearing prayer for the College and the Orphanage, and other parts of my work for the Lord. I marked the deep interest which these facts produced. He believed me to be a man of integrity, and he could not resist the conclusion that the Lord is a prayer-hearing God. To yourself and to others one fact is better than a dozen inferences. Even the hardest of the Gradgrinds can only say, "What I want is facts." Test prayer for yourself, and then boldly state the results, and you will have power with men. Personal experience is far more convincing than observation: tell facts which you have yourself experienced: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Such testimony will have most weight with the same sort of men as yourselves. When a poor man tells what the Lord did for him, he wins the attention, and gains the belief of other poor men. When any event happens to a person like myself, I become interested in it. The poor man says, "I see he is a poor man like myself, and if God hears him, why should he not hear me?" Does not your brother's salvation cheer you, and make you feel that you will cry to the Lord too? How wonderfully God has heard prayer from men in singular positions! He heard Jacob when his

angry brother Esau was close upon him with armed men. At Jabbok the Lord heard him by night; and he met his brother the next morning with a smiling face. Israel in Egypt was in sore bondage, but the Lord heard his people's cry, and sent Moses, and divided the Red Sea, and brought forth his chosen. The Lord heard Samson when he was ready to die of thirst. He heard the men of Reuben who cried to God in the battle against the Hagarites, "and he was entreated of them, because they put their trust in him." He heard Hezekiah and Isaiah when Rabshakeh wrote his blasphemous and slanderous letter. We read that, "for this cause they prayed, and cried to heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of Assyria." David prayed in the cave, and Elijah on Carmel, and Jeremiah in prison, and the Lord heard them. There was once a man in the belly of a fish miraculously kept alive. The great fish felt ill with such a thing as a living man within him; and therefore it dived deep down till the prisoner felt himself to be at the bottom of the mountains. Then, to get vegetable medicine, the fish rushed among the sea meadows, and Jonah cried, "The weeds were wrapped about my head." He was in a strange, dark, horrible place, and he says of it, "Out of the belly of hell cried I." Was his cry of any use? Yes; we read, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." Wherever you may be, and in whatsoever trial you may be involved, the Lord will hear your cry, and come to your help. If any soul here is, like Jonah, in the very belly of hell in feeling and apprehension, yet, his cry will prevail with heaven, and he shall know that "salvation is of the Lord." A poor man's cry will sound, through the telephone of Christ's mediation, in the ear of God, and he will respond to it.

Now, this witness, dear friends, while it is very strong to those who are like ourselves, will be increased in force as one and another shall join us. One person says, "I cried to the Lord, and he heard me." "But," says an objector, that is a special case." Up rises a second witness, and says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." "Well, that is only two; and two instances may not prove a rule." Then, up rises a third, a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and in each case it is the same story—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Surely he must be hardened in unbelief who refuses to believe so many witnesses. I remember the story of a

lawyer, a sceptic, who attended a class-meeting where the subject was similar to our theme of this morning. He heard about a dozen tell what the Lord had done for them; and he said, as he sat there, "If I had a case in court, I should like to have these good people for witnesses. I know them all, they are my neighbors, they are simple-minded people, straightforward and honest, and I know I could carry any case if I had them on my side." Then he very candidly argued that what they all agreed upon was true. He believed them in other matters, and he could not doubt them in this, which was to them the most important of all. He tried religion for himself, and the Lord heard him; and very soon he was at the class-meeting, adding his witness to theirs. If I were to put the question at this moment to my present audience, what would be the result? Our friend Mr. Stott said just now in prayer that we were a very promiscuous company this dark morning. I agree with him. Still I will try it. You that have had answers to prayer say, "Ay (The response came like a thunderclap.) I am sure there are none of us who have ever tried the power of prayer who would have to say "No." If I were to put the contrary, there would be no answer. All who are accustomed to pray will vote with the ayes. Go home, then, with the words of our text in your hearts and on your tongues—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Glory be to God! Amen.

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The Poor Man's Friend

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. - Psalm 72:12

This is a royal psalm. In it you see predictions of Christ, not upon the cross, but upon the throne. In reference to his manhood as well as to his godhead, he is exalted and extolled and very high. He is the king—the king's son, truly with absolute sway, stretching his scepter from sea to

sea, and "from the river even unto the ends of the earth." It is remarkable that in this psalm which so fully celebrates the extent of his realm and the sovereignty of his government, there is so much attention drawn to the minuteness of his care for the lowly, his personal sympathy with the poor, and the large benefits they are to enjoy from his kingdom. Where Christ is highest and we are lowest, and the two meet, there is "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." I might almost raise the question whether this psalm is more a tribute of homage to the Messiah, or a treasury of comfort for his poor subjects. We will compound the controversy by saying that as Christ here is highly exalted, so his poor needy ones are highly blessed, and while it is a blessing to them that he is exalted, it is an exaltation to him that they are blessed.

Turning to our text without further preface, we shall note in it the special objects of great grace. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;" then, the special blessings which are allotted to them. Here it is said that he shall deliver them, but all through the psalms there are scattered promises full of instruction and consolation all meant for them. And, lastly, the special season which God has appointed for the dispensing of these favors. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth." That shall be God's time. When it is our time to cry, it shall be God's time to deliver.

I. First, then, notice **THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF GREAT GRACE**. There is a three-fold description—they are needy, they are poor, they have no helper.

They are needy. In this they are like all the sons of men. We begin life in a needy state. We are full of needs in our infancy, and cannot help ourselves. We continue throughout life in a needy state. The very breath in our nostrils hath to be the gift of God's goodness. In him we live, and move, and have our being. And, as we grow old our needs become even more apparent. The staff on which we lean reveals to us our needs, and our infirmities all tell us what needy creatures we are. We need temporal things and we need spiritual things. Our body needs, our soul needs, our spirit needs. We need to be kept from evil; we need to be led into the paths of righteousness; we need on the outset that grace should be

implanted; when implanted, we need that it be nurtured; when nurtured, we need that it be perfected and made to bring forth fruit. We are never a moment without need. We wake up, and our first glance might reveal our needs to us, and when we fall asleep it is upon a poor man's pillow, for we need that God should preserve us through the night. We have needs when we are on our knees, else where would be the energy of our prayers? We have needs when we try to sing, else how should our uncircumcised lips praise him aright? We have needs when we are relieving the needs of others, lest we become proud of our almsgiving. We have need in preaching, need in hearing; we have need in working, need in suffering, need in resting. What is our life but one long need? All men are full of needs. But God's peculiar people feel this need—they not only confess it is so, but they know it experimentally. They are full of needs. Once they thought that they were rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, but now, through the enlightenment of God's Spirit, they feel themselves to be naked, and poor, and miserable. Their needs were great before, but they appear now to be incalculable, more in number than the hairs of their heads. They have need of a covering for the sin of the past; they have need of help against the temptation of the present; they have need of perseverance as to the entire future. If there are any people under heaven who could claim the title of "needy," above all others, it is not the pauper in the workhouse, nor the mendicant who asks alms in the streets, but it is the child of God, for he feels himself to be so dependent that the more he gets from his great Benefactor the more he requires, and the more he must have to satisfy the enlarged desires of a heart that begins to know the will of God concerning us. Our needs are great and constant.

The second description given is that he is poor—"the poor also." A man might be needy, and be able to supply his own need. As fast as his needs arose, he might have sufficient wealth to be able to procure what he wanted. I speak merely of his temporal wants. But, with regard to us in spiritual things, we are not only needy, but we are poor to utter destitution—there is nothing within our reach that we can help ourselves with. We have need of water for our thirst, but nature's buckets are empty, and her cisterns are broken. We have need of bread, but nature's granary is bare. Like the prodigal son in a far off country, there is a famine, a mighty famine, in that land, and we are in want. We have need

of clothing; we have found that we are naked, and we are ashamed, but our fig leaves will not serve us, and we are too poor to buy a garment for ourselves. We are so poor that when a want comes it only shows us how empty the treasury is; and every want while it draws upon us meets with no fitting response; there is nothing, nothing, nothing, in human nature at its very best, that can keep pace with its own needs. Speak of self-reliance!—'tis well enough in matters of the world, but self-reliance is absolutely madness in the things of God. We have heard of self-made men, but if any man would enter heaven, he must be a God-made man from first to last, for all that can come out of human nature will still be defiled. The stream shall never mount higher than the fountain-head, and the fountain-head of human nature is pollution, total depravity. It cannot rise higher than that, let it do its best. We are very needy, and very poor. If there be any poor in all the world, who have tasted the bitter ingredients of this cup of sorrow, it is God's people. We are very needy and very poor, though we did not always think so. When the discovery was first made to us, we felt the smart as those do "who have seen better days." Once we fancied ourselves able to do our work and sure to get our wages; we did hope to merit a reward for our good conduct; and we thought it was only for us to add a little piety to our decent morals in order to be well pleasing to God and our own conscience. Ah, sirs! when we woke from these foolish dreams, and faced our own abject poverty, how ashamed we were; how we shunned the light; how we sat alone and avoided company; how fear preyed on our heart; with what anguish we chattered to ourselves, saying, "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Poor indeed we are and we know it.

Moreover, it is said they have no helper. Now, until God enlightens us, we seem to have a great many helpers. We fancy—perhaps we once fancied—that a priest could save us. If we have a grain of grace we have given up that idea. Perhaps we imagined that our parents would help us, that our godly ancestry might stand us in some stead:—but we have long ago been brought to the conviction that we must each stand personally before God, for only personal religion is of any value. At one time we placed some dependence upon the ministry we attended, and hoped that in some favored hour that ministry might be of use to us; but, if God has awakened us, we look higher than pulpits and preachers now. Our eyes

are up towards the hills whence cometh our help, and as to all earthly things, we see no help in them. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." "He shall be like the heath in the desert—he shall not see when good cometh." The Lord grant us all to be reduced to this—that we have no helper, because when we have no helper here, he will become our helper and our salvation. Put the three words together and you have a very correct description of the awakened people of God—needy, poor, and having no helper.

We have felt this, beloved, very keenly some of us just before we looked to Christ. Oh! we can remember now when we wanted to have our sins forgiven us, we would have given all we had if we could but have found mercy;—we were full of needs. We turned all our good works over, but they had all become mouldy and worm-eaten, and they stank in our nostrils. We tried our prayers. We used to fancy if we began to pray earnestly it would all be well with us, but alas! alas! we found our prayers to be poor comforts—broken reeds. We looked all around us, and we could get no consolation. Even Scripture did not seem to cheer us; the very promises seemed to shut their doors against us. We had no helper. Oh, do you remember then when you cried to God in your trouble, and he delivered you? I know you verified the truth of the promise in our text, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth."

Since that time, we have been equally needy; we have been making fresh proof of our indigence; and getting into straits from which we could by no means extricate ourselves. Indeed, when a Christian is richest in grace he is poorest in himself. The way to grow rich in grace is to feel your poverty. Whenever you think you have stored up a little strength, a little comfort, a little provision against a rainy day, you are pretty sure to have the trouble you bargained for, and to miss the resources you counted on. Estimate your true wealth before God by your entire dependence on him. The more you have, the less you have, and the less you have, the more you have. When you have nothing at all in yourself, then Christ is all in all to you. The perpetual condition of every child of God in himself is that of a needy and a poor and a helpless one—on the high mountains with his Lord, rejoicing in his love, yet is he even there in himself less than nothing and vanity—still poor and needy.

There have been times when we felt this very powerfully, perhaps, very painfully. Has Satan ever beset you, my brethren, with his fierce temptations? No doubt many of you have had to feel the ferocity of his attacks. Perhaps, blasphemous thoughts have been injected into your mind—dark forebodings, such as these, "God has forsaken me." Perhaps, he has said, "He has sinned himself out of the covenant—he is a castaway," and your poor little faith has tried to hold on to Christ, but it seemed as if she must be driven from her hold. While others found it as you thought easy to get to heaven, you realised the truth of the text—"The righteous scarcely are saved." You have had to fight for every inch of ground, and it seemed to you often as though you had not a spark of grace in you, not a ray of hope, and not so much as a single grain of the grace of God within your heart. Ah! and at such times you have been poor and needy, and you have had no helper. And, perhaps, at such seasons, too, temporal trouble may have come in. Whoever may go through the world without trouble, God's people never do.

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

"In the world ye shall have tribulation" is as sure a promise as that other, "In me ye shall have peace." The trials of God's servants are sometimes extremely severe. Not a few are literally as well as spiritually poor. Hunger, privation, and embarrassment haunt their steps. And when you once come to be poor, how often does it happen that you have no helper. In the summer of prosperity your friends and acquaintances are numerous as the leaves of the forest, but in the winter of your losses and distresses, your friends are few indeed; your neighbors stand aloof, your old mates desert you, for like the wind your trials have borne them all away as sere leaves, and you cannot find them.

But, do not think that the Lord has cast you off, because he is thus chastening you with the rod of men; take it as an exercise of your faith, and go to him and plead this promise, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

Thus I have set before you the character of God's especial objects of sovereign grace; they are poor and needy spiritually. Do you ask why is it that God selects these? Our first answer is, he giveth no account of his matters; he doeth as he will. He is a sovereign; who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?" And, in order that he may make that sovereignty clear to the sons of men, he is pleased to select those whom naturally we might expect him to pass by. Did not Jesus lift his eyes to heaven full of gratitude and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen, but God hath chosen the poor of this world, he hath chosen the things that are despised, (and as the Apostle puts it) "Things that are not hath God chosen to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." When the chariot of the Eternal comes from above, he bids it roll far downward from the skies; he passes by the towers of haughty kings; he leaves the palaces of princes and the halls of senates, and down to the hovels of cottagers the chariot of his grace descends, for there he sees with joy and delight the objects of his everlasting love. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is the word of divine sovereignty, and God makes it true by taking the poor and the needy, and them that have no helper.

Still, if we may enquire into the reason, we see in the poor, and the needy, and the helpless, a reason for God's grace. They are the persons who are most willing to accept it, for they are the persons who most require it. Your generosity will not stand to be dictated to, but, at the same time, you usually prefer to give to those who want most. Wise mercy seeks out chief misery, and God therefore delights to give his blessings to those who need them most, not to those who fancy they deserve them—they shall have none of them, but those who need them, they shall have all of them.

When a soul is made to feel its own poverty, it does not set itself up in rivalry with Christ; it does not pretend to be able to help itself; it has no disputing about the terms of the gospel. A sinner, when he is thoroughly famished, has such an appetite that he eats such things as God's mercy

sets before him, and he raises no question. A proud Pharisee will say, "I will not submit to this, to be saved by faith alone—I will not have it. To accept mercy as the absolute gift of heaven, irrespective of my character, I cannot endure it." The high soul of a Pharisee, I say, kicks at it. But when God has brought a man low, till like the publican he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he is glad to be saved in God's way, and no matter however humbling the plan of grace, nor how the sinner is debased and Christ exalted, the poor sinner loves to have it so. It is a way suitable to his own wants, a way which he accepts for the very reason that God has adapted it to his position. Hence, if there be reasons they lie here, not in man's merit but on the Lord's mercy. The fact that bare misery, when touched and guided by the Spirit of God, makes the soul to open its mouth like the hard chapped soil to drink in the rain, as soon as the rain descends from above, is an argument why grace so commonly flows in this course.

In choosing to bless the poor and needy by his grace, the Lord finds for himself warm friends, those who will give him much praise, contend earnestly for his reign and for his sovereignty, and endure much obloquy for very love to his dear name. Why if the Lord were to save the Pharisees, they would hardly say, "thank you," they are so good themselves. They reckon themselves to be so excellent, that if they had salvation they would take it as a matter of course, and, like the lepers, they would never return to thank him that healed them. But when the Lord saves a great sinner, a man that feels there is nothing good in him; oh, how that man talks of it and tells it to others. He cannot take any praise to himself, he knows that he had nothing to do with it, that it is all of the grace of God. And, oh, see that man how he will stand up for the doctrines of grace! He is as the valiant men in Solomon's song, "each man with a sword on his thigh because of fear in the night;" for the doctrines of grace are not to him matters of opinion, but matters of experience. They are dear to him as his own life. "What," says he, "is not God the giver of salvation? Is not salvation all of God, from first to last? I know it is," saith he. "Don't tell me. Whatever your arguments, however smooth may be the form and fashion of your theology, it does not tally with what I have tasted and handled and felt; for unless it is grace from first to last, I am a lost man; and, if I be indeed a child of God, then can I contend for the doctrines of

grace, and will do till I die." I know I felt myself last Sunday night, after I had talked to you about the difficulties of salvation, that if ever I got to heaven, I would praise and bless God with all my soul. I felt like that good old woman who said, that if the Lord ever saved her he should never hear the last of it, for she would tell it everywhere, and publish it abroad throughout all eternity, that the Lord had done it, that he was a good and gracious God to have mercy on such a soul as she was. Now, since one object of God in bestowing his mercy is to glorify himself, he does wisely in bestowing his mercy upon the poor and the needy, and such as have no helper. The Lord give to you, my dear hearer, to be brought down to this tonight. I know many of you have been brought there and are there now. Let my text encourage and cheer you. Dear objects of Almighty love, he finds you on the dunghill, but he lifts you from it. He finds you in the dust, but is not this the song of Hannah and the song of Mary too—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree: he hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away?" It is God's way of dealing with the poor and lost; rejoice at it, it is full of encouragement to you. But I say to any of you that have never been humbled, good people, who have always been good people, you that have always kept the law from your youth up, and gone to church regularly, or to chapel regularly, very people—The Lord have mercy upon you, and let you see that your goodness is filthiness, that your righteousness is unrighteousness, and that the best that is in you is bad, and that the bad that is in you that you have never seen as yet will be your ruin, your eternal destruction, unless God set it before your eyes, and bring you down to loathe yourself, and feel yourself to be abominable in his sight, and abominable also in your own sight, when his law comes with power home to your souls. Thus I have spoken upon the special objects of divine grace.

II. Now, a few words upon THE SPECIAL BLESSING WHICH THE GREAT KING HAS STORED UP FOR THESE PEOPLE. Kindly look at the second verse. "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment;" so that one of the special blessings for God's poor is that they shall be judged with judgment. Alas! they are often judged with harshness; or they are judged in ignorance; or they are judged by malice—not judged by righteousness, nor by judgment. When their enemies see

them, they say, "These are a broken-spirited people; they are moping and melancholy, wretched and sad." Thus hard things are spoken against them, and unkind stories are told of them. Sometimes they say they are out of their minds, and then they will insinuate that they are only hypocrites and pretenders. Slander is very busy with the children of God. God had a Son that had no fault; but he never had a son that was not found fault with. Ay, God himself was slandered in paradise by Satan: let us not expect, therefore, to escape from the venomous tongue.

One blessing, however, that will always come to God's needy ones is this—Christ will right them, he will judge them with judgment. Are you harshly spoken of at home? Don't be angry, don't provoke in return, don't answer railing with railing. "He shall judge his poor with righteousness." Leave it to him. Wait, wait, till the judgment sits, for who are these that they should judge you? Their opinion, though it is bitter as gall to your spirit, does not really affect your character or your destiny. If you are right before the Lord, through faith in Christ, they cannot make you wrong by anything they say. God judges and God knows. "He searcheth the heart and tries the reins." You remember how David, among his brethren, was much despised. He had not the appearance and the carriage that his elder brethren had, and even Samuel, the Lord's prophet, thought the others to be better than David, and said of them, "Surely the Lord hath chosen these." David was therefore despised of his brethren, but what mattered it? The Lord looked not as man looks, for man looked upon the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. Bide your time you that are one of a family and alone. Or, if for Christ's sake you have been despised, have courage to-night and let not your spirit be bowed down. "Rejoice ye in this day and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." The King will speedily come, and when he cometh then will this word be verified. "He shall judge his people with righteousness and his poor with judgment." There is one mercy for you—to have your wrongs righted and your character cleared.

God's poor and needy ones, you will perceive, if you turn a little further down, shall be saved from oppression. Fourth verse: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The Lord's people are like sheep among wolves,

the wolves treat them injuriously. Christ himself was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. His people may expect to be oppressed too; but they have this for their comfort, that Christ will surely deliver them, and he will break their oppressors in pieces. Are you tonight oppressed by Satan? Have you things laid to your charge by him that you know not of, and doth conscience oppress you with the remembrance of sins which have been forgiven? Have you ever believed concerning them in the atonement of Christ? Well, bow your head meekly, and go to the mercy-seat once again, pleading the precious blood, and he shall break in pieces the oppressor. There is no answer for Satan like the blood! and there is no answer for conscience but the blood. Plead it before God, plead it in your own soul, and you shall find that the great and glorious King in Zion shall, in your hearts, break in pieces the oppressor. There is another special mercy, then—help against the oppressor.

The third blessing is that of our text: "He shall deliver the needy." Deliver them! You are brought into great troubles; you shall be delivered out of them. You are just now the subject of many fears: you shall be delivered from your fears. It seems as though the enemy would soon exult over you, and put his foot upon your neck, and make an end of you; you shall be delivered. You are like a bird taken in the fowler's net, and he is ready to wring your neck and take the breath out of you; but you shall be delivered out of the hand of the fowler, and brought safely through the perils that threaten you. Oh, that we all had faith! Oh, that we all could exercise faith when in deep waters. It is a fine thing to talk about faith on land, but we want faith to swim with when we are thrown into the flood. May you, tonight, get such a grip of this precious word that you may take it before the Lord and say, "I am poor and needy, and have no helper. O God, deliver my soul now."

But, we have not exhausted the string of blessings. A little further down in the psalm, at the thirteenth verse, you will notice it is said of the King: "He shall spare the poor and needy." If he lays heavily upon them apparently, yet will he by-and-by stay his hand; if he bids one of his rough winds blow, he will save the other. As he is said to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, so will he certainly temper it to his people; they shall be

afflicted, but it shall be in measure; he shall spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him: the rod shall make them smart, but shall not make them bleed; they shall be made to suffer, but they shall not be called to die. Perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; there shall always be a gracious limit put to the blows that come from Jehovah's hand for his own people. Oh, what a mercy to be amongst his poor ones, and to feel that he will spare us; he spared not his own Son, but he will spare us, the poor and needy; he smote him with the blows of avenging justice, but concerning us it is written, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not depart. As I have sworn that the waters shall no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." He will spare his people; he will bring them safely through, and, meanwhile, he will not let the waters be deep enough to overwhelm them.

There is one other blessing which sums up all the rest; you find it in the fourteenth verse: "He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence." Redemption belongs to the Lord's poor people. He bought with a price his poor ones, and as the ransom has all been paid, they belong to Christ, and none shall take them out of his hand. He that redeemed them by price will redeem them by power. He will, if it be needful, divide the Red Sea again to redeem his people; and, if by no usual means his servants can be preserved, he will bring unusual means into the field. There are no miracles now, we say, but if they are ever wanted for the safety of God's people, there shall be miracles as timely and as plentiful as of yore. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall never pass away." He would sooner shake the heavens themselves than suffer one of his children to famish, or utterly to perish, rest assured of that. Oh, what glorious comfort there is in all this! We shall be spared, we shall be redeemed, we shall be delivered, we shall be saved, we shall be revenged and cleared before the judgment-bar of God; and, all because the great King has made the poor and needy the special objects of his love. Oh! my soul revels in this. I cannot speak out the thoughts I feel, much less the joy that arises out of them; but what a mercy it really is, that the great King, the King who rules from the river to the ends of the earth, is the poor man's friend. I am very poor and needy and helpless to-night, but the king has made me his favourite, counts me one of his courtiers: it is

the same with you, dear brother, if you too are poor and needy, he rules, and he rules on the throne for us; he is great and hath dominion, but he uses all his greatness and his dominion for us. As Joseph in Egypt was invested with power for the good of his brethren, or at least such sovereignty as he held of Pharaoh he laid out for the welfare of his father's house, so Jesus has all power and authority in heaven and earth; all might, majesty, and dominion for the good of his people. He has the king's signet ring upon his finger, but he uses it for his own beloved ones that he may enrich, and honor, and cheer, and perfect them. His glory is concerned in every one of us. If one of the least of his people should perish, his crown would suffer damage. He is the shepherd and surety of the flock, and at his hand will the Father require all those who are committed to him. He cannot, therefore, let us perish, for then he would not be able to say at the last, "Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none." He must and will preserve us. We are wrapped up in his honor. His power, I say, his crown, his glory, his very name, as the Christ of God anointed to save sinners, all are wrapped up and intertwined in the salvation of every poor and needy soul that is brought to rest in him.

III. And, now, our closing word is, **THE SPECIAL SEASON WHEN ALL THIS SHALL BE TRUE.** He shall deliver the needy when he crieth.

Ah! while I have been preaching there may have been some poor child of God here who has said, "I am poor and needy, and I am in great distress, but I have not been delivered." And there may be some sinner here who has said, "God has taught me my poverty and need, and I know I have no helper, but I cannot find I have been delivered." Perhaps, dear friends, you have been praying for months, praying very bitterly too, after a sort, and you have been desirous that you might find mercy. God's time, when will it come? Well, it will come when you cry. That is something more, I take it, than a mere ordinary prayer. A child asks you for something, and you may perhaps deny it; but you know there is a difference between asking for a thing and crying for a thing. Oh, when you get so that you must have it, and your heart breaks for it, when your needs are so extreme that you cannot stand up under them—well, now, it comes to this, that you must have Christ or perish. "Give me Christ or else I die," when it seems as if you could not put your prayer into words any more,

that you could only fall at the foot of the cross, and say, "O God, I cannot pray, but my very soul groans after thee, to have mercy upon me," then is the time, then is the time, but not till then, when God will deliver you. The Lord loves to hear the prayers of his people, and he sometimes keeps them waiting at the posts of his door, that they may pray more. It is always a blessing for us to pray as well as to get the answer to prayer. Prayer is in itself a blessing. When the Lord hears us knock faintly at the door, he does not open; we may knock and knock again—he likes us to knock; it does us good to knock. But when it comes to this, that it is all knocking with us, and our very soul and body seem to knock, and our heart and flesh cry after God, the living God: when we shall thus come to appear before God, and open our mouth and pant vehemently for the mercy he has promised, then it will come. When thou canst not take a denial, thou shalt not have a denial. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. There is none so violent as the man who is in desperate need. There is a person who has been without bread many hours, and he asks you for charity in the street. You would pass him by, but he is famished, and he says, "Oh give me bread! I die." He compels you to it. And such is the prayer that prevails with God. When the soul cannot wait, dare not wait, fears lest it should shut its eyes and open them in hell. Oh! God will not keep such a soul long waiting. I am always glad when I hear of convinced souls saying, "I went up into my chamber with the resolution that I would never come down again till I had found the Savior." I always delight to hear of men and women who say, "I went upon my knees and cried to him, saying, I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He will bless thee. If thou wilt let him go, he will go, but if thou wilt not let him go, thou shalt have thy request of him. "But who am I," saith one, "that I should plead thus? I have no right to hold him thus." 'Tis true, but when a man is hungry, when a man is dying, he does not think of rights. He holds you right or wrong. His need is his right. Poor soul, go and plead your need before God. Plead your sin, tell him you are wretched and undone without his sovereign grace. Use the strange argument which David used, the strangest in all the world, "For thy name's sake, O Lord! pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Plead the very greatness of your sin as a reason for mercy; the damnable character of your sin; the certainty that you will soon be cast into hell, the fact that he might justly drive you from his presence for ever; plead all that before

him; and say, "Lord, if ever the heights and depths of thy grace might be seen in saving an undeserving soul, I am just that one. If thy mercy wants to honor itself by saving the most undeserving, ill deserving, hell deserving sinner that ever lived, Lord, I am the man. If thou wantest a platform on which to erect a monument of infinite grace, that men shall stand and wonder, and angels shall gaze on it with astonishment, Lord, here am I. If thou wantest emptiness, here is one who is all emptiness. If thou as the good physician wantest a bad case, a glaring case, a desperate case, to operate on, thou wilt never have a worse case than mine. O God, turn aside and have pity upon me, and show thy mighty power." This is the way to plead. Not your merits—they will never get a hearing, but your misery, your sin, your guiltiness before God—these are the arguments. And then if faith can come in and plead the blood, and say, "Didst thou not send thy Son to save sinners?" has he not said he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance? Is it not written that the Son of Man is come to seek and to save not the good, but that which was lost? Oh! if you can plead the blood in that fashion, you will not fail. His name is the Savior—he came to save his people from their sins. He died for the ungodly, he justifieth the ungodly—the unrighteous he makes righteous through his own merits. If you can plead this, oh, then, you shall not long wait, for though God does not deliver till we cry, yet he does deliver when we cry. "He will deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Oh, what a mercy it is when the tide is ebb'd right out, and there is nothing left. It will turn now, it will turn now. The streams of grace will turn now. When you are empty, when you are overwhelmed, when you are like a dish wiped out, and there is not anything good left in you—now will God come to you. The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the dawn of the day. When God has killed you, he will make you live. When he has wounded you through and through, he will come to your healing.

"'Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge.

But let our debts be what they may,

However great or small;
As soon as we have nought to pay,
Our God forgives us all."

May it be so now, for his name's sake. Amen.

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The Poor Man's Friend

The poor committeth himself unto thee. - Psalm 10:14

God is the poor man's friend; the poor man, in His helplessness and despair, leaves his case in the hands of God, and God undertakes to care for him. In the days of David,—and I suppose, in this respect, the world has but little improved,—the poor man was the victim of almost everybody's cruelty, and sometimes he was very shamefully oppressed. If he sought redress for his wrongs, he generally only increased them, for he was regarded as a rebel against the existing order of things; and when he asked for even a part of what was his by right, the very magistrates and rulers of the land became the instruments of his oppressors, and made the yoke of his bondage to be yet heavier than it was before. Tens of thousands of eyes, full of tears, have been turned to Jehovah, and he has been invoked to interpose between the oppressor and the oppressed; for God is the ultimate resort of the helpless. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed; he undertakes the cause of all those that are downtrodden.

If the history of the world be, rightly read, it will be found that no case of oppression has been suffered to go long unpunished. The Assyrian empire wean a very cruel one, but what is now left of Nineveh and Babylon? Go to the heaps of ruins by the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and see what will become of an empire which is made to be only an instrument of oppression in the hands of an emperor and the

great men under him. It has ceased to be more than a name; its power has vanished, and its palaces have been destroyed. In later times, there sprang up the mighty empire of Rome; and even now, wherever we wander, we see traces of its greatness and splendour. How came it to fall? Many reasons have been assigned, but you may rest assured that at the bottom of them all was the cruelty practised towards the slaves, and other poor people, who here absolutely in the power of the aristocracy and oligarchy who formed the dominant party in the empire. There is a fatal flaw in the foundations of any throne that executes not justice; and it matters not though the empire seems to stand high as heaven, and to raise its pinnacles to the skies, down it must come if it be not founded upon right. When ten thousand slaves have cried to God apparently in vain, it has not really been in vain, for he has registered their cries, and in due season has avenged their wrongs; and when the poor toilers, who have reaped the rich man's fields, have been deprived of their hard-earned wages, and have cast their complaints into the court of heaven, they have been registered there, and God has, at the right time, taken up their cause, and punished their oppressors.

For many years the Negro slaves cried to God to deliver them, and at last deliverance came, to the joy of the emancipated multitudes, yet not without suffering to all the nations that had been concerned in that great wrong. And here, too, if the employers of labour refuse to give to the agricultural labourer his just wage, God will surely visit them, in his wrath. At this very day, we have; serfs in England who, with sternest toil, cannot earn enough to keep body and soul together, and to maintain their families as they ought to be maintained; and where masters are thus refusing to their labourers a fair remuneration for their work, let them know that, whoever may excuse them, and whatever may be said of the laws of political economy, God does not judge the world by political economy. He judges the world by this rule, that men are bound to do that which is just and right to their fellow-men; and it can never be right that a man should work like a slave, be housed worse than a horse, and have food scarcely fit for a dog. But if the poor commit their case to God, he will undertake it; and I, as one of God's ministers, will never cease to speak on behalf of the rights of the poor. The whole question has two sides,—the rights of the masters, and the rights of the men. Let not the

men do as some workmen do, ask more than they ought; yet, on the other hand, let not the masters domineer over their men, but remember that God is the Master of us all, and he will see that right is done to all. Let us all act rightly towards one another, or we shall feel the weight of his hand, and the force of his anger.

Now, having thus given the literal meaning of my text, I am going to spiritualize it, which I should have no right to do if I had not first explained the primary reference of David's words, "The poor committeth himself unto thee."

I. THERE ARE SPIRITUALLY POOR MEN; and these do what other poor men have done in temporal things, they commit their case, into the hands of God.

Let me try to find out the spiritually poor. They are, first, those who have no merits of their own. There are some people, in the world, who are, according to their own estimate, very rich in good works. They think that they began well, and that they have gone on well, and they hope to continue to do well right to the end of their lives. They do confess, sometimes, that they are miserable sinners, but total. is merely because that expression is in the Prayer Book. They are half sorry it is there, but they suppose that it must have been meant for other people, not for themselves. So far as they know, they have kept all the commandments from their youth up, they have been just in their dealings with their fellow-men, and they do not feel that they are under any very serious obligations even to God himself. I have nothing to say to such people except to remind them that the, Lord Jesus Christ said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Christ came to bring healing to those who are spiritually sick; you say that you are perfectly well, so you must go your own way, and Christ will go in another direction,—towards sinners.

Further, the poor peoples of whom I am speaking, are not only totally without, anything like merit, absolutely bankrupt of any goodness, and devoid of anything of which they could boast, but they are also without

strength to perform any such good works in the future. They are so poor, spiritually, that they cannot even pray as they would, and they do not even feel their poverty as they would like to feel it. After having read this Bible, they wish they could re-read it with greater profit; and when they weep over sin, they feel their own sin in their very tears, and want to weep in penitence over their tears. They are such poor people that they can do absolutely nothing without Christ, and so poor that, in them, that is, in their flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. They did think once that there might be something good in them; but they have searched their nature through most painfully, and they have discovered that, unless grace shall do everything for them, where God is they can never come.

Perhaps some of you say, "These must be very bad people." Well, they are no better that they should be, yet I may tell you another thing concerning them, they are no worse than many of those who think themselves a great deal better. They have this lowly opinion of themselves because the grace of God has taught them to think rightly and truthfully about themselves in relation to God. They are, in outward appearance, and as far as we, can judge, quite as good as others, and better than some. In certain respects, they might be held up as examples to others. This is what we say of them, but they have not a good word to say of themselves; rather, do they put their finger upon their lips, and blush at the remembrance of what they feel themselves to be; or if they must speak of themselves at all, they say, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way."

II. That brings me to notice, secondly, WHAT THESE POOR PEOPLE DO. They commit themselves unto God. This is a very blessed description of what true faith does. The poor in spirit feel that their case is so desperate that they cannot keep it in their own charge, and therefore they commit it to God. I will try to show you how they do that.

First, they commit their case to God as a debtor commits his case to a surety. The man is so deeply in debt that he cannot pay his creditors even a farthing in the pound; but here is someone who can pay everything that the debtor owes, and he says to him, "I will stand as security for you; I will be bondsman for you; I will give full satisfaction to all your creditors,

and discharge all your debts." There is no person who is thus deeply in debt, who would not be glad to know of such a surety, both able and willing to stand in his stead, and to discharge all his responsibilities. If the surety said to this poor debtor, "Will you make over all your liabilities to me? Will you sign this document, empowering me to take all your debts upon myself, and to be responsible for you? Will you let me be your bondsman and surety?" "Ah!" the poor man would reply, "that I will, most gladly." That is just what spiritually poor men have done to the Lord Jesus Christ,—committed their case, with all their debts and liabilities, into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has undertaken all the responsibility for them.

I think I hear someone say, "But will Christ really stand in the sinner's place in such a way as that?" Oh, yes! for he did stand, in anticipation, in the sinner's place before the foundation of the world, and he actually stood there when he died upon the accursed tree, by his death obtaining a full discharge of the debts of all those whose Surety he had become.* Dear soul, wilt, thou not commit all thy affairs into his hands? Art thou not, willing to let him stand as thy Surety, to clear thee of all thy liabilities? "Willing?" say you; "ah! that I am; and not only willing, but, right glad shall I be for him to take my place, and relieve me of the burden that is crushing me to the dust." Then it is done for you, and so done that it can never be undone. Suppose that one of you had taken all my debts upon you, and that you were quite able and willing to pay them, I should not go home, and fret myself about my debts. I should rejoice to think that, you had taken them upon yourself, and that therefore they would no longer be mine. If Christ has taken your sins upon himself,—and he has done so if you have truly trusted him, your sins have ceased to be; they are blotted out for ever. Christ nailed to his cross the record of everything that was against, us; and, now, every poor sinner, who is indebted to God's law, and who trusteth in Christ, may know that his debt is cancelled, and that he is clear of all liability for it for ever.

Next, we commit our case to Christ as a client does to a solicitor and advocate.** You know that, when a man has a suit at law, (I hope that none of you may ever have such a suit,) if he has an advocate to plead his cause, he does not plead for himself. He will probably get into trouble if

he does. It is said that, when Erskine was pleading for a Man who was being tried for murder, his client, being dissatisfied with the way in which his defense was being conducted, wrote on a slip of paper, "I'll be hanged if I don't plead for myself." Erskine wrote in reply, "You'll be hanged if you do!" It is very much like that with us; if we attempt to plead for ourselves, we shall be sure to go wrong. We must have the Divine Advocate who alone can defend us against the suits of Satan, and speak with authority on our behalf even before the bar of God. We must commit our case to him, that he may plead for us, and then it will go rightly enough.

Remember also that any man, who has committed his case to an advocate, must not interfere with it himself. If anybody from the other side should wait upon him, and say, "I wish to speak to you about that suit," he must reply, I cannot go into the matter with you; I must refer you to my solicitor." "But I want to reason about it; I want to ask you a few questions about the case." "No," says he, "I cannot listen to what you have to say, you must go to my solicitor." How much trouble Christians would save themselves if, when they have committed their case into the hands of Jesus, they would leave it there, and not attempt to deal with it on their own account! I say to the devil, when he comes to tempt me to doubt and fear, "I have committed my soul to Jesus Christ, and he will keep it in safety. You must bring your accusations to him, not to me. I am his client, and he is my Counsellor. Why should I have such an Advocate as he is, and then plead for myself" John does not say, "If any man sin, let him be his own adovcate;" but he says, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Dear brother, leave your case with Christ; he can handle it wisely, you cannot. Remember that, if the devil and you get into an argument, he is much older than you are, and far more clever than you are, and he knows a great many points of law that you do not know. You should always refer him to the Saviour, who is older than he is, and knows much more about law and everything else than he does, and who will answer him so effectually as to silence him forever. So, poor tried and tempted soul, commit your case to the great Advocate, and he will plead for you before the Court of King's Bench in heaven, and your suit will be sure to succeed through his advocacy.

Further, sinners commit their case to Christ as a patient commits his case to the physician. We, poor sin-sick sinners, put our case into the hands of Jesus, that he may heal us of all our depravities, and evil tendencies, and infirmities. If anyone asks, "Will he undertake my case, if I come to him?" I answer;—Yes, he came to be the Physician of souls, to heal all who trust him. There never was a case in which he could not heal, for he has a wonderful remedy, a catholicon, a cure for all diseases. If you put your case, into his hands, the Holy Spirit will shed abroad his love in your heart, and there is no spiritual disease that can withstand that wondrous remedy. Are you predisposed to quickness of temper? He can cure that. Are you inclined to be indolent? Is there a sluggish spirit within you? He can cure that. Are you proud, or are your tendencies towards covetousness, worldliness, lust, or ambitions? Christ, can cure all these evils. When he was on this earth, he had all manner of patients brought to him, yet he never was baffled by one case, and your case, whatever it may be, will be quite an easy one to him if you only go and commit it into his hands. This building seems to me like a great hospital*** full of sin-sick souls, and I pray the great Physician to come here, and heal them. Nay, I must correct myself, for he is here; and, as he walks through these aisles, and round these galleries, I beseech you to say to him, "Good Master, I commit myself to thee. I take thee to be my Saviour. O save me from my constitutional temperament, and my besetting sins, and everything else that is contrary to thy holy will!" He will hear you, for he never yet refused to heed the cry of a poor sin-sick soul. Do not let him go by you without praying to, him, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Come, Lord, and lay thy hands upon each one of us and we shall be made perfectly whole!

As to the future, the spiritually poor commit themselves to Christ in the same way in which the pilgrims described in *The Pilgrim's Progress* committeth themselves to the charge of Mr. Greatheart, that he might fight all their battles for them, and conduct them safely to the Celestial City. In the old war time, when the captains of merchant vessels wanted to go to foreign countries, and they were afraid of being captured by the privateers of other nations, they generally went in company under the convoy of a man-of-war to protect them, and that is the way you and I must go to heaven. Satan's privateers will try to capture us, but we

commit ourselves to the protection of Jesus, the Lord High Admiral of all the seas, and we poor little vessels sail safely under his convoy. When any enemy seeks to attack us, we need not be afraid. He can blow them all out of the water if he pleased, but he will never suffer one of them to injure a solitary vessel that is entrusted to his charge. Sinner, give thyself up to the charge of Jesus, to be convoyed to heaven; and thou over-anxious child of God, lay down all thine anxieties at the feet of Jesus, and rest in his infinite power and love, which will never let thee be lost.

I might thus multiply figures and illustrations of how we commit ourselves to Christ. We do it very much in the way in which our blind friends, sitting under the pulpit, got here this evening,—they came by committing themselves to the care of guides. Some of them can walk a good long way without a guide, but others could not have found their way here to-night without some friend upon whose arm they could lean. That is the way to get to heaven, by leaning upon Jesus. Do not expect to see him, but trust yourself to him, and lean hard upon him. He loves to be trusted, and faith has a wonderful charm for him. I was once near the Mansion House, and as I stood there, a poor blind man, who wished to cross over to the Bank, said to me, "Please, sir, lead me across; I know you will, for I am blind." I was not sure that I could do so, for it is not an easy task to lead a blind man across that part where so many cabs and omnibuses are constantly passing, but I managed it as best I could. I do not think I could have, done it if the poor man had not said to me, "I know you will;" for then I thought that I must; and if you come to Christ, and say, "Lord Jesus, wilt thou lead me to heaven?" and tell him that you are sure that he will never let a poor blind soul miss its way, that you are sure you can trust him, that he is such a kind-hearted Saviour that he will never thrust away a guilty sinner who thus commits himself into his hands, and I am sure that he will be glad to save you, and that he will rejoice over you as he leads you safely home to heaven. If any of you can see with your natural eyes, and yet are blind spiritually, be glad that there is a blessed Guide, to whom you can commit yourself, and do commit yourself to him. Christ leads the blind by a way that they know not, and he will continue to lead them until he brings them to the land where they will open their eyes, and see with rapture and surprise the splendours of paradise, and rejoice that they are all their own for ever.

Is not this work of the poor committing themselves to Christ, a very easy task? It is a very easy thing for a debtor to commit his debts to his surety, for anyone to commit his case to his advocate, for a patient to trust himself to his physician, for a pilgrim to feel safe under a powerful convoy, and for a blind man to trust in his guide;—all this is very simple and easy. It does not need much explanation, and faith in Jesus is just as simple and just as easy as that. Why is it, that we sometimes find that faith is difficult? It is because we are too proud to believe in Jesus. If we did but see ourselves as we really are, we should be willing enough to trust the Saviour; but we do not like going to heaven like blind people who need a guide, or like debtors who cannot pay a farthing in the pound. We want to have a finger in the pie, we want to do something towards our own salvation, we want to have some of the praise and glory of it. God save us from this evil spirit!

While it is a very simple thing for the Spiritually poor to commit themselves to Christ, let me also say that it is an act which greatly glorifies God. Christ is honoured when any soul trusts in him; it is a joy to his heart to be trusted. When the feeble cling to him, he feels such joy as mothers feel when their little ones cling to them. Christ is glad when poor sin-sick souls come and trust him. It was for this very purpose that he came into the world, to meet the needs of guilty sinners. So this plan, while it is easy for us, is glorifying to him

And I will add that it is a plan that never fails any who trust to it. There never was a single soul that committed its case to Christ, and theft found him fail, and there never shall be such a soul so long as the earth endureth. He that believeth in Christ shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," and everlasting life can never be taken away from one who has received it.

I close by asking a question,—If the spiritually poor commit themselves unto God, what comes of it? Why, it makes them very happy. But, are they not sinful? Oh, yes; but they commit themselves to God's grace, and His grace blots out all their sins for ever. Are they not feeble? Oh, yes;

but, their feebleness leads them to commit themselves to his omnipotence; and his strength is made perfect in their weakness. Are they not needy? Oh, yes; but then they bring their needs to him, and they receive out of his fulness "grace for grace." But, are they not often in danger? Oh, yes, in a thousand dangers; but they come, and hide beneath the shadow of God's wings, and he covers them with his feathers, and there they rest in perfect security. His truth becomes their shield and buckler, so that they need not fear any foe. But are they not apt to slip? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to him who gives his angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways, and to bear them up in their hands, lest they should dash their feet against a stone. But are they not, very fickle and changeable? Oh, yes; but they commit, themselves to him who says, "I am Jehovah; I change not." But are they not unworthy? Oh, yes, in themselves they are utterly unworthy; but they commit themselves to him who is called The Lord their righteousness; and when they are clothed in his righteousness, they are looked upon by God as being "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." But have they no sickness? Yes, but they commit themselves to Jehovah-Rophi, the lord, the Healer, and he either heals their sickness, or gives them the grace to endure it. Are they not poor? Yes, many of them are extremely so; but they commit themselves to the faithful Promiser, and so bread is given them, and their water sure. But don't they expect to die? Oh, yes, unless the Lord should first come; but they are not afraid to die. This is the point, above all others, in which the spiritually poor commit themselves unto God. They have learnt that sweet prayer of David so well that it is often on their tongues, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." They did commit their spirit into God's hands years ago, and he has kept them until now, and they know that, he will not fail them in their dying hour.

In conclusion, I pray every spiritually poor heart to commit itself to God. I like to do this every morning. Satan often comes and says, "You are no Christian; all your supposed Christian experience is false." Very Well, suppose it has been false; then I will start afresh; saint or no saint, I will begin over again by trusting Christ to be my Saviour. When you, dear friend, wake tomorrow morning, let this be the first thing that you do,—commit yourself to Jesus Christ for the whole of the day. Say, "My Lord,

here is my heart, which I commit to thee. While I am away from home, may my heart be full of fragrance of thy blessed presence; and when I return at night, may I still find my heart, in thy kind keeping! "And every night, ere we go to sleep, let us pray,—

"Should swift death this night o'ertake us,
And our couch become our tomb;
May the morn in heaven awake us.
Clad in light and deathless bloom."

Are you going to a foreign land? Then, renew the committal of your life to God. Are you going to change your state, and enter upon the joys and responsibilities of married life? Then commit yourself to God. Are you going to a new situation, or opening a new business? Is any change coming over you? Then, make a new committal, or a re-committal of your soul to the Lord Jesus,—only take care that you do it heartily and thoroughly, and make no reserve. I rejoice to feel that I have committed myself to Christ as the slave of old committed himself to his master. When the time came for him to be set free under the Jewish law, he said to his master, "No, I do not want to go. I love you, I love your children, I love your household, I love your service; I do not want to be free." Then you know that the master was to take an awl, and fasten him by the ear to the door-post. I suppose this was done to see whether the man really wanted to remain with his master, or not. Ah, beloved! some, of us have had our ears bored long ago; we have given ourselves up to Christ, and we have a mark upon us which we can never lose. Were we not buried with him by baptism unto death,—a symbol that we are dead to the world, and buried to the world, for his dear sake? Well, in that same way, give yourself wholly up to Jesus; commit yourself to him. As that young bride, commits all her life's joys and hopes to that dear bridegroom into whose face she looks so lovingly, so, O souls, commit yourselves to that dearest Bridegroom in earth or heaven,—the Lord Jesus Christ. Commit yourselves to him, to love and to be loved,—his to obey, his to serve, and his to be kept,—his in life,—and you need not add "till death us do part," but you may say "till death shall wed us more completely, and we shall sit together at the marriage banquet above; and be for ever and for ever one before the throne of God." Thus the poor soul commits itself unto Christ,

is married unto Christ, gets the portion which Christ possesses, becomes Christ's own, and then lives with Christ for ever. Oh, that this might be the time in which many a man and many a woman would commit themselves unto Christ! I do not merely mean you who are poor in pocket, but you who are poor in spirit, I am asking you to commit yourselves unto Christ. Do not put it off, but may this be the very hour in which you shall be committed to Christ, and he shall take possession of you to be his for ever and for ever! Amen and Amen.

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Portraits Of Christ

For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. - Romans 8:29

It is not so much predestination which will occupy our attention this morning, as the fact that believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son.

Perhaps nothing in the world is a surer sign of littleness than a slavish imitation of any man. Men lose that which is an honor to them, individuality, and then they lose that which is a power to them, originality, the moment they commence walking in another man's track. When one painter slavishly copies another, he is only known as the satellite of the greater luminary, he himself is neither respectable nor respected. But this is not the case when men select models which are confessed to be perfect. You never hear a man accused of a want of originality because he studies the models in sculpture of Ancient Greece.

It is not usual to hear the accusation of imitation brought against painters who have studiously examined the works of Michael Angelo or of Raphael. These men are put at the head of their respective schools, and the following of these masters of the art is voted to be no folly but true wisdom. `Tis even so with the imitation of Christ. To imitate other men is weakness; to copy Christ is strength. Christ is the perfect type of manhood. He who should imitate him the most nearly, would be the most original man upon earth. It may seem a paradox, but it is one which nevertheless needs only to be tried to be proved, no man will be looked upon as so strange, so singular a being among his fellows, as the man who shall nearest approach to the image of the Lord Jesus. He imitates, we grant you; he copies, we confess it, but he is himself, despite his copying, an original to other men, and he stands out from the common herd as being a distinguished and celebrated individual; he will be "known and read of all men." If I should stand here this morning, my hearers, to exhort you to imitate any one model in manhood except Christ, I should feel that I had a difficult task with sensible men. There is not in all the annals of our race, a single name which I could bid you love and reverence so much as to shut your eyes to the faults connected therewith. There is not a single biography truthfully written, which I would have you read, and then say, "I will re-live this man's life precisely as he lived it." You would make shipwreck if you should blindly steer in the wake of the noblest of your brethren. You may take a virtue here, and a virtue there, and then in God's strength seek to imitate those men, who excelled in those points, but to imitate an Abraham in all things, would not make you an Abraham, nor would it make you what you should be. To seek to follow a Job in all respects would not bring you to be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. There remains but one model we can ever commend to you, and only one which a man of strong mind can accept as his copy in every jot and tittle. That I shall endeavor to present to you this morning, while I preach the great doctrine that all believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.

In what sense? Wherefore? and Is it possible? Three points each interesting.

I. IN WHAT SENSE IS A BELIEVER TO BE CONFORMED TO THE

IMAGE OF CHRIST?

There are some views which would be taken of this subject, which I think would be shallow and would not reach the full meaning of the Word of God. Some men conceive that they are to bear the image of Christ to warrant them as being his followers, although their works tell another tale. They are to be called Christians, and then under the garb and cover of Christianity, they are to make their vices appear like virtues, and their crimes are to be dignified as though they were the highest morality. Now a Christian is not to bear the image of Christ as a penny bears the superscription of the Queen. That image is put there to make the coin current among men; but a penny is not the image of the Queen, it is only stamped with it. There are some Christians who think that they have the seal of the Spirit upon them, the stamp of Christ's warranty, and that they can claim to be accepted as Christians, because they imagine they have the seal of the Spirit, and the stamp of Christ's warranty upon them, Now, as the penny is not conformed after all to the image of the person whose face it bears, so such a man is not, by any pretended warranty he thinks he has, really conformed to the image of Christ. There is something more required of us, and something more will be bestowed upon us by the Spirit, than having in some dark corner the name of Jesus tattooed into the skin of our profession.

Nor, again; neither have they attained to a conformity to the image of Christ, who are content with a cold morality. You have seen a statue so exceedingly well chiselled, that it is the very image of the statesman or the warrior whom it represents; you might dream that it looked from those stony eyes; you might imagine that it would step from its pedestal. Is it not put in the attitude of one who is about to lead the troops to battle? Could you not conceive it crying, "On, comrades, on!" But it stands there stiff and stolid, and its lips move not. It is dumb, and blind, and motionless. I know some whose imitation of Christ is as if it were cut in marble, there is no life in it. Now, this is not the conformity to Christ's image which the Spirit will give to us. We are not to be mere pictures of Christ, dead and lifeless, but the very life-blood of Christ is to run in our veins, our activity and our energy is to be consecrated and Christ-like, we are to be like him as living men. Not as cold frozen things, or mummies

swathed in the bandages of law, but as living free-men we are to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.

Some there be, too, who imagine that to be confined to the image of Christ Jesus, it will be quite enough to act publicly as Christ would have acted. They are always talking about points of conscience: "Would Christ have done this" or "that?" And then they answer it according to their own fancies. They see some Christian man who walks under "the perfect law of liberty," and is not bound by the "touch not, taste not, handle not," of the old Mosaic spirit, and they cry over him. "Would Christ have done such a thing?" They see a believer laugh, "Would Christ have done it?" If a Christian man keeps a carriage, "Ah," they say, "did Christ ever ride in a carriage?" And so they think that by putting on a face that is more marred than that of any other man, they shall become the very image of Christ Jesus. You know that in the theatres men come forth as kings, "and strut their little hour;" and for awhile they are the very image of Julius Caesar, or of Richard III, and do you suppose that such is the intention of the Holy Spirit, that you and I should be so dressed, that in outward appearance we should be the image of Christ, and yet not be like Christ really and truly? God forbid we should indulge so idle a dream. The fact is, men and brethren, while practically we must be like the Savior, yet the greatest conformity to his image must be within; it must be that unseen spirit, that essential holiness which dwells where only God can see it, which shall constitute the main part of our likeness to Christ. You might put on to-morrow, a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout; you might put sandals on the soles of your feet; you might wear your beard uncut, and so say, "In all this I seek to be like Christ," and you might even ride through the streets of Jerusalem upon "a colt, the foal of an ass," but you would be a great deal more the image of a fool, than you would be the image of Christ. This imitation is not to be in mere externals, it is to be in internals, in the very essence and spirit of your Christian character.

1. In what then is this conformity to be found? I reply, in three things. First, the believer is to be conformed to the image of Christ in character. Now, when we think of Christ, what thoughts arise at once? We think, in the first place, of an humble one, of one who, "though he was rich, yet for

our sakes became poor." We think of a man who was meek and lowly in heart, who took no lordship over the sons of men, but was a servant of servants and washed his disciples' feet. If we would be like Christ we must be humble, we must cast aside that self-conceit which is interwoven into our nature, we must strive against that pride, which is, alas! too natural to us all. When we think of Christ we always bring up before our minds the idea of one who was diligent in his Father's business; we see before us not an idle sluggard, not one who sought his own rest, who slept upon the oar that he ought to tug, or reclined upon the sword with which he should fight. We find him one who went about doing good who knew no rest except that wondrous rest which his holy toil afforded to his spirit. "I have meat to eat," saith he, "that ye know not of." Now if we would be like Christ, we must conquer our constitutional sloth, we must spurn all the softnesses of ease, we must be good soldiers, and bear hardness. We must spend and be spent, if we would bear his image. When we think of Christ, again, we see one who was full of love -- not that love which cants and whines, but the love which is true and honest, and which for love's sake dare not flatter. We see a love which dwelt not in words, but in very deeds; of love which gave its whole self up to the objects which it had chosen. If we would be like Christ we must be pillars of love. We must not be so loving that we yield up everything that is masculine in our nature; our love must be that faithful love which, in faithfulness, gives wounds even to a friend; and yet must it be so deep, so true, that we would prefer to be sacrificed and to be offered up in the most painful manner rather than the objects of our affection should be made to suffer. Oh! we have never come to be like Christ till love is legible upon our very face, till we have got rid of our crabbed and stern visage, till we have had cast out of us that seven-fold devil of intolerance and bigotry. We have never come to be like Christ till we have arms that would embrace a world. We have never come to be like him till we have a heart on which the name of the Church is written, and a breast which bears the names of all the redeemed, as the High Priest bore the breast-plate before the mercy-seat.

But yet, further, I think we always associate with the name of Christ not simply humility, and service, and love, but devotion and prayerfulness. We know that when he had ceased to preach he began to pray. When he had left the mountain side which had been his pulpit, he went to another

mountain which became his silent oratory. The disciples might sleep, but not the Master. They might sleep for sorrow, but he sweats great drops of blood for agony.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer"

We can never be like the Master, till not only in public but in private we are God's own; never till we know the power of knee-work, till we know how to struggle with strong crying, and tears; never till we could almost shed great drops of blood, when we are pleading for the souls of men; never till our heart is ready to burst with a sacred agony, when we are wrestling with God -- never till then shall we be conformed to the image of God's dear Son. Ah, my brethren, I feel, in trying to describe what that image is, like one who handles the brush with a shaking, palsied hand, although he has the outlines of the most beauteous form sketched upon the canvas of the age to paint. Lo! I have daubed where I ought to have been skillful. I have but sought to paint one feature; but who among us can describe the whole? We can but gather up all thoughts and say, one man is admirable for his faith, another for his patience; one is distinguished for his courage, and another for his affection; but he is altogether lovely! Christ is not a mixture of many beauties, but he is all beauty put together.

"Nature, to make his beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own."

We must exhaust all the eulogies which were ever poured upon the heads of the excellent, we must drain dry all the earnest strains of enthusiastic song that were ever cast at the feet of the heroes of this world, and when we have done all this, we have not begun to sing the song which is due to our beloved, our perfect exemplar and covenant head. In moral virtues, then, the Christian is to be conformed to Christ.

2. But, further, there is one thing which is so linked to Christ that you cannot think of him without it, and that is, his cross. You do not see all of Christ till you see his cross. By four nails was he fastened to it; by more

than four sure thoughts is he ever linked in the minds of his people with his agony and his death. If we are ever conformed to Christ, we must bear his cross. Do you see him, Christian? He is despised and rejected of men. Do you see him passing through the midst of a crowd yelling and hooting at him? Men whom he had blessed are cursing him; lame men whom he had healed are using the power which he gave that they may run to scorn him; lips that had been dumb if he had not given them speech are venting blasphemies upon him, and he, the lovely one forsaken of all, goes without the camp bearing his reproach. Do you see him, believer? The world counts him to be the offscouring of all things. It cries, "Away with him, away with him! It is not fit that he should live." It awards him a slave's death. He must not only die, but die as a menial dieth; he must not simply so die, but die without the camp, as a thing accursed and unclean. See there an image of yourself, if you ever be conformed to his likeness; you must bear the cross of suffering; you must bear the shame and spitting of ungodly men. You, too, must become in your measure the song of the drunkard; you must go without the camp, even of his professed followers, you must be crucified to the flesh, and its affections and lusts, you must be dead to the world, and the world must be dead to you, or else you will never completely bear the image of Christ.

And while I talk on this subject I am smitten with grief, for, indeed, if I wanted a living illustration of this, must I not rather find it in contrast than in comparison? O, what multitudes of professors we have who have found out a new way to shun the cross! We have ministers who could preach all the year round, and no man would ever find fault with them. We have some who can prophecy such smooth things, that none of their hearers gnash their teeth in anger against them. We have Christian merchants who find it not at all impossible to keep their profession and yet to be dishonest in their trade. We find men who are first and foremost in all manner of worldliness; they are the world's men, and yet they are Christ's men too, they say. Where they shall stand in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be known I will not say; but I leave that text to declare it in which it is written, "The love of this world is enmity against God." If any man professes to be a Christian, let him count the cost first if he means to be a thorough Christian, and let him put down among the first items loss of reputation, and if he means to be decisive in his

convictions, let him put down, loss of many friends, and let him think it no strange thing when the fiery trial shall come upon him. God grant you, my brothers and sisters, that you may have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and that in the bearing of the cross you may be conformed to his image.

Once more only upon this first point. To-day we think of Christ not merely as the bearer of the cross, but as the wearer of the crown.

"The head that once was crown'd with thorns,
Is crown'd with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victors brow.
No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more;
For hell itself shakes at his name,
And all the heavens adore."

And -- blessed thought! -- the believer is to be conformed to the image of the Crowned One as well as of the Crucified One. If we be cross bearers we shall be crown wearers. If the hand shall feel the nail, it shall grasp the palm. If the foot shall be tightly fastened to the wood, it shall one day be girt with the sandals of immortal bliss. Fear not, believer! It is necessary that you should first bear the image of the sorrowful that you should afterwards bear the image of the glorious. Christ himself came not to his crown except by his cross, he descended that he might ascend, he stooped to conquer, he went into the grave that he might rise above all principalities and powers. As the man-Mediator, he earned his dignity by his sufferings, and you, too, must fight if you would reign, you, too, must endure if you would will, you must run the race if you would obtain the reward. O then let your hearts be cheered! As you have borne "the image of the earthy," you shall also bear "the image of the heavenly." You shall be like him when you shall see him as he is, you shall be perfect, blessed, honored, magnified, and glorified in him. Does he sit at the right hand of God, even the Father? You, too, shall sit at his right hand. Doth the Father say to him, "Well done," and look on him with inexpressible delight? He shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," even to you,

and you shall enter into the joy of your Lord. Is he without a pain, without a fear? Is he without anything to mar the splendor of his magnificence? So shall you be. You are as he was in this world, you shall be in the world to come just what he is there. Come, cross! I stoop my willing shoulders to thee, if I may afterward bow my head to receive that crown. Come, earth! and lay thy heaviest cross upon me. Come, ye adversaries of the truth! and bring your hammer and your nails. Come, thou chief enemy! and bring thy sharpest spear. My soul shall bare her breast, and hold out hands and feet to receive the marks of the Lord Jesus, that in these she may afterwards arise to claim the crown, to claim the image of the glorious, because she has borne the image of the despised.

Now all this, I take it, is contained in my text. We are predestinated to be God formed to the hinge of God's Son in character, in suffering, and, afterwards, in glory.

II. But, secondly, and though it be a very extensive subject, hurriedly, **WHEREFORE SHOULD WE BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY?** Why should we be transformed as unto the image of Christ?

Very many answers spring up, and each one of them claims the preference. But to begin, well may we desire to bear the image of Christ, because it was that which we lost in Eden. We look back to Paradise with many a sigh, but well, I ween, the spiritual mind sighs not for the spice-groves, nor for the verdant walks, nor for the trees luxuriant with fruit. If Eden had been a Sahara, a howling desert, the truly spirituals mind would long to have it back again for one reason, namely, that there man was in the image of his Maker. "Let us make man in our own image," said God, "after our own likeness." All the losses we sustained by Adam's ruin were very little, compared with that great loss of the likeness and image of the immortal and immaculate Deity. Oh! if we had been spotless and undying, like the God whose image Adam bore, we might well have endured to have the earth sterile and barren; and all the pains and pangs which the curse brought upon us, would have been light and trivial, if we had still retained the image of our God.

Now then, my brethren, it is this which Christ restores to us. He re-makes us, takes away the sinful, rebellious visage, which our father bore when he was expelled from the garden, re-stamps God's own face on us, and makes us in the image of the Most High again. Oh! if Eden were a sorrowful loss, and if it be desirable to obtain its Paradise again, surely the inure of God must be desirable first and foremost of all.

But, then, ought not that to be the object of other ambition, which is the ultimate end of God's decree? God, it is true, has predestinated believers to heaven, but that is not all. I do not read in so many words, that this saints predestinated to Paradise, but I do read that they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his dear Son. This is the end of the whole predestination of God, to make his elect like their elder brother, that he may be the first-born among many brethren. And that which God sees great enough to be the object of all his acts in providence, and all his deeds in grace, that which he makes the ultimate end of his predestination, ought certainly never to be a trifle to you and to me; rather, we ought to pant and long for it as the highest desire of our souls.

But again; the image of Christ is the Spirit's latent work in us. In that day, when we are regenerated, the new man is put into us; now in what image is that new man? It is in the image of him that created him. The new man, we are expressly told by Paul is renewed in the image of Christ Jesus. The moment that a sinner believes, there is put into him the first germ of a perfect Christ; it needs but that it should be nourished by the Spirit and continually fed, and it will grow into the perfect stature of a man in Christ. Yet even now in a believer, who was converted but yesterday, there is the image of Christ, though it has not come to the perfect stature. Just as the new-born child is a man, and in a certain sense perfect, and bears completely the image of manhood; yet is it true that that image is not fully developed, so in the new-born believer there is Christ, the indwelling Christ, but it is the Christ of the manger rather than the Christ of the wilderness. There is an infant Christ in every Christian, that Christ is to grow and to expand, and then at last in death, shaking off the coils, the troublesome burden of the old man, this new man which has been growing these years by grace, shed step out, and as the serpent casts off its old slough, and comes out fresh and young covered with azure hues, so

shall the new man leave all corruptions behind, and we shall be discovered to be made in the perfect image of Christ Jesus our Lord and Master. Now, if this be the Spirit's work, certainly it ought to be our love, and we ought to be ever seeking after it.

But further, my dear friends, I need not plead this case with you if you be Christians, for there is not a believer alive who does not pant to be like Christ. If I had but one prayer to pray, and might not pray another, it would be this, "Lord, make me like Christ," for that is to comprehend all our other prayers in one. Like Christ, free from all corruptions should I be; free from infirmity and passion. I might be tempted, but I could say, "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "Like Christ," -- O if that prayer should involve the lion's den, or the furnace fiery heat, 'twere well. 'twere well! We could take these encumbrances upon the blessed estate if we could but once have the fair lands. To be like Christ, -- Oh! what trial would you not endure with it even though you had the direst tribulation coupled therewith. Better to be like Christ in his poverty, in his wanting a place whereon to lay his head; better to be like him as despised and rejected of men, than to be like a Caesar, or the richest, and in the world's eye, the most happy of men. Better try be with Christ in his worst estate than to be with an evil man in his best. If, then, this be the universal prayer and cry of the Christian, shall not we, my brethren, as part of the same family, join in it and say, "Lord, make me to be conformed to the image of Christ, my Lord?"

And after all, if we need anything to whet our appetites and to stimulate our desires once more -- is not this our highest glory on earth, and is not this our crowning privilege above? What more glorious for a man than to be like Christ? I do believe that if the spirit of envy could penetrate the hierarchy of angels, Gabriel would envy the poorest man on earth, because that anon has a possibility of being like Christ, while the angel, though he may be like him in some respects, can never grow into the perfect stature of a man in Christ. I do think, brethren, that if it cattle to the point to-day, and the angelic spirits could have permission to exchange their robes of light for our livery of rags; if they could lay aside their harps to take up the tools of our toil, if they could relinquish their crowns to have their immortal brows moistened with our sweat; if they

could give up the golden streets to tread earth's mire and dirt, they would think it a high boon and a matchless privilege to be allowed to make the exchange, with this proviso, that thereby they might be recognized as being in the likeness of the Son of God. Why this will make believers throughout eternity distinguished. Many a man has thought that a few hour's toil was but a mere trifle -- a few minutes' exposure of his life was a little thing only to be snapped at if he might by that will years of honor and esteem among the sons of men. But what must it be in comparison when these light afflictions, which are but for a moment are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, because these light afflictions put us in the posture and give us the possibility of becoming conformed to the image of Christ. I tell thee, Gabriel, -- if thou canst hear the voice of mortal now -- that sinner though I be, and groaning beneath the load of my imbred sin, mixed though I be with the sons of men, and often groaning in the tents of Kedar; yet I would that change with thee, for I have the hope, the hope to which thou canst not aspire, that aft I have slept in death, I shall wake up in his likeness; and as I have borne "the image of the heavenly," so shall I bear "the image of the heavenly." Thou wilt not scorn me, I know, bright spirit, because I bear the broken and disfigured image of the earthy; they too, wouldst be glad to try bear it if thou mightest afterwards, as the result thereof, bear the irate of the heavenly, towards which thefts Arrest eyes of ravishing delight and inexpressible admiration each hotter. To see the glee of Christ is angels' joy; to wear that face is ours. To bow before it is their delight, but to be transformed into it is our privilege -- a privilege, I dare to say, which no other creature that God has ever made shall possess the privilege of being like the Son of Man, and so, like the Son of God.

III. But, thirdly and lastly, IS IT POSSIBLE? IS IT POSSIBLE?

"I have tried," says Belle, "to make myself like Christ, and I cannot." Indeed, thou canst not. This is art which excels all art. Ah! there is a skill needed to make thee like Christ which thrift enlist never have. Why, sirs, the most wondrous painters, who have never failed before, always fail in the very portrait of Christ. They cannot paint the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. They fail entirely when they once come there. They may labor, they may strive, but he is fairer than the sons of

men. And if so with the earthy image, what must it be with that within?

Orators, before whose eloquence men have been swayed to and fro as the waves are tossed by the fourth wind, have confessed their utter inability, by any figures of speech, ever to reach the excellencies of Christ. Divinest poets, whose hearts have been pregnant with celestial fire, have been compelled to lay down their harps, and relinquish all hope ever to sing the song of songs concerning this fairest Solomon. And must it not be a vastly harder task for a man to be made like Christ? If we can neither paint him nor sing, him, nor preach him, how can we live him, how can we be like him? How can we bear his image if we cannot even paint it? Indeed, if this were our work, it were impracticable, and we might dissuade you from the task. But it is not your work, it is God's work. 'Twas God who predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his son; and God who "made the decree;" will fulfill it himself, and by his omnipotence, the same power which created Christ in the virgin's womb shall create a Christ even in our sinful hearts, and cause our sins to die out before the indwelling of the living Christ.

But wherein lies the hardness of our being made like Christ? I suppose it lies first, in the material to be worked upon. "Oh," saith one, "there is never a possibility of making an image of Christ out of me. Sculptors choose polished marble; I, indeed, am but a rough unhewn stone of the quarry; friable, unworkable I know that the chisel will only blunt its edge upon me; I never can be made like Christ. What! build a temple for God out of bramble bushes? Make a crown for the King of kings out of common pebbles of the brook?" "No," say we, "it cannot be." But, stop, sir, what mattereth the material when you know the great artificer? God is the great artist who has predestinated and decreed that he will make you, who are to-day like a devil, one day to be like Christ. It is a daring task. It is like God. It is an impossible task, it is only fit for one hand and that one has undertaken it and will achieve it. For, sirs, when God decrees a thing, what is to stand in his way? He can make pathways through the flood, he can take the fiery power out of the flame, he can take the drowning influence out of the waters To him all things are possible. Can he not, then, even in the charnel-house of your heart, put a Christ who shall bring a glorious resurrection, put a new life in you, and transmute

even the base metal of your nature, till you shall become like the golden nature of him who is God incarnate? Oh! when we have God to deal with, what mattereth the material? He can overthrow your depravity, can cast off your lust, and make you like your Lord.

"Ah! but," saith one, "there is another difficulty, think what a world I live in. How can I be like Christ? It is very well preaching this, sir, to us. If you had a number of hermits' cells for us all to live in, it might be done. If you would build a large monastery, and let us all live as Christian brethren together, it might be possible; but I tell you, sir, you do not know my business. It cannot be done, sir. I have to mix with men that curse and blaspheme, I cannot be like Christ. Besides, my business is so trying to the temper, so irritating, it cannot be done, sir, I tell you. And then, you do not know we have so many tricks in trade, and our trade has so many temptations in it, that it is very difficult for us to prevent ourselves being decoyed. Sir, it is not possible for us to be like Christ while we have to mix with this wicked world. We get one touch, as it were, put into the picture on a Sunday, and we think we shall be like Christ one day, but the devil puts six black touches in during the week, and spoils the whole, it cannot be done, sir, it is not possible we should ever be like Christ "But God says it shall be done. God has predestinated you if you be a believer to be conformed to the image of his dear Son. Of course Satan will do his best to stay God's decrees; but what shall become of anything that stands in the way of God's decree? As the car of Juggernaut rolls remorselessly on, and crushes any man, be he king or what he may, who dares to place himself in its track so shall God's decree. On, on it goes, and through blood and bones of your carnal nature, and natural depravity, that triumphant chariot of God shall grind. "A hideous figure," say you. Indeed, sirs, you shall find that there is something, hideous in your experience. You will have to suffer for it. If you are in this world you will have to be as Jesus was in this world. Rest assured that though God will make you like Christ, yet inasmuch as you are in a world of sinners, it will necessitate your suffering like him; it will not take from you the power to hear his image, but it will bring about you, as a hornet's nest, all those who hated Christ aforetime. I was standing one day at my window, when living far from London, and I saw on a house opposite a canary bird, which had by some means or other got loose from its cage. It had no

sooner rested upon the roof than about twenty sparrows came round it, and began to pick and pull, and although the poor thing resisted, and flew hither and thither, it stood but a very poor chance in the midst of so many enemies. I remembered that text -- "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her." That will be your lot. Mark this! If you are to be like Christ, you will be a speckled bird, and if you are not pecked upon by others, you may question whether you are not one of their own kind, and therefore they let you alone, and freely associate with you; but if you differ from them, and prove you have another nature than theirs, you will surely be opposed and maligned, even as your Master was.

Once more only and I have done. Many a Christian heart has said, "I think the difficulty about the material is not so great when I think of the omnipotence of God; and the difficulty about the associations is not so very hard, for I can suffer and I am willing to suffer if I may but be like

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Christ, but the great and insurmountable obstacle is this -- that image is so perfect I can never reach it. It is high as heaven what can I know? It surpasses my thoughts, I cannot conceive the ideal, how, then can I reach the feet? If it were to be like David I might hope it, if it were to be made like Josiah, or some of the ancient saints, I might think it possible; but to be like Christ, who is without spot or blemish, and the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, I cannot hope it. I look, sir, I look, and look and look again, till I turn away, tears filling my eyes, and I say, "Oh, it were presumption for such a fallen worm as I, to hope to be like Christ." And did you know it, that while you were thus speaking, you were really getting the thing you thought to be impossible? Or did you know that, while you were gazing on Christ, you were using the only means which can be used to effect the divine purpose? And when you bowed before that image overawed, do you know it was because you began to be made like it? When I come to love the image of Christ it is because I have some measure of likeness to it. It was said of Cicero's works if any man could read them with admiration, he must be in a degree an orator himself. And if any man can read the life of Christ, and really love it, methinks there must be somewhat -- however little -- that is Christ-like within himself. And if you as believers will look much at Christ, you will grow like him;

you shall be transformed from glory to glory as by the image of the Lord. I look at you, I do not grow like you; you look at me, you grow not like me. You look at Christ -- Christ looks at you -- he is photographed on you by his own power of light. Without need of any light beyond himself, he photographs his image on the face of those who live much in fellowship with him, and who contemplate much his character. Now then believer, it is true the image of Christ is sublime, but then it, by the Spirit, makes you into itself, so that the difficulty supplies the means, and that which looks like the obstacle becomes really the means to the attainment thereof. Go again and look at Christ. Go and weep because you are not like him. Go and bow before him with adoration. Go and strain upwards to that great height. In doing so your very failures are successes; your fears are proofs that you are beginning to be like him. Are you not beginning to sorrow as he sorrowed? Your very agony, because you cannot be as he is, is a beginning of the agony which he endured, because he would have had the cup pass from him. I say, sirs, that the more you look at him though it may tend to dispirit you, that very dispiriting is a part of the divine process it is a chipping away from the block of marble an excrescence, which, if not removed, would have malted the image entirely. God help you to live near to Christ, and so shall you be more and more like him every day!

To conclude; one thing is certain, and having mentioned that, I have done. You will either bear the image of Christ, or the image of Satan. You will be developed every one of you, sirs. Either those eyes will develop, till they are the very eyes of fiends, and roll with the hellish leer of blasphemy; that mouth will be developed till it gnashes its teeth in diabolic scorn; that hand will be developed till it has itself as though it were iron, and dares to defy the Eternal, that soul will be developed till it becomes a living hell, a hell as full of pains as hell itself is full of demons; or else -- and God grant that you may have this last alternative! -- or else those eyes will shine till they become like the eyes of Christ, which are as flames of fire that face will be transformed till it becomes like the face of Christ, as though it glowed with heaven itself; that heart will be developed till it becomes a heaven as full of songs as heaven itself is full of music. By faith in Christ, or unbelief, your destiny may be known. Dost thou believe in Christ? Thou art predestinated to be like him. Art thou an unbeliever?

Then if thou diest so, thou shalt be transformed into the image of darkness. God save thee! Christ help thee! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," for "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

God add his blessing for Jesu's sake!

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The Power Of Christ Illustrated By The Resurrection

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we also we look for the Savior; the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, - Philippians 3:20-21

I should mislead you if I called these verses my text, for I intend only to lay stress upon the closing expression, and I read the two verses because they are needful for its explanation. It would require several discourses to expound the whole of so rich a passage as this.

Beloved, how intimately is the whole of our life interwoven with the life of Christ! His first coming has been to us salvation, and we are delivered from the wrath of God through him. We live still because he lives, and never is our life more joyous than when we look most steadily to him. The completion of our salvation in the deliverance of our body from the bondage of corruption, in the raising of our dust to a glorious

immortality, that also is wrapped up with the personal resurrection and quickening power of the Lord Jesus Christ. As his first advent has been our salvation from sin, so his second advent shall be our salvation from the grave. He is in heaven, but, as the apostle saith, "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." We have nothing, we are nothing, apart from him. The past, the present, and the future are only bright as he shines upon them. Every consolation, every hope, every enjoyment we possess, we have received and still retain because of our connection with Jesus Christ our Lord. Apart from him we are naked, and poor, and miserable. I desire to impress upon your minds, and especially upon my own, the need of our abiding in him. As zealous laborers for the glory of God I am peculiarly anxious that you may maintain daily communion with Jesus, for as it is with our covenant blessings, so is it with our work of faith and labor of love, everything depends upon him. All our fruit is found in Jesus. Remember his own words, "Without me ye can do nothing." Our power to work comes wholly from his power. If we work effectually it must always be according to the effectual working of his power in us and through us. Brethren, I pray that our eyes may be steadfastly turned to our Master at this season when our special services are about to commence. Confessing our dependence upon him, and resorting to him in renewed confidence, we shall proceed to our labor with redoubled strength. May we remember where our great strength lieth, and look to him and him alone, away from our own weakness and our own strength too—finding all in him in our work for others as we have found all in him in the matter of the salvation of our own souls. When the multitudes were fed, the disciples distributed the bread, but the central source of that divine commissariat was the Master's own hand. He blessed, he brake, he gave to the disciples, and then the disciples to the multitude. Significant also was one of the last scenes of our Lord's intercourse with his disciples before he was taken up. They had been fishing all the night, but they had taken nothing; it was only when he came that they cast the net on the right side of the ship, and then the net was filled with a great multitude of fishes. Ever must it be so; where he is souls are taken by the men-fishers, but nowhere else. Not the preaching of his servants alone, not the gospel of itself alone, but his presence with his servants is the secret of success. "The Lord working with them," his

co-operating presence in the gospel, this is it which makes it "the power of God unto salvation." Lift up your eyes then, my brethren, confederate with us for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, to the Savior, the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation, through whom and by whom all things shall be wrought to the honor of God, but without whom the most ardent desires, and the most energetic efforts must most certainly fail. I have selected this text with no less a design than this—that every eye may by it be turned to the omnipotent Savior before we enter upon the hallowed engagements which await us.

In the text notice, first of all, the marvel to be wrought by our Lord at his coming; and then gather from it, in the second place, helps to the consideration of the power which is now at this time proceeding from him and treasured in him; and then, thirdly, contemplate the work which we desire to see accomplished, and which we believe will be accomplished on the ground of the power resident in our Lord.

I. First, we have to ask you to **CONSIDER BELIEVINGLY THE MARVEL WHICH IS TO BE WROUGHT BY OUR LORD AT HIS COMING.**

When he shall come a second time he will change our vile body and fashion it like unto his glorious body. What a marvellous change! How great the transformation! How high the ascent! Our body in its present state is called in our translation a "vile body," but if we translate the Greek more literally it is much more expressive, for there we find this corporeal frame called "the body of our humiliation." Not "this humble body," that is hardly the meaning, but the body in which our humiliation is manifested and enclosed. This body of our humiliation our Lord will transform until it is like unto his own. Here read not alone "his glorious body," for that is not the most literal translation, but "the body of his glory;" the body in which he enjoys and reveals his glory. Our Savior had a body here in humiliation; that body was like ours in all respects except that it could see no corruption, for it was undefiled with sin; that body in which our Lord wept, and sweat great drops of blood, and yielded up his spirit, was the body of his humiliation. He rose again from the dead, and he rose in the same body which ascended up into heaven, but he concealed its glory to a very great extent, else had he been too bright to be

seen of mortal eyes. Only when he passed the cloud, and was received out of sight, did the full glory of his body shine forth to ravish the eyes of angels and of glorified spirits. Then was it that his countenance became as the sun shining in its strength. Now, beloved, whatever the body of Jesus may be in his glory, our present body which is now in its humiliation is to be conformed unto it; Jesus is the standard of man in glory. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Here we dwell in this body of our humiliation, but it shall undergo a change, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Then shall we come into our glory, and our body being made suitable to the glory state, shall be fitly called the body of glory. We need not curiously pry into the details of the change, nor attempt to define all the differences between the two estates of our body; for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," and we may be content to leave much to be made known to us hereafter. Yet though we see through a glass darkly, we nevertheless do see something, and would not shut our eyes to that little. We know not yet as we are known, but we do know in part, and that part knowledge is precious. The gates have been ajar at times, and men have looked awhile, and beheld and wondered. Three times, at least, human eyes have seen something of the body of glory. The face of Moses, when he came down from the mount, shone so that those who gathered around him could not look thereon, and he had to cover it with a veil. In that lustrous face of the man who had been forty days in high communion with God, you behold some gleams of the brightness of glorified manhood. Our Lord made a yet clearer manifestation of the glorious body when he was transfigured in the presence of the three disciples. When his garments became bright and glistening, whiter than any fuller could make them, and he himself was all aglow with glory, his disciples sew end marvelled. The face of Stephen is a third window as it were through which we may look at the glory to be revealed, for even his enemies as they gazed upon the martyr in his confession of Christ, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Those three transient gleams of the morning light may serve as tokens to us to help us to form some faint idea of what the body of the glory of Christ and the body of our own glory will be.

Turning to that marvellous passage in the Corinthians, wherein the veil seems to be more uplifted than it ever had been before or since, we learn a few particulars worthy to be rehearsed. The body while here below, is corruptible, subject to decay; it gradually becomes weak through old age, at last it yields to the blows of death, falls into the ground, and becomes the food of worms. But the new body shall be incorruptible, it shall not be subject to any process of disease, decay, or decline, and it shall never, through the lapse of ages, yield to the force of death. For the immortal spirit it shall be the immortal companion. There are no graves in heaven, no knell ever saddened the New Jerusalem. The body here is weak, the apostle says "it is sown in weakness;" it is subject to all sorts of infirmities in life, and in death loses all strength. It is weak to perform our own will, weaker still to perform the heavenly will; it is weak to do and weak to suffer: but it is to be "raised in power, all infirmity being completely removed." How far this power will be physical and how far spiritual we need not speculate; where the material ends and the spiritual begins we need not define; we shall be as the angels, and we have found no difficulty in believing that these pure spirits "excel in strength," nor in understanding Peter when he says that angels are "greater in power and might." Our body shall be "raised in power."

Here, too, the body is a natural or soulish body—a body fit for the soul, for the lowest faculties of our mental nature but according to the apostle in the Corinthians, it is to be raised a spiritual body, adapted to the noblest portion of our nature, suitable to be the dwelling-place and the instrument of our new-born grace-given life. This body at present is no assistance to the spirit of prayer or praise; it rather hinders than helps us in spiritual exercises. Often the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak. We sleep when we ought to watch, and faint when we should pursue. Even its joys as well as its sorrows tend to distract devotion: but when this body shall be transformed, it shall be a body suitable for the highest aspirations of our perfected and glorified humanity—a spiritual body like unto the body of the glory of Christ. Here the body is sinful, its members have been instruments of unrighteousness. It is true that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; but, alas! there are traces about it of the time when it was a den of thieves. The spots and wrinkles of sin are not yet removed. Its materialism is not yet so refined as to be an

assistance to the spirit; it gravitates downwards, and it has a bias from the right line; but it awaits the last change, and then it shall be perfectly sinless, as alabaster white and pure, upon which stain of sin did never come; like the newly driven snow, immaculately chaste. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Being sinless, the body when it shall be raised again shall be painless. Who shall count the number of our pains while in this present house of clay? Truly we that are in this tabernacle do groan. Does it not sometimes appear to the children of sickness as if this body were fashioned with a view to suffering; as if all its nerves, sinews, veins, pulses, vessels, and valves, were parts of a curious instrument upon which every note of the entire gamut of pain might be produced? Patience, ye who linger in this shattered tenement, a house not made with hands awaits you. Up yonder no sorrow and sighing are met with; the chastising rod shall fall no longer when the faultiness is altogether removed. As the new body will be without pain, so will it be superior to weariness. The glorybody will not yield to faintness, nor fail through languor. Is it not implied that the spiritual body does not need to sleep, when we read that they serve God day and night in his temple? In a word, the bodies of the saints, like the body of Christ, will be perfect; there shall be nothing lacking and nothing faulty. If saints die in the feebleness of age they shall not rise thus; or if they have lost a sense or a limb or are halt or maimed, they shall not be so in heaven, for as to body and soul "they are without fault before the throne of God." "We shall be like him," is true of all the saints, and hence none will be otherwise than fair, and beautiful, and perfect. The righteous shall be like Christ, of whom it is still true that not a bone of him shall be broken, so not a part of our body after its change shall be bruised, battered, or otherwise than perfect.

Put all together, brethren, and what a stretch it is from this vile body to the glorious body which shall be! yet when Christ comes this miracle of miracles shall be wrought in the twinkling of an eye. Heap up epithets descriptive of the vileness of this body, think of it in all its weakness, infirmity, sin, and liability to death; then admire our Lord's body in all its holiness, happiness, purity, perfection, and immortality; and know

assuredly that, at Christ's coming, this change shall take place upon every one of the elect of God. All believers shall undergo this marvellous transformation in a moment. Behold and wonder! Imagine that the change should occur to you now. What a display of power! My imagination is not able to give you a picture of the transformation; but those who will be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of God will undergo it, and so enter glory without death. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," and therefore the bodies of living believers shall in the twinkling of an eye pass from the one state into the other; they shall be transformed from the vile to the glorious, from the state of humiliation into the state of glory, by the power of the coming Savior.

The miracle is amazing, if you view it as occurring to those who shall be alive when Christ comes. Reflect, however, that a very large number of the saints when the Lord shall appear a second time will already be in their graves. Some of these will have been buried long enough to have become corrupt. If you could remove the mould and break open the coffin-lid, what would you find but foulness and putrefaction? But those mouldering relics are the body of the saint's humiliation, and that very body is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. Admire the miracle as you survey the mighty change! Look down into the loathsome tomb, and, if you can endure it, gaze upon the putrid mass; this, even this, is to be transformed into Christ's likeness. What a work is this! And what a Savior is he who shall achieve it! Go a little further. Many of those whom Christ will thus raise will have been buried so long that all trace of them will have disappeared; they will have melted back into the common dust of earth, so that if their bones were searched for not a vestige of them could be found, nor could the keenest searcher after human remains detect a single particle. They have slept in quiet through long ages in their lonely graves, till they have become absorbed into the soil as part and parcel of mother earth. No, there is not a bone, nor a piece of a bone left; their bodies are as much one with earth as the drop of rain which fell upon the wave is one with the sea: yet shall they be raised. The trumpet call shall fetch them back from the dust with which they have mingled, and dust to dust, bone to bone, the anatomy shall be rebuilt and then refashioned. Does your wonder grow? does not your

faith accept with joy the marvel, and yet feel it to be a marvel none the less?

Son of man, I will lead thee into an inner chamber more full of wonder yet. There are many thousands of God's people to whom a quiet slumber in the grave was denied; they were cut off by martyrdom, were sawn asunder, or cast to the dogs. Tens of thousands of the precious bodies of the saints have perished by fire, their limbs have been blown in clouds of smoke to the four winds of heaven, and even the handful of ashes which remained at the foot of the stake their relentless persecutors have thrown into rivers to be carried to the ocean, and divided to every shore. Some of the children of the resurrection were devoured by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatres or left a prey to kites and ravens on the gibbet. In all sorts of ways have the saints' bodies been hacked and hewn, and, as a consequence, the particles of those bodies have no doubt been absorbed into various vegetable growths, and having been eaten by animals have mingled with the flesh of beasts; but what of that? "What of that?" say you, how can these bodies be refashioned? By what possibility can the selfsame bodies be raised again? I answer it needs a miracle to make any of these dry bones live, and a miracle being granted, impossibility vanishes. He who formed each atom from nothing can gather each particle again from confusion. The omniscient Lord of providence tracks each molecule of matter, and knows its position and history as a shepherd knows his sheep; and if it be needful to constitute the identity of the body, to regather every atom, he can do it. It may not, however, be needful at all, and I do not assert that it will be, for there may be a true identity without sameness of material; even as this my body is the same as that in which I lived twenty years ago, and yet in all probability there is not a grain of the same matter in it. God is able then to cause that the same body which on earth we wear in our humiliation, which we call a vile body, shall be fashioned like unto Christ's body. No difficulties, however stern, that can be suggested from science or physical law, shall for a single instant stand in the way of the accomplishment of this transformation by Christ the King. What marvels rise before me! indeed, it needs faith, and we thank God we have it. The resurrection of Christ has for ever settled in our minds, beyond all controversy, the resurrection of all who are in him; "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,

even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Still it is a marvel of marvels, a miracle which needs the fullness of the deity. Of whom but God, very God of very God, could it be said that he shall change our bodies, and make them like unto his glorious body?

I know how feebly I have spoken upon this sublime subject, but I am not altogether regretful of that, for I do not wish to fix your thoughts on my words for a single moment; I only desire your minds to grasp and grapple with the great thought of the power of Christ, by which he shall raise and change the bodies of the saints.

II. We will now pass on. Here is the point we aim at. Consider, in the second place, that THIS POWER WHICH IS TO RAISE THE DEAD IS RESIDENT IN CHRIST AT THIS MOMENT.

So saith the text, "according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." It is not some new power which Christ will take to himself in the latter days and then for the first time display, but the power which will arouse the dead is the same power which is in him at this moment, which is going forth from him at this instant in the midst of his church and among the sons of men. I call your attention to this, and invite you to follow the track of the text.

First notice that all the power by which the last transformation will be wrought is ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ now as the Savior. "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus." When Christ raises the dead it will be as a Savior, and it is precisely in that capacity that we need the exercise of his power at this moment. Fix this, my brethren, in your hearts; we are seeking the salvation of men, and we are not seeking a hopeless thing, for Jesus Christ is able as a Savior, to subdue all things, to himself; so the text expressly tells us. It doth not merely say that as a raiser of the dead he is able to subdue all things, but as the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. His titles are expressly given, he is set forth to us as the Lord, the Savior, the Anointed, and in that capacity is said to be able to subdue all things to himself. Happy tidings for us! My brethren, how large may our prayers be for the conversion of the sons of men, how great our expectations, how confident our efforts! Nothing is too hard for our Lord Jesus Christ;

nothing in the way of saving work is beyond his power. If as a Savior he wakes the dead in the years to come, he can quicken the spiritually dead even now. These crowds of dead souls around us in this area and in these galleries, he can awaken by his quickening voice and living Spirit. The resurrection is to be according to the working of his mighty power, and that same energy is in operation now. In its fullness the power dwells in him, let us stir him up, let us cry unto him mightily, and give him no rest till he put forth that selfsame power now. Think not, my brethren, that this would be extraordinary and unusual. Your own conversion, if you have truly been raised from your spiritual death, was by the same power that we desire to see exerted upon others. Your own regeneration was indeed as remarkable an instance of divine power as the resurrection itself shall be. Ay, and I venture to say it, your spiritual life this very day or any day you choose to mention, is in itself a display of the same working which shall transform this vile body into its glorious condition. The power of the resurrection is being put forth to-day, it is pulsing through the quickened portion of this audience, it is heaving with life each bosom that beats with love to God, it is preserving the life-courses in the souls of all the spiritual, so that they go not back to their former death in sin. The power which will work the resurrection will be wonderful, but it will be no new thing. It is everywhere to be beheld in operation in the church of God at this very moment by those who have eyes to see it; and herein I join with the apostle in his prayer "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places' far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Note next that the terms of our text imply that opposition may be

expected to this power, but that all resistance will be overcome. That word "subdue" supposes a force to be conquered and brought into subjection. "He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Herein is a great wonder! There will be no opposition to the resurrection. The trumpet sound shall bring the dead from their graves, and no particle shall disobey the summons; but to spiritual resurrection there is resistance—resistance which only omnipotence can vanquish. In the conversion of sinners natural depravity is an opposing force; for men are set upon their sins, and love not the things of God, neither will they hearken to the voice of mercy. My brethren, to remove all our fears concerning our Lord's ability to save, the word is here used, "He is able," not only to raise all things from the dead, but "to subdue all things to himself." Here again I would bid you take the encouragement the text presents you. If there be opposition to the gospel, he is able to subdue it. If in one man there is a prejudice, if in another man the heart is darkened with error, if one man hates the very name of Jesus, if another is so wedded to his sins that he cannot part from them, if opposition has assumed in some a very determined character, does not the text meet every case? "He is able to subdue all things," to conquer them, to break down the barriers that interpose to prevent the display of his power, and to make those very barriers the means of setting forth that power the more gloriously. "He is able even to subdue all things." O take this to the mercy-seat, you who will be seeking the souls of men this month! Take it to him and plead this word of the Holy Spirit in simple, childlike faith. When there is a difficulty you cannot overcome, take it to him, for he is "able to subdue."

Note next, that the language of our text includes all supposable cases. He is able to "subdue all things unto himself," not here and there one, but "all things." Brethren, there is no man in this world so fallen, debased, depraved, and wilfully wicked, that Jesus cannot save him—not even among those who live beyond the reach of ordinary ministry. He can bring the heathen to the gospel, or the gospel to them. The wheels of providence can be so arranged that salvation shall be brought to the outcasts; even war, famine, and plague, may become messengers for Christ, for he, too, rides upon the wings of the wind. There lived some few years ago in Perugia, in Italy, a man of the loosest morale and the worst

conceivable disposition. He had given up all religion, he loathed God, and had arrived at such a desperate state of mind that he had conceived an affection for the devil, and endeavored to worship the evil one. Imagining Satan to be the image and embodiment of all rebellion, free-thinking, and lawlessness, he deified him in his own mind, and desired nothing better than to be a devil himself. On one occasion, when a Protestant missionary had been in Perugia preaching, a priest happened to say in this man's hearing, that there were Protestants in Perugia, the city was being defiled by heretics. "And who do you think Protestants are?" said he. "They are men who have renounced Christ and worship the devil." A gross and outrageous lie was this, but it answered far other ends than its author meant. The man hearing this, thought, "Oh, then, I will go and meet with them, for I am much of their mind;" and away he went to the Protestant meeting, in the hope of finding an assembly who propagated lawlessness and worshipped the devil. He there heard the gospel, and was saved. Behold in this and in ten thousand cases equally remarkable, the ability of our Lord to subdue all things unto himself. How can any man whom God ordains to save escape from that eternal love which is as omnipresent as the deity itself? "He is able to subdue all things to himself." If his sword cannot reach the far off ones his arrows can, and even at this hour they are sharp in his enemy's hearts. No boastful Goliath can stand before our David; though the weapon which he uses to-day be but a stone from the brook, yet shall the Philistine be subdued. If there should be in this place a Deist, an Atheist, a Romanist, or even a lover of the devil, if he be but a man, mercy yet can come to him. Jesus Christ is able to subdue him unto himself. None have gone too far, and none are too hardened. While the Christ lives in heaven we need never despair of any that are still in this mortal life—"He is able to subdue all things unto himself."

You will observe, in the text that nothing is said concerning the unfitness of the means. My fears often are lest souls should not be saved by our instrumentality because of faultiness in us; we fear lest we should not be prayerful enough or energetic or earnest enough; or that it should be said, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." But the text seems to obliterate man altogether—"He is able to subdue all things unto himself"—that is to say, Jesus does it, Jesus can do it, will do

it all. By the feeblest means he can work mightily, can take hold of us, unfit as we are for service, and make us fit, can grasp us in our folly and teach us wisdom, take us in our weakness and make us strong. My brethren, if we had to find resources for ourselves, and to rely upon ourselves, our enterprise might well be renounced, but since he is able, we will cast the burden of this work on him, and go to him in believing prayer, asking him to work mightily through us to the praise of his glory, for "He is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Note that the ability is said in the text to be present with the Savior now. I have already pointed that out to you, but I refer to it again. The resurrection is a matter of the future, but the working which shall accomplish the resurrection is a matter of the present. "According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Jesus is as strong now as he ever will be, for he changes not. At this moment he is as able to convert souls as at the period of the brightest revival, or at Pentecost itself. There are no ebbs and flows with Christ's power. Omnipotence is in the hand that once was pierced, permanently abiding there. Oh, if we could but rouse it; if we could but bring the Captain of the host to the field again, to fight for his church, to work his servants! What marvels should we see, for he is able. We are not straitened in him, we are straitened in ourselves if straitened at all.

Once more, for your comfort be it remembered that the fact of there having been, as it were, a considerable time in which few have been converted to Christ, is no proof that his power is slackening; for it is well known to you that very few have as yet been raised from the dead, only here and there one like Lazarus and the young man at the gates of Nain, but you do not therefore doubt the Lord's power to raise the dead. Though he tarrieth we do not mistrust his power to fulfill his promise in due time. Now the power which is restrained, as it were, so that it does not work the resurrection yet, is the same which may have been restrained in the Christian church for awhile, but which will be as surely put forth ere long in conversion as it will be in the end of time to accomplish the resurrection. Let us cry unto our Lord, for he has but to will it and thousands of sinners will be saved; let us lift up our hearts to him who has but to speak the word and whole nations shall be born unto

him. The resurrection will not be a work occupying centuries, it will be accomplished at once; and so it may be in this house of prayer, and throughout London, and throughout the world, Christ will do a great and speedy work to the amazement of all beholders. He will send forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, and rule in the midst of his enemies. He will unmask his batteries, he will spring his mines, he will advance his outworks, he will subdue the city of his adversaries, and ride victoriously through the Bozrah of his foes. Who shall stay his hand? Who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?"

I wish we had time to work out the parallel which our text suggests, between the resurrection and the subduing of all things. The resurrection will be worked by the divine power, and the subduing of sinners is a precisely similar instance of salvation. All men are dead in sin, but he can raise them. Many of them are corrupt with vice, but he can transform them. Some of them are, as it were, lost to all hope, like the dead body scattered to the winds, desperate cases for whom even pity seems to waste her sighs; but he who raises the dead of all sorts, with a word can raise sinners of all sorts by the selfsame power. And as the dead when raised are made like to Christ, so the wicked when converted are made like to Jesus too. Brilliant examples of virtue shall be found in those who were terrible instances of vice; the most depraved and dissolute shall become the most devout and earnest. From the vile body to the glory-body, what a leap, and from the sinner damnable in lust to the saint bright with the radiance of sanctity, what a space! The leap seems very far, but omnipotence can bridge the chasm. The Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to do it; he is able to do it in ten thousand thousand cases, able to do it at this very moment. My anxious desire is to engrave this one thought upon your hearts, my brethren and sisters, yea, to write it on the palms of those hands with which you are about to serve the Lord, learn it and forget it not—almighty power lies with Jesus to achieve the purpose upon which our heart is set, namely, the conversion of many unto himself.

III. I said I would ask you to consider, in the third place, **THE WORK WHICH WE DESIRE TO SEE ACCOMPLISHED**. I will not detain you however, with that consideration farther than this.

Brethren, we long to see the Savior subduing souls unto himself. Not to our way of thinking, not to our church, not to the honor of our powers of persuasion, but "unto himself." "He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." O sinner, how I wish thou wert subdued to Jesus, to kiss those dear feet that were nailed for thee, to love in life him who loved thee to the death. Ah! soul, it were a blessed subjection for thee. Never subject of earthly monarch so happy in his king as thou wouldst be. God is our witness, we who preach the gospel, we do not want to subdue you to ourselves, as though we would rule you and be lords over your spirits. It is to Jesus, to Jesus only that we would have you subdued. O that you desired this subjection, it would be liberty, and peace, and joy to you!

Notice that this subjection is eminently to be desired, since it consists in transformation. Catch the thought of the text. He transforms the vile body into his glorious body, and this is a part of the subjection of all things unto himself. But do you call that subjection? Is it not a subjection to be longed after with an insatiable desire, to be so subdued to Christ that I, a poor, vile sinner, may become like him, holy, harmless, undefiled? This is the subjection that we wish for you, O unconverted ones. We trust we have felt it ourselves, we pray you may feel it too. He is able to give it to you. Ask it of him at once. Now breathe the prayer, now believe that the Savior can work the transformation even in you, in you at this very moment. And, O my brethren in the faith, have faith for sinners now. While they are pleading plead for them that this subjection which is an uplifting, this conquering which is a liberating, may be accomplished in them.

For, remember again, that to be subjected to Christ is, according to our text, to be fitted for heaven. He will change our vile body and make it like the body of his glory. The body of the glory is a body fitted for glory, a body which participates in glory. The Lord Jesus can make you, sinner, though now fitted for hell, fitted for heaven, fitted for glory, and breathe into you now an anticipation of that glory, in the joy and peace of mind which his pardon will bring to you. It must be a very sad thing to be a soldier under any circumstances; to have to cut and hack and kill and subdue, even in a righteous cause, is cruel work; but to be a soldier of

King Jesus is an honor and a joy. The service of Jesus is a grand service. Brethren, we have been earnestly seeking to capture some hearts that are here present, to capture them for Jesus. It has been a long and weary siege up till this hour. We have summoned them to surrender, and opened fire upon them with the gospel, but as yet in vain. I have striven to throw a few live shells into the very heart of their city, in the form of warning and threatening and exhortation. I know there have been explosions in the hearts of some of you, which have done your sins some damage, killed some of the little ones that would have grown up to greater iniquity. You have been carefully blockaded by providence and grace. Your hearts have found no provision for joy in sin, no helps to peace in unrighteousness. How I wish I could starve you out until you would yield to my Lord, the crown Prince, who again to-day demands that you yield to him. It is dreadful to compel a city to open its gates unwillingly to let an enemy come in; for however gentle be the enemy his face is an unwelcome sight to the vanquished. But oh! how I wish I could burst open the gates of a sinner's heart to-day, for the Prince Emmanuel to come in. He who is at your gates is not an alien monarch, he is your rightful prince, he is your friend and lover. It will not be a strange face that you will see, when Jesus comes to reign in you. When the King in his beauty wins your soul, you will think yourselves a thousand fools that you did not receive him before. Instead of fearing that he will ransack your soul, you will open all its doors and invite him to search each room. You will cry, "Take all, thou blessed monarch, it shall be most mine when it is thine. Take all, and reign and rule." I propound terms of capitulation to you, O sinner. They are but these: yield up yourself to Christ, give up your works and ways, both good and bad, and trust in him to save you, and be his servant henceforth and for ever. While I thus invite you, I trust he will speak through me to you and win you to himself. I shall not plead in vain, the word shall not fall to the ground. I fall back upon the delightful consolation of our text, "He is able to subdue all things unto himself." May he prove his power this morning. Amen and Amen.

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The Power Of The Holy Ghost

The power of the Holy Ghost. - Romans 15:13

Power is the special and peculiar prerogative of God, and God alone. "Twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." God is God; and power belongeth to him. If he delegates a portion of it to his creatures, yet still it is *his* power. The sun, although he is "like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race," yet has no power to perform his motions except as God directs him. The stars, although they travel in their orbits, and none could stay them, yet have neither might nor force, except that which God daily infuses into them. The tall archangel, near his throne, who outshines a comet in its blaze, though he is one of those who excel in strength, and hearken to the voice of the commands of God, yet has no might except that which his Maker gives to him. As for Leviathan, who so maketh the sea to boil like a pot, that one would think the deep were hoary; as for Behemoth, who drinketh up Jordan at a draught, and boasteth that he can snuff up rivers; as for those majestic creatures that are found on earth, they owe their strength to him who fashioned their bones of steel, and made their sinews of brass. And when we think of man, if he has might or power, it is so small and insignificant, that we can scarcely call it such; yea, when it is at its greatest - when he sways his sceptre, when he commands hosts, when he rules nations - still the power belongeth unto God; and it is true, "Twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." This exclusive prerogative of God, is to be found in each of the three persons of the glorious Trinity. The Father hath power; for by his word were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them; by his strength all things stand, and through him they fulfil their destiny. The Son hath power; for, like his Father, he is the Creator of all things; "Without him was not anything made that was made," and "by him all things consist." And the Holy Spirit hath power. It is concerning the power of the Holy Ghost that I shall speak this morning; and may you have a practical

exemplification of that attribute in your own hearts, when you shall feel that the influence of the Holy Ghost is being poured out upon me, so that I am speaking the words of the living God to your souls, and bestowed upon you when you are feeling the effects of it in your own spirits.

We shall look at the power of the Holy Ghost in three ways this morning. First, *the outward and visible displays of it*; second, *the inward and spiritual manifestations of it*; and third, *the future and expected works thereof*. The power of the Spirit will thus, I trust, be made clearly present to your souls.

I. First, then, we are to view the power of the Spirit in the OUTWARD AND VISIBLE DISPLAYS OF IT. The power of the Spirit has not been dormant; it has exerted itself. Much has been done by the Spirit of God already; more than could have been accomplished by any being except the Infinite, Eternal, Almighty Jehovah, of whom the Holy Spirit is one person. There are four works which are the outward and manifest signs of the power of the Spirit; creation works; resurrection works; works of attestation, or of witness; and works of grace. Of each of these works I shall speak very briefly.

1. First, the Spirit has manifested the omnipotence of his power in *creation works*; for though not very frequently in Scripture, yet sometimes creation is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the Father and the Son. The creation of the heavens above us, is said to be the work of God's Spirit. This you will see at once by referring to the sacred Scriptures, Job 26, 13th verse, "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent." All the stars of heaven are said to have been placed aloft by the Spirit, and one particular constellation called the "crooked serpent," is specially pointed out as his handiwork. He looseth the bands of Orion; he bindeth the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and binds Arcturus with his suns. He made all those stars that shine in heaven. The heavens were garnished by his hands, and he formed the crooked serpent by his might. So, also, in those continued acts of creation which are still performed in the world; as the bringing forth of man and animals, their birth and generation. These are ascribed also to the Holy Ghost. If you look at the 104th Psalm, at the

29th verse you will read, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth." So that the creation of every man is the work of the Spirit; and the creation of all life, and all flesh-existence in this world, is as much to be ascribed to the power of the Spirit, as the first garnishing of the heavens, or the fashioning of the crooked serpent. But if you look in the first chapter of Genesis, you will there see more particularly set forth that peculiar operation of power upon the universe which was put forth by the Holy Spirit; you will then discover what was his special work. In the 2d verse of the first chapter of Genesis, we read, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." We know not how remote the period of the creation of this globe may be - certainly many millions of years before the time of Adam. Our planet has passed through various stages of existence, and different kinds of creatures have lived on its surface, all of which have been fashioned by God. But before that era came, wherein man should be its principal tenant and monarch, the Creator gave up the world to confusion. He allowed the inward fires to burst up from beneath, and melt all the solid matter, so that all kinds of substances were commingled in one vast mass of disorder. The only name you could give to the world, then, was that it was a chaotic mass of matter; what it should be, you could not guess or define. It was entirely "without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The Spirit came, and stretching his broad wings, bade the darkness disperse, and as he moved over it, all the different portions of matter came into their places, and it was no longer "without form, and void;" but became round, like its sister planets, and moved, singing the high praises of God - not discordantly, as it had done before, but as one great note in the vast scale of creation. Milton very beautifully describes this work of the Spirit, in thus bringing order out of confusion, when the King of Glory, in his powerful Word and Spirit, came to create new worlds: -

"On heavenly ground they stood; and from the shore
They viewed the vast, immeasurable abyss,
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds

And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
Heaven's height, and with the centre mix the pole.

"Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,
Said then the Omnific Word; your discord end.
Then on the watery calm,
His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread
And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth
Throughout the fluid mass."

This you see, then, is the power of the Spirit. Could we have seen that earth all in confusion, we should have said, "Who can make a world out of this?" The answer would have been, "The power of the Spirit can do it. By the simple spreading of his dove-like wings, he can make all the things come together. Upon that there shall be order where there was naught but confusion." Nor is this all the power of the Spirit. We have seen some of his works in creation. But there was one particular instance of creation in which the Holy Spirit was more especially concerned; viz., the formation of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a woman, and made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet, the power that begat him was entirely in God the Holy Spirit - as the Scriptures express it, "The Holy One of Israel shall overshadow thee." He was begotten, as the Apostles' Creed says, begotten of the Holy Ghost. "That holy thing which is born of thee shall be called the Son of the Highest." The corporeal frame of the Lord Jesus Christ was a masterpiece of the Holy Spirit. I suppose his body to have excelled all others in beauty; to have been like that of the first man, the very pattern of what the body is to be in heaven, when it shall shine forth in all its glory. That fabric, in all its beauty and perfection, was modeled by the Spirit. "In his book were all the members written, when as yet there were none of them." He fashioned and formed him; and here again we have another instance of the creative energy of the Spirit.

2. A second manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power is to be found in the *resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ*. If ye have ever studied this subject, ye have perhaps been rather perplexed to find that sometimes the resurrection of Christ is ascribed to himself. By his own power and

godhead he could not be held by the bond of death, but as he willingly gave up his life he had power to take it up again. In another portion of Scripture, you find it ascribed to God the Father: "He raised him up from the dead:" "Him hath God the Father exalted." And many other passages of similar import. But, again, it is said in Scripture that Jesus Christ was raised by the Holy Spirit. Now, all these things were true. He was raised by the Father Because the Father said, "Loose the prisoner - let him go. Justice is satisfied. My law requires no more satisfaction - vengeance has had its due - let him go." Here he gave an official message which delivered Jesus from the grave. He was raised by his own majesty and power, because he had a right to come out; and he felt he had, and therefore "burst the bonds of death: he could be no longer holden of them." But he was raised by the Spirit as to that energy which his mortal frame received, by the which it rose again from the grave after having lain there for three days and nights. If you want proofs of this you must open your Bibles again, 1 Peter 3:18. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit." And a further proof you may find in Romans 8:11 - (I love sometimes to be textual, for I believe the great fault of Christians is that they do not search the Scriptures enough, and I will make them search them when they are here if they do not do so anywhere else.) - "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The resurrection of Christ, then, was effected by the agency of the Spirit! And here we have a noble illustration of his omnipotence. Could you have stepped, as angels did, into the grave of Jesus, and seen his sleeping body, you would have found it cold as any other corpse. Lift up the hand; it falls by the side. Look at the eye; it is glazed. And there is a death-thrust which must have annihilated life. See his hands: the blood distills not from them. They are cold and motionless. Can that body live? Can it start up? Yes; and be an illustration of the might of the Spirit. For when the power of the Spirit came on him, as it was when it fell upon the dry bones of the valley, "he arose in the majesty of his divinity, and, bright and shining, astonished the watchmen so that they fled away; yea, he arose no more to die, but to live forever, King of kings and Prince of the kings of

the earth."

3. The third of the works of the Holy Spirit, which have so wonderfully demonstrated his power, are *attestation works*. I mean by this - works of witnessing. When Jesus Christ went into the stream of baptism in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and proclaimed him God's beloved son. That was what I style an attestation work. And when afterwards Jesus Christ raised the dead, when he healed the leper, when he spoke to diseases and they fled apace, when demons rushed in thousands from those who were possessed of them, it was done by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit dwelt in Jesus without measure, and by that power all those miracles were worked. These were attestation works. And when Jesus Christ was gone, you will remember that master attestation of the Spirit, when he came like a rushing mighty wind upon the assembled apostles, and cloven tongues sat upon them; and you will remember how he attested their ministry, by giving them to speak with tongues as he gave them utterance; and how, also, miraculous deeds were wrought by them, how they taught, how Peter raised Dorcas, how he breathed life into Enticus, how great deeds were wrought by the apostles as well as their Master - so that "mighty signs and wonders were done by the Holy Ghost, and many believed thereby." Who will doubt the power of the Holy Spirit after that? Ah! Those Socinians who deny the existence of the Holy Ghost and his absolute personality, what will they do when we get them on creation, resurrection, and attestation? They must rush in the very teeth of Scripture. But mark! It is a stone upon which if any man fall he shall be bruised; but if it fall upon him, as it will do if he resists it, it shall grind him to powder. The Holy Spirit has power omnipotent, even the power of God.

4. Once more, if we want another outward and visible sign of the power of the Spirit, we may look at the *works of grace*. Behold a city where a soothsayer hath the power - who has given out himself to be some great one, a Philip enters it and preaches the Word of God; straightway a Simon Magus loses his power and himself seeks for the power of the Spirit to be given to him, fancying it might be purchased with money. See, in modern times, a country where the inhabitants live in miserable wigwams, feeding on reptiles and the meanest creatures; observe them

bowing down before their idols and worshiping their false gods, and so plunged in superstition, so degraded and debased, that it became a question whether they had souls or not; behold a Moffat go with the Word of God in his hand, hear him preach as the Spirit gives him utterance, and accompanies that Word with power. They cast aside their idols - they hate and abhor their former lusts; they build houses, wherein they dwell; they become clothed, and in their right mind. They break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder; the uncivilized become civilized; the savage becomes polite; he who knew nothing begins to read the Scriptures: thus out of the mouths of Hottentots, God attests the power of his mighty Spirit. Take a household in this city - and we could guide you to many such - the father is a drunkard; he has been the most desperate of characters; see him in his madness, and you might just as well meet an unchained tiger as meet such a man. He seems as if he could rend a man to pieces who should offend him. Mark his wife. She, too, has a spirit in her, and when he treats her ill she can resist him; many broils have been seen in that house. And often has the neighborhood been disturbed by the noise created there. As for the poor little children - see them in their rags and nakedness, poor untaught things. Untaught, did I say? They are taught and well taught in the devil's school, and are growing up to be the heirs of damnation. But some one whom God has blessed by his Spirit is guided to the house. He may be but an humble city missionary, perhaps, but he speaks to such a one: "Oh!" says he, "come and listen to the voice of God." Whether it is by his own agency, or a minister's preaching, the Word, which is quick and powerful, cuts to the sinner's heart. The tears run down his cheeks - such as had never been seen before. He shakes and quivers. The strong man bows down - the mighty man trembles - and those knees that never shook begin to knock together. That heart which never quailed before now begins to shake before the power of the Spirit. He sits down on an humble bench by the penitent; he lets his knees bend, whilst his lips utter a child's prayer; but, whilst a child's prayer, a prayer of a child of God. He becomes a changed character. Mark the reformation in his house! That wife of his becomes the decent matron. Those children are the credit of the house, and in due time they grow up like olive branches round his table, adorning his house like polished stones. Pass by the house - no noise or broils, but songs of Zion. See him - no drunken revelry; he has drained his last cup, and, now forswearing it, he comes to

God and is his servant. Now, you will not hear at midnight the bacchanalian shout; but should there be a noise, it will be the sound of the solemn hymn of praise to God. And, now, is there not such a thing as the power of the Spirit? Yes! And those must have witnessed it, and seen it. I know a village, once perhaps the most profane in England - a village inundated by drunkenness and debauchery of the worst kind, where it was impossible almost for an honest traveler to stop in the public house without being annoyed by blasphemy; a place noted for incendiaries and robbers. One man, the ringleader of all, listened to the voice of God. That man's heart was broken. The whole gang came to hear the gospel preached, and they sat and seemed to reverence the preacher as if he were a God, and not a man. These men became changed and reformed; and every one who knows the place affirms that such a change had never been wrought but by the power of the Holy Ghost. Let the gospel be preached and the Spirit poured out, and you will see that it has such power to change the conscience, to ameliorate the conduct, to raise the debased, to chastise and to curb the wickedness of the race, that you must glory in it. I say, there is naught like the power of the Spirit. Only let that come, and, indeed, everything can be accomplished.

II. Now for the second point, THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. What I have already spoken of may be seen; what I am about to speak of must be felt, and no man will apprehend what I say with truth unless he has felt it. The other, even the infidel must confess; the other, the greatest blasphemer cannot deny, if he speaks the truth; but this is what the one will laugh at as enthusiasm, and what the other will say is but the invention of our fevered fancies. However, we have a more sure word of testimony than all that they may say. We have a witness within. We know it is the truth, and we are not afraid to speak of the inward spiritual power of the Holy Ghost. Let us notice two or three things wherein the inward and spiritual power of the Holy Ghost is very greatly to be seen and extolled.

1. First, in that the Holy Ghost has *a power over men's hearts*. Now, men's hearts are very hard to affect. If you want to get at them for any worldly object, you can do it. A cheating world can win man's heart; a little gold can win man's heart; a trump of fame and a little clamor of

applause can win man's heart. But there is not a minister breathing that can win man's heart himself. He can win his ears and make them listen; he can win his eyes, and fix those eyes upon him; he can win the attention, but the heart is very slippery. Yes! The heart is a fish that troubles all gospel fishermen to hold. You may sometimes pull it almost all out of the water; but, slimy as an eel, it slippeth between your fingers, and you have not captured it after all. Many a man has fancied that he has caught the heart, but has been disappointed. It would take a strong hunter to overtake the hart on the mountains. It is too fleet for human foot to approach. The Spirit alone has power over man's heart. Do you every try your power on a heart? If any man thinks that a minister can convert the soul, I wish he would try. Let him go and be a Sabbath School teacher. He shall take his class, he shall have the best books that can be obtained, he shall have the best rules, he shall draw his lines of circumvallation about his spiritual Sebastopol, he shall take the best boy in his class, and if he is not tired in a week I shall be very much mistaken. Let him spend four or five Sabbaths in trying; but he will say, "the young fellow is incorrigible." Let him try another. And he will have to try another, and another and another before he will manage to convert one. He will soon find "it is not by might nor power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Can a minister convert? Can he touch the heart? David said, "Your hearts are as fat as grease." Aye, that is quite true; and we cannot get through so much grease at all. Our sword cannot get at the heart, it is encased in so much fatness; it is harder than a nether millstone. Many a good old Jerusalem blade has been blunted against the hard heart. Many a piece of the true steel that God has put into the hand of his servants has had the edge turned by being set up against the sinner's heart. We cannot reach the soul, but the Holy Spirit can. "My beloved can put in his hand by the hole in the door, and my bowels will move for sin." He can give a sense of blood-bought pardon that shall dissolve a heart of stone. He can

"Speak with that voice which wakes the dead
And bids the sinner rise;
And makes the guilty conscience dread
The death that never dies."

He can make Sinai's thunders audible; yea, and he can make the sweet

whisperings of Calvary enter into the soul. He has power over the heart of man. And here is a glorious proof of the omnipotence of the Spirit that he has rule over the heart.

2. But if there is one thing more stubborn than the heart, it is *the will*. "My lord Will-be-will," as Bunyan calls him in his "Holy War," is a fellow who will not easily be bent. The will, especially in some men, is a very stubborn thing; and in all men, if the will is once stirred up to opposition, there is nothing can be done with them. *Free-will* somebody believes in. *Free-will* many dream of. Free-will! Wherever is that to be found? Once there was Free-will in Paradise, and a terrible mess Free-will made there; for it spoiled all Paradise and turned Adam out of the garden. Free-will was once in heaven; but it turned the glorious archangel out, and a third part of the stars of heaven fell into the abyss. I want nothing to do with Free-will, but I will try to see whether I have got a Free-will within. And I find I have. Very free will to evil but very poor will to that which is good. Free-will enough when I sin, but when I would do good, evil is present with me, and how to do that which I would I find not. Yet some boast of Free-will. I wonder whether those who believe in it have any more power over persons' wills than I have? I know I have not any. I find the old proverb very true, "One man can bring a horse to the water but a hundred cannot make him drink." I find that I can bring you all to the water, and a great many more than can get into this chapel; but I cannot make you drink; and I don't think a hundred ministers could make you drink. I have read old Rowland Hill, and Whitefield, and several others, to see what they did; but I cannot discover a plan of turning your will. I cannot coax you, and you will not yield by any manner of means. I do not think any man has power over his fellow-creature's will, but the Spirit of God has. "I will make them willing in the day of my power." He maketh the unwilling sinner so willing that he is impetuous after the gospel; he who was obstinate now hurries to the cross. He who laughed at Jesus now hangs on his mercy; and he who would not believe is now made by the Holy Spirit to do it, not only willingly, but eagerly; he is happy, is glad to do it, rejoices in the sound of Jesus' name, and delights to run in the way of God's commandments. The Holy Spirit has power over the will.

3. And yet there is one thing more which I think is rather worse than the

will. You will guess what I mean. The will is somewhat worse than the heart to bend, but there is one thing that excels the will in its naughtiness, and that is the *imagination*. I hope that my will is managed by Divine Grace. But I am afraid my imagination is not at times. Those who have a fair share of imagination know what a difficult thing it is to control. You cannot restrain it. It will break the reins. You will never be able to manage it. The imagination will sometimes fly up to God with such a power that eagles' wings cannot match it. It sometimes has such might that it can almost see the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off. With regard to myself, my imagination will sometimes take me over the gates of iron, across the infinite unknown, to the very gates of pearl, and discover the blessed glorified. But, if it is potent one way, it is another: for my imagination has taken me down to the vilest kennels and sewers of earth. It has given me thoughts so dreadful, that, while I could not avoid them, yet I was thoroughly horrified at them. These thoughts will come; and when I feel in the holiest frame, the most devoted to God, and the most earnest in prayer, it often happens that that is the very time when the plague breaks out the worst. But I rejoice and think of one thing, that I can cry out when this imagination comes upon me. I know it is said in the Book of Leviticus, when an act of evil was committed, if the maiden cried out against it, then her life was to be spared. So it is with the Christian. If he cries out, there is hope. Can you chain your imagination? No; but the power of the Holy Ghost can. Ah, it shall do it! And it does do it at last, it does it even on earth.

III. But the last thing was, THE FUTURE AND DESIRED EFFECTS; for, after all, though the Holy Spirit has done so much, he cannot say, "It is finished." Jesus Christ could exclaim concerning his own labor - "It is finished." But the Holy Spirit cannot say that. He has more to do yet: and until the consummation of all things, when the Son himself becomes subject to the Father, it shall not be said by the Holy Spirit, "It is finished." What, then, has the Holy Spirit to do?

1. First, he has to *perfect us in holiness*. There are two kinds of perfection which a Christian needs: one is the perfection of justification in the person of Jesus; and the other is, the perfection of sanctification worked in him by the Holy Spirit. At present corruption still rests even in the

breasts of the regenerate. At present the heart is partially impure. At present there are still lusts and evil imaginations. But, oh! My soul rejoices to know that the day is coming when God shall finish the work which he has begun; and he shall present my soul, not only perfect in Christ, but perfect in the Spirit, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. And is it true that this poor depraved heart is to become as holy as that of God? And is it true that this poor spirit, which often cries, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this sin an death!" shall get rid of sin and death? I shall have no evil things to vex my ears, and no unholy thoughts to disturb my peace. Oh happy hour! May it be hastened! Just before I die sanctification will be finished; but not till that moment shall I ever claim perfection in myself. But at that moment when I depart, my spirit shall have its last baptism in the Holy Spirit's fire. It shall be put in the crucible for its last trying in the furnace; and then, free from all dross, and fine, like a wedge of pure gold, it shall be presented at the feet of God without the least degree of dross or mixture. O glorious hour! O blessed moment! Methinks I long to die if there were no heaven, if I might but have that last purification come up from Jordan's stream most white from the washing. Oh! To be washed white, clean, pure, perfect! Not an angel more pure than I shall be - yea, not God himself more holy! And I shall be able to say, in a double sense, "Great God, I am clean - through Jesus' blood I am clean, through the Spirit's work I am clean too!" Must you not extol the power of the Holy Ghost in thus making us fit to stand before our Father in heaven?

2. Another great work of the Holy Spirit, which is not accomplished, is *the bringing on of the latter-day glory*. In a few more years - I know not when, I know not how - the Holy Spirit will be poured out in a far different style from the present. There are diversities of operations; and during the last few years it has been the case that the diversified operations have consisted in very little pouring out of the Spirit. Ministers have gone on in dull routine, continually preaching - preaching - preaching, and little good has been done. I do hope that perhaps a fresh era has dawned upon us, and that there is a better pouring out of the Spirit even now. For the hour is coming, and it may be even now is, when the Holy Ghost shall be poured out again in such a wonderful manner, that many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased - the

knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the surface of the great deep; when his kingdom shall come, and his will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven. We are not going to be dragging on forever like Pharaoh, with the wheels off his chariot. My heart exults, and my eyes flash with the thought that very likely I shall live to see the outpouring of the Spirit; when "the sons and the daughters of God again shall prophesy, and the young men shall see visions and the old men shall dream dreams." Perhaps there shall be no miraculous gifts - for they will not be required; but yet there shall be such a miraculous amount of holiness, such an extraordinary fervor of prayer, such a real communion with God, and so much vital religion, and such a spread of the doctrines of the cross, that every one will see that verily the Spirit is poured out like water, and the rains are descending from above. For that let us pray; let us continually labor for it, and seek it of God.

3. One more work of the Spirit, which will especially manifest his power - *the general resurrection*. We have reason to believe from Scripture, that the resurrection of the dead, whilst it will be effected by the voice of God and of his Word(the Son), shall also be brought about by the Spirit. The same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies. The power of the resurrection is, perhaps, one of the finest proofs of the works of the Spirit. Ah! My friends, if this earth could but have its mantle torn away for a little while, if the green sod could be cut from it, and we could look about six feet deep into its bowels, what a world it would seem! What should we see? Bones, carcasses, rottenness, worms, corruption. And you would say, Can these dry bones live? Can they start up? Yes! "In a moment! In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised." He speaks; they are alive! See them scattered! Bone comes to his bone! See them naked; flesh comes upon them! See them still lifeless; "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain!" When the wind of the Holy Spirit comes, they live; and they stand upon their feet an exceeding great army.

I have thus attempted to speak of the power of the Spirit, and I trust I have shown it to you. We must now have a moment or two for practical inference. The Spirit is very powerful, Christian! What do you infer from that fact? Why, that you never need distrust the power of God to carry

you to heaven. O how that sweet verse was laid to my soul yesterday!

"His tried Almighty arm
is raised for your defense;
Where is the power can reach you there?
Or what can pluck you thence?"

The power of the Holy Spirit is your bulwark, and all his omnipotence defends you. Can your enemies overcome omnipotence? Then they can conquer you. Can they wrestle with Deity, and hurl him to the ground? Then they might conquer you. For the power of the Spirit is our power; the power of the Spirit is our might.

Once again, Christians, if this is the power of the Spirit, *why should you doubt anything?* There is your son. There is that wife of yours, for whom you have supplicated so frequently; do not doubt the Spirit's power. "Though he tarry, wait for him." There is thy husband, O holy woman! And thou hast wrestled for his soul. And though he is ever so hardened and desperate a wretch, and treats thee ill, there is power in the Spirit. And, O ye who have come from barren churches, with scarcely a leaf upon the tree, do not doubt the power of the Spirit to raise you up. For it shall be a "pasture for flocks, a den of wild asses," open but deserted, until the Spirit is poured out from on high. And then the parched ground shall be made a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; and in the habitations of dragons, where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And, O ye members of Park Street! Ye who remember what your God has done for you especially, never distrust the power of the Spirit. Ye have seen the wilderness blossom like Carmel, ye have seen the desert blossom like the rose, trust him for the future. Then go out and labor with this conviction, that the power of the Holy Ghost is able to do anything. Go to your missionary enterprise; go to your preaching in your rooms, with the conviction that the power of the Spirit is our great help.

And now, lastly, to you sinners: - What is there to be said to you about this power of the Spirit? Why, to me, there is some hope for some of you. I cannot save you; I cannot get at you. I make you cry sometimes - you wipe your eyes, and it is all over. But I know my Master can. That is my

consolation. Chief of sinners, there is hope for thee! This power can save you as well as anybody else. It is able to break your heart, though it is an iron one; to make your eyes run with tears, though they have been like rocks before. His power is able this morning, if he will, to change your heart, to turn the current of all your ideas; to make you at once a child of God, to justify you in Christ. There is power enough in the Holy Spirit. Ye are not straightened in him, but in your own bowels. He is able to bring sinners to Jesus; he is able to make you willing in the day of his power. Are you willing this morning? Has he gone so far as to make you desire his name; to make you wish for Jesus? Then, O sinner! Whilst he draws you, say, "Draw me, I am wretched without thee." Follow him, follow him; and, while he leads, tread you in his footsteps, and rejoice that he has begun a good work in you, for there is an evidence that he will continue it even unto the end. And, O desponding one! Put thy trust in the power of the Spirit. Rest on the blood of Jesus, and thy soul is safe, not only now, but throughout eternity. God bless you, my hearers. Amen.

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Powerful Persuasives

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. - Matthew 11:27-28

I have preached to you, dear friends, several times from the words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is such sweetness in the precept, such solace in the promise, that I could fain hope to preach from it many times more. But I have no intention just now to repeat what I have said in any former discourse, or to follow the same vein of thought that we have previously explored. This kindly and gracious invitation needs only to be held up in different lights to give us different subjects for admiration. That it flowed like an anthem from our Saviour's lips we perceive, in what connection it was spoken we may properly enquire. He had just made some important disclosures as to the covenant relations that existed between himself and God the Father. This interesting revelation of heavenly truth becomes the basis upon which he offers an invitation to the toiling and oppressed children of men, and assigns it as a reason why they should immediately avail themselves of his succour. Such is the line of discourse I propose now to follow. Kindly understand me that I want to deal with the hearts and consciences of the unconverted, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to plead with them that they may at once go to Jesus and find rest unto their souls. I shall require no stories or anecdotes, no figures or metaphors, to illustrate the urgent necessity of the sinner and the generous bounty of the Saviour. We will make it as plain as a pikestaff, and as sharp as a sword, with the intention of driving straight at our point. Time is precious, your time especially, for you may not have many days in which to seek the Lord. The matter is urgent. Oh! that every labouring, weary sinner here might at once come to Jesus and find that rest which the Saviour expresses himself as so willing to give! With all simplicity, then,

let me explain to you the way of salvation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden."

The way to be saved is to come to Jesus. To come, to Jesus means to pray to him, to trust in him, to rely upon him. Each man who trusts in another may be said to come to that other for help. Thus to trust in Jesus is to come to him. In order to do this I must give up all reliance upon myself, or anything I could do or have done, or anything I do feel or can feel. Nor must I feel the slightest dependence upon anything that anyone else can do for me. I must cease from creature helps and carnal rites, to rest myself upon Jesus. That is what my Saviour means when he says, "Come unto me." The exhortation is very personal. "Come unto me," says he. He saith not, come to my ministers to consult them. nor come to my sacraments to observe them, nor come to my Bible to study its teaching—interesting and advantageous as under some circumstances any or all of these counsels might be; but he invites us in the sweetest tune of friendship, saying, "Come to me." For a poor sinner this is the truest means of succour. Let him resort to the blessed Lord himself. To trust in a crucified Saviour is the way of salvation. Let him leave everything else and fly away to Christ, and look at his dear wounds as he hangs upon the cross. I am afraid many people are detained from Christ by becoming entangled in the meshes of doctrine. Some with heterodox doctrine, others with orthodox doctrine, content themselves. They think that they have advanced far enough. They flatter their souls that they have ascertained the truth! But the fact is, it is not the truth as a letter which, saves anybody. It is the truth as a person—it is Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life, whom we need to apprehend.

Our confidences must rest entirely upon him. "Come unto me," saith Jesus; Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The exhortation is in the present tense. "Come" now; do not wait; do not tarry; do not lie at the pool of ordinances but come unto me; come now at once, immediately, just where you are, just as you are. Wherever the summons finds you, rise without parley, without an instant's delay. "Come." I know that the human mind is very ingenious, and it is especially perverse when its own destruction is threatened. By some

means or other it will evade this simple call. "Surely," says one, "there must be something to do besides that." Nay, nothing else is to be done. No preliminaries are requisite. The whole way of salvation is to trust in Jesus. Trust him now. That done, you are saved. Rely upon his finished work. know that he has meditated on your behalf. Commit thy sinful self to his saving grace. A change of heart shall be yours. All that you need he will supply.

"There is life in a look at the crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee."

So sweet an invitation demands a spontaneous acceptance. Come just as you are. "Come unto me," saith Christ. He does not say, "Come when you have washed and cleansed yourself." Rather should you come to be cleansed. He does not say, "Come when you have clothed yourself and made yourself beautiful with good works." Come to be made beautiful in a better righteousness than you can wear. Come naked, and let him gird thee with fine linen, cover thee with silk, and deck thee with jewels. He does not say, "Come when your conscience is tender, come when your heart is penitent, when your soul is full of loathing for sin, and your mind is enlightened with knowledge and enlivened with joy. But ye that labour, ye that are heavy laden, he bids you to come as you are. Come oppressed with your burdens, begrimed with your labours, dispirited with your toils. If the load that bends you double to the earth be upon your shoulders? just come as you are. Take no plea in your mouth but this—he bids you come. That shall suffice as a warrant for your coming, and a security for your welcome. If Jesus Christ bids you, who shall say you nay?

He puts the matter very exclusively. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Do nothing else but come to him. Do you want rest? Come to him for it. The old proverb hath it that betwixt two stools we come to the ground." Certainly, if we trust partly in Christ and partly in ourselves, we shall fall lower than the ground. We shall sink into hell. "Come unto me" is the whole gospel. "Come unto me." Mix nothing with it. Acknowledge no other obedience. Obey Christ, and him alone. Come unto me. You cannot go in two opposite directions. Let your tottering footsteps bend their way to him alone. Mix anything with him, and the

possibility of your salvation is gone. Yours be the happy resolve:—

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

This must be your cry if you are to be accepted at all. Come, then, ye that labour, ye horny-handed sons of toil. Come ye to Jesus. He invites you. Ye that stew and toil for wealth, ye merchants, with your many cares, labourers ye are. He bids you come. Ye students, anxious for knowledge, chary of sleep, burning out the midnight oil. Ye labour with exhausted brains; therefore, come. Come from struggling after fame. Ye pleasure-seekers, come; perhaps there is no harder toil than the toil of the man who courts recreation and thinks he is taking his ease. Come, ye that labour in any form or fashion; come to Jesus—to Jesus alone. And ye that are heavy laden; ye whose official duties are a burden; ye whose domestic cares are a burden; ye whose daily toils are a burden; ye whose shame and degradation are a burden, all ye that are heavy laden, come and welcome. If I attach no exclusive spiritual signification to these terms, it is because there is nothing in the chapter that would warrant such a restriction. Had Christ said, "Some of you that labour and are heavy laden may come," I would have said "some" too. Howbeit he has not said "some," but "all" "that labour and are heavy laden." It is wonderful how people twist this text about. They alter the sense by misquoting the words. They say, "Come ye that are weary and heavy laden." After this manner some have even intended to define a character rather than to describe condition, so they shut out some of those who labour from the kind invitation. But let the passage stand in its own simplicity. Let any sinner here, who can say, "I labour," though he cannot say spiritually labour, come on the bare warrant of the word as he finds it written here; he will not be disappointed of the mercy promised. Christ will not reject him. Himself hath said it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And any man that is heavy laden, even though it may not be a spiritual burden that oppresses him, yet if he comes heavy laden to Christ, he certainly shall find relief. That were a wonder without precedent or parallel, such as was never witnessed on earth throughout all the generations of men, that a soul should come to Jesus, be rebuffed, and told by him, "I never called you, I never meant you; you are not the

character; you may not come." Hear, O heaven! witness, O earth! such thing was never heard of. No, nor ever shall it be heard of in time or in eternity. That any sinner should come to the Saviour by mistake is preposterous. That Jesus should say to him, "Go your way; I never called for you," is incredible. How can ye thus libel the sinner's friend? Come, ye needy—come, ye helpless—come, ye simple—come, ye penitent—come, ye impenitent—come, ye who are the very vilest of the vile. If you do but come, Jesus Christ will receive you, welcome you, rejoice over you, and verify to you his thrice blessed promise, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

Now to the tug of war. It shall be my main endeavour to press the invitation upon you, my good friends, by the arguments which the Saviour used.

Kindly look at the text. Read the words for yourselves. Do you not see that the reason why you are solemnly bidden to come to Christ is because:—

I. HE IS THE APPOINTED MEDIATOR.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father." God, even the Father, your Creator, against whom you have transgressed, has appointed our Lord Jesus Christ to be the way of access for a sinner to himself. He is no amateur Saviour. He has not thrust himself into the place officiously. He is officially delegated. In times of distress, every man is at liberty to do his best for the public welfare; but the officer commissioned by his Sovereign is armed with a supreme right to give counsel or to exercise command. Away there in Bengal, if there are any dying of famine, and I have rice, I may distribute it of my own will at my own charge. But the commissioner of the district has a special warrant which I do not possess; he has a function to discharge; it is his business, his vocation; he is authorised by the Government, and responsible to the Government to do it. So the Lord Jesus Christ has not only a deep compassion of heart for the necessities of men, but he has God's authority to support him. The Father delivered all things into his hands, and appointed him to be a Saviour. All that Christ teaches has this superlative sanction. He teaches you nothing of his own conjecture. "What I have heard of the Father," he saith, "that reveal I unto

you." The gospel is not a scheme of his suggestion. He reveals it fresh from the heart of God. Remember that the promises Christ makes are not merely his surmises, but they are promises with the stamp of the court of heaven upon them. Their truth is guaranteed by God. It is not possible they should fail. Sooner might heaven and earth pass away than one word of his fall flat to the ground. Your Saviour, O sinner—your only Saviour—is one whose teachings, whose invitations, and whose promises have the seal royal of the King of kings upon them. What more do you want? Moreover, the Father has given all things into his hands in the sense of government. Christ is king everywhere. God has appointed Christ to be a mediatorial prince over all of us—I say over us all—not merely over those who accept his sovereignty, but even over the ungodly. He hath given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as he has given him. It is of no use your rebelling against Christ, and saying, "We will not have him"—the old cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." How read ye in the second Psalm "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. "Christ is supreme. You will have either to submit to his sceptre willingly, or else to be broken by his iron rod like a potter's vessel. Which shall it be? Thou must either bow or be broken; make your choice. You must bend or break. God help you wisely to resolve and gratefully relent. Has the Father appointed Christ to stand between him and his sinful creatures? Has he put the government upon his shoulders, and given him a name called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty, the everlasting King? Is he Emmanuel, God with us, in God's stead? With what reverence are we bound to receive him!

Moreover, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of mercy and goodness, are laid up in Christ. You recollect when Pharaoh had corn to sell in Egypt, what reply he made to all who applied to him, "Go to Joseph." It would have been no use saying, "Go to Joseph," if Joseph had not the keys of the garner; but he had, and there was no garner that could be opened in Egypt unless Joseph lent the key. In like manner, all the garners of mercy are under the lock and key of Jesus Christ, "who openeth, and no man shutteth; who shutteth, and no man openeth."

When you require any bounty or benefit of God, you must repair to Jesus for it. The Father has put all power into his hands. He has committed the entire work of mercy to his Son, that through him as the appointed mediator, all blessings should be dispensed to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. "Now, sirs, do you want to be saved? I charge you to say whether you do or not; for if you care not for salvation, why should I labour among you? If you choose your own ruin, you need no counsel; you will make sure of it by your own neglect. But if you want salvation, Christ is the only authorized person in heaven and earth who can save you. "There is no other name, given among men whereby we must be saved." The Father hath delivered all things into his keeping. He is the authorised Saviour. "Come unto me, then, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." This argument is further developed by another consideration: Christ is:—

II. A WELL-FURNISHED MEDIATOR,

"All things are delivered unto me," he said, "of my Father. "Sum up all that the sinner wants, and you will find him able to supply you with all. You want pardon; it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You want change of heart; it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You want righteousness in which you may be accepted; Christ has it. You want to be purged from the love of sin; Christ can do it. You want wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is all in Christ. You are afraid that if you start on the road to heaven, you cannot hold on. Persevering grace is in Christ. You think you will never be perfect; but perfection is in Christ, for all believers, being saints of God and servants of Christ, are complete in him. Between hell-gate and heaven-gate there is nothing a sinner can need that is not treasured up in his blessed person. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is "full of grace and truth." Oh! sinner, I wish I could constrain you to feel as I do now, that had I never come to Christ before, I must come to him now, just now. Directly I understand that:—

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find."

Why, then, should I not come? Is it because I want something before I come? Make the question your own. Where are you going to seek it? All things are delivered unto Christ. To whom should you go for ought you crave? Is there another who can aid you when Christ is in possession of all? Do you want a tender conscience? Come to Christ for it. Do you want to feel the guilt of your sin? Come to Christ to be made sensitive to its shame. Are you just what you ought not to be? Come to Christ to be made what you ought to be, for everything is in Christ. Is there any, thing that can be obtained elsewhere and brought to him? The invitation to you is founded upon the explanation that accompanies it. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father"; therefore, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The argument is so exclusive, that it only wants a willing mind to make it welcome. Only let God the Holy Spirit bless the word, and sinners will come to Christ, for unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Now note the next argument. Come to Christ, ye labouring ones, because:—

III. HE IS AN INCONCEIVABLY GREAT MEDIATOR.

Where do I get that? Why, from this—that no man knows him but the Father. So great is he, so good, so full of all manner of precious store for needy sinners. No man knows him but the Father. He is too excellent for our puny understanding to estimate his worth. None but the infinite God can comprehend his value as a Saviour. Has anyone here been saying, "Christ cannot save me; I am such a big sinner"? You don't know him, my friend you don't know him. You are measuring him according to your little insignificant notions. High as the heavens are above the earth so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. You don't know him, sinner, and no one does know him but his Father. Why, some of us who have been saved by him, thought when we saw the blessed mystery of his substitutionary sacrifice, that we knew all about him; but we have found that he grows upon our view the nearer we approach, and the more we contemplate him. Some of you have now been Christians for thirty or forty years, and you know much more of him than you used to do; but you do not know him yet; your eyes are dazzled by his brightness; you do not know him. And the happy spirits before the throne who have been there, some of them, three or four thousand years, have

hardly begun to spell the first letter of his name. He is too grand and too good for them to comprehend. I believe that it will be, the growing wonder in eternity to find out how precious a Christ, how powerful, how immutable—in a word, how divine a Christ he is. in whom we have trusted. Only the infinite can understand the infinite. "God only knows the love of God,"and only the Father understands the Son. Oh! I wish I had a week in which to talk on this, instead of a few minutes! You want a great Saviour? Well, here he is. Nobody can depict him, or describe him, or even imagine him, except the infinite God himself. Come, then, poor sinner, sunken up to your neck in crime, black as hell—come unto him. Come, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and prove him to be your Saviour. The fact that no one knows how great a Saviour he is except his Father may encourage you. Now for another argument. Come to him because:—

IV. HE IS AN INFINITELY WISE MEDIATOR.

He is a mediator who understands both persons on whose behalf he mediates. He understands you. He has summed and reckoned you up, and he has made you out to be a heap sin and misery, and nothing else. The glory of it is that he understands God, whom you have offended, for it is written, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son," and he knows the Father. Oh! what a mercy that is to have one to go before God for me who knows him intimately. He knows his Father's will; he knows his Father's wrath. No man knows it but himself. He has suffered it. He knows his Father's love. He alone can feel it—such love as God felt for sinners. He knows how his Father's wrath has been turned away by his precious blood; he knows the Father as a Judge whose anger no longer burns against those for whom the Atonement has been made. He knows the Father's heart. He knows the Father's secret purposes. He knows the Father's will is that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him shall have everlasting life. He knows the decrees of God, and yet he says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give, you rest." There is nothing in that contrary to the decrees of God; for Jesus knows what the decrees are, and he would not speak in contradiction to them. He knows God's requirements. Sinner, whatever it is God requires of you, Christ knows what they are, and he is ready to meet them. "The

law is holy, and just, and good," and Jesus knows it, for the, law is in his heart. Justice is very stern, and Jesus knows it, for Jesus has felt the edge of the sword of justice, and knows all about it. He is fully equipped for the discharge of his mediatorial office, and those that put their trust in him shall find that he will bear them through. Often, when a prisoner at the bar has a barrister who understands his work, and is perfectly competent for the defense, his friends say to him, "Your case is safe, for if there is a man in England who can get you through, it is that man." But my Master is an advocate who never lost a case. He has a plea at the throne of God that never failed yet. Give him—oh! give him your cause to plead, nor doubt the Father's grace. Poor sinner, he is so wise an advocate that you may well come to him, and he will give you rest. But I must not weary you, although there is a fulness of matter on which I might enlarge. With one other argument I conclude:—

V. HE IS AN INDISPENSABLE MEDIATOR.

The only mediator, so the text says. "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." Christ knows the Father; no one else knows him, save the Son. There is none other that can approach unto God. It is Christ for your Saviour, or no Saviour at all. Salvation is in no other; and if you will not have Christ, neither can you have salvation. Observe how that is. It is certain that no man knows God except Christ. It is equally certain that no man can come, to God except by Christ. He says it peremptorily; "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Not less certain is it that no man can please the Father except through Christ, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." No faith is worth having except the grace that is founded and based upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and him only. Oh! then, souls, since you are shut up to it by a blessed necessity, say at once, "I will to the gracious Prince approach, and take Jesus to be my all in all. "If I might hope you would do this early, I could go back to my home and retire to my bed, praising God for the work that was done, and the result that was achieved. Let us reiterate again and again the gospel we have to declare, the very essence of the gospel it is which we proclaim. Trust your souls with Jesus, and your souls are saved. He suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all that trust him. If you rely upon him by an act of

simple faith, the simplest act in all the world, immediately you so rely you are forgiven, your transgressions are blotted out for his name's sake. He stands in spirit among us at this good hour, and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"; and he gives you these arguments, which ought to convince you. I pray they may. He is an authorized Saviour, and a well-furnished Saviour. He is the friend of God, and the friend of man. God grant you may accept him, and find the boon which he alone can bestow. Amen.

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Praise For The Gift Of Gifts

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. - 2 Corinthians 9:15

In the chapter from which my text is taken, Paul is stirring up the Christians at Corinth to be ready with liberal gifts for the poor saints at Jerusalem. He finishes by reminding them of a greater gift that any they could bring, and by this one short word of praise, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," he sets all their hearts a-singing. Let men give as liberally as they may, you can always proclaim the value of their gift; you can cast it up, and reckon its worth; but God's gift is unspeakable, unreckonable. You cannot fully estimate the value of what God gives. The gospel is a gospel of giving and forgiving. We may sum it up in those two words; and hence, when the true spirit of it works upon the Christian, he forgives freely, and he also gives freely. The large heart of God breeds large hearts in men, and they who live upon his bounty are led by his Spirit to imitate that bounty, according to their power.

However, I am not going, on the present occasion, to say anything upon

the subject of liberality. I must get straight away to the text, hoping that we may really drink in the spirit of it, and out of full hearts use the apostle's language with intenser meaning than ever as we repeat his words: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." I shall commence by saying that salvation is altogether the gift of God, and as such is to be received by us freely. Then I shall try to show that this gift is unspeakable; and, in the third place, that for this gift thanks should be rendered to God. Though it is unspeakable, yet we should speak our praise of it. In this way you will see, as of old preachers used to say, the text naturally falls apart.

I. We begin with the thought that SALVATION IS ALTOGETHER THE GIFT OF GOD. Paul said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Over and over and over again, have we to proclaim that salvation is wholly of grace: not of works nor of wages, but it is the gift of God's great bounty to undeserving men. Often as we have preached this truth, we shall have to keep on doing so as long as there are men in the world who are self-righteous, and as long as there are minds in the world so slow to grasp the meaning of the word "grace", that is, "free favour", and as long as there are memories that find it difficult to retain the idea of salvation being God's free gift.

Let us say simply and plainly, that salvation must come to us as a gift from God, for salvation comes to us by the Lord Jesus, and what else could Jesus be? The essence of salvation is the gift of God's Only-begotten Son to die for us, that we might live through him. I think you will agree with me that it is inconceivable that men should ever have merited that God should give his Only-begotten Son to the,. To give Christ to us, in any sense, must have been an act of divine charity; but to give him up to die on yonder cruel and bloody tree, to yield him up as a sacrifice for sin, must be a free favour, passing the limits of thought. It is not supposable that any man could deserve such love. It is plain that if man's sins needed a sacrifice, he did not deserve that a sacrifice should be found for him. The fact that his need proves his demerit and his guiltiness. He deserves to die; he may be rescued by Another dying for him; but he certainly cannot claim that the eternal God should take from his bosom his Only-begotten and Well-beloved Son, and put him to death. The more you look

that thought in the face, the more you will reject the idea that, by any possible sorrow, or by any possible labour, or by any possible promise, a man could put himself into the position of deserving to have Christ to die for him. If Christ is to come to save sinners, it must be as a gift, a free gift of God. The argument, to my mind, is conclusive.

Besides that, over and over again, in God's Word, we are told that salvation is not of works. Although there are many who cling to the notion of man's works as a ground of salvation, yet as long as this Book stands, and there are eyes to read it; it will bear witness against the idea of human merit, and it will speak out plainly for the doctrine that men are saved by faith, and not by works. Not once only, but often it is written, "The just shall live by faith;" moreover, we are told, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The very choice of the way of salvation by believing, rather than by works, is made by God on purpose that he might show that grace is a gift. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Faith is that virtue, that grace, which is chosen to bring us salvation, because it never takes any of the glory to itself. Faith is simply the hand that takes. When the beggar receives alms, he does not bless the hand that takes, but blesses the hand that gives; therefore we do not praise the faith that receiveth, but the God who giveth the unspeakable gift. Faith is the eye that sees. When we see an object, we delight in the object, rather than in the eye that sees it; therefore do we glory, not in our faith, but in the salvation which God bestows. Faith is appointed as the porter to open the gate of salvation, because that gate turns upon the hinges of free grace.

In the next place, be it always remembered, that we cannot be saved by the merit of our own works, because holy works are themselves a gift, the work of the grace of God. If thou hast faith, and joy, and hope, who gave them to thee? These did not spring up spontaneously in thy heart. They were sown there by the hand of love. If thou hast lived a godly life for years, if thou hast been a diligent servant of the church and of thy God, in whose strength hast thou done it? Is there not One who works all our works in us? Could you work out your salvation with fear and trembling if

God did not first work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure? How can that, then, claim a reward, which is, in itself, the gift of God? I think the ground is cut right away from those who would put confidence in human merit, when we show, first of all, that, in Scripture, salvation is clearly said to be "not of works, lest any man should boast"; and, secondly, that even the good works of believers are the fruit of a renewed life; for "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

"All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all mine own;
All that I am, I own to thee,
My gracious God, alone."

Further, if salvation were not a free gift, how else could a sinner get it? I will pass over some of you, who fancy that you are the best people in the world. It is sheer fancy, mark you, without any truth in it. But I will say nothing about you. There are, however, some of us, who know that we were not the best people in the world; we who sinned against God, and knew it, and who were broken into pieces under a sense of our guilt. I know, for one, that there would have been no hope of heaven for me, if salvation had not been a free gift of God to those who deserved it not. After ministering among you for nearly thirty-seven years, I stand exactly where I stood when first I came to Christ, a poor sinner and nothing at all, but taking Christ as the free gift of God to me, as I took him at first, when, yet but a lad, I fled to him for salvation. Ask any of the people of God who have been abundant in service, and constant in prayer, whether they deserve aught at the hand of God, and those who have most to be thankful for will tell you that they have nothing that they have not received. Ask these, whom God has honoured to the conversion of many, whether they lay any claim to the grace of God, whether they have any merit, and whether in their hand they dare bring a price, and seek to buy of God his love; they will loathe the very thought. There is no way to heaven for you and me, my friends convinced of sin, unless all the way we are led by grace, and unless salvation is the gift of God.

But, once more: look at the privileges which come to us through

salvation! I cannot, as I value those privileges, conceive for a minute that they are purchasable, or that they come to us as the result of our desert. They must be a gift; they are so many and so glorious as to be altogether outside the limit of our furthest search, and beyond the height of our utmost reach. We cannot by our efforts compass any salvation of any sort; but if we could, it certainly would not be such a salvation as this. Let us look, then, at our privileges.

Here comes, first, "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." He that believes in Christ has no sin. His sin is blotted out. It has ceased to be. Christ has finished it, and he is unto God as though he had never sinned. Can any sinner deserve that?

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon too!"

Can any sinner bring a price that will purchase such a boon as that? No; such mercy must be a gift.

Next, everyone that believes in Christ is justified, and looked upon by God as being perfectly righteous. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is "accepted in the Beloved." By this he becomes not only innocent, that is pardoned, but he becomes praiseworthy before God. This is justification. Can any guilty man deserve that? Why, he is covered with sin, defiled from head to foot! Can he deserve to be arrayed in the sumptuous robe of the divine righteousness of Christ, and "be made the righteousness of God in him"? It is inconceivable. Such a blessing must be the gift of infinite bounty, or it can never come to man.

Furthermore, beloved, remember that "now we are the sons of God." Can you realise that truth? As others are not, believers are, the sons of God. He is their Father, and the spirit of adoption breathes within their heart. They are the children of his family, and come to him as children come to a father, with loving confidence. Think of being made a son of God, a son of him that made the heavens, a son of him who is God over all, blessed for

ever. Can any man deserve that? Certainly not; this must also come as a gift.

Sonship leads on to heirship. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." My brother, if thou art a believer, all things are thine, this world, and the worlds to come. Could you ever deserve all that? Could such an inheritance have come to you through any merits of your own? No, it must be a gift. Look at it, and the blaze of its splendour will strike all idea of merit blind.

Further than that, we are now made one with Christ. Oh, tell everywhere this wonder which God hath wrought for his people! It is not to be understood; it is an abyss too deep for a finite mind to sound. Every believer is truly united to Christ: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Every believer is married to Christ, and none of them shall ever be separated from him. Seeing, then, that there is such a union between us and Christ, can you suppose that any man can have any claim to such a position apart from the grace of God? By what merit, even of a perfect man, could we deserve to become one with Christ in an endless unity? Such a surpassing privilege is out of the line of purchase. It is, and can only be, the gift of God. Oneness with Christ cannot come to us in any other way.

Listen yet again. In consequence of our union with Christ, God the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. Our bodies are his temple. God dwelleth in us, and we dwell in God. Can we deserve that? Even a perfect keeping of the law would not have brought to men the abiding of the Holy Ghost in them. It is a blessing that rises higher than the law could ever reach, even if it had been kept.

Let me say, furthermore, that if you possess a blessed peace, as I trust you do, if you can say—

"My heart is resting, O my God;
I will give thanks and sing;
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing;"

that divine peace must surely be the gift of God. If there is a great calm within your soul, an entire satisfaction with Christ your Lord, you never deserved that precious boon. It is the work of his Holy Spirit, and must be his free gift.

And when you come to die, as you may—unless the Lord comes, as he will—the grace that will enable you fearlessly to face the last enemy will not be yours by any right of your own. If you fall asleep, as I have seen many a Christian pass away, with songs of triumph, with the light of heaven shining on your brow, almost in glory while yet you are in your bed, why, you cannot deserve that! Such a death-bed must be the free gift of God's almighty grace. It cannot be earned by any merit; indeed, it is just then that every thought of merit melts away, and the soul hides itself in Christ, and triumphs there.

If this does not convince you, look once more. Let a window be opened in heaven. See the long line of white-robed saints. Hark to their hallelujahs. Behold their endless, measureless delight. Did they deserve to come there? Did they come to their thrones and to their palms of victory by their own merits? Their answer is, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and from them all comes the harmonious anthem, "Non nobis, Domine,"—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." From first to last, then, we see that salvation is all the gift of God. And what can be freer than a gift, or more glorious than the gift of God? No prize can approach it in excellence, no merit can be mentioned in the same hour. O my brethren, we are debtors indeed to the mercy of God! We have received much, and there is more to follow; but it is all of grace from first to last. We know but little yet at what a cost these gifts were purchased for us; but we shall know it better by-and-by, as McCheyne so sweetly sings:—

"When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun;
When I stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,

Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then, how much I owe.

When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe."

II. Now I would try to lead your thoughts in another direction as we consider that THIS GIFT IS UNSPEAKABLE. Do not think it means that we cannot speak about this gift. Ah, how many times have I, for one, spoken upon this gift during the last forty years! I have spoken of little else. I heard of one who said, "I suppose Spurgeon is preaching that old story over again." Yes, that is what he is doing; and if he lives another twenty years, and you come here, it will be "the old, old story" still, for there is nothing like it. It is inexhaustible; it is like an Artesian well that springeth up for ever and ever. We can speak about it; yet it is unspeakable. What mean we, then, by saying it is unspeakable? Well, as I have said already, Christ Jesus our Lord is the sum and substance of salvation, and of God's gift. O God, this gift of thine is unspeakable, and it includes all other gifts beside!

"Thou didst not spare thine only Son,
But gav'st him for a world undone,
And freely with that Blessed One—
Thou givest all."

Consider, first, that Christ is unspeakable in his person. He is perfect man, and glorious God. No tongue of seraph, or of cherub, can ever describe the full nature of him whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." This is he whom the Father gave "for us men, and for our sakes." He was the Creator of all things, for "without him was not anything made that was made," yet he was "made of flesh and dwelt among us." He filleth all things by his omnipresence; yet he came and tabernacled on the earth.

This is that Jesus, who was born of Mary, yet who lived before all worlds. He was that Word, who "was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God." He is unspeakable. It is not possible to put into human language the divine mystery of his sacred being, truly man and yet truly God. But how great the wonder of it! Soul, God gave God for thee! Dost thou hear it? To redeem thee, O believing man, God gave himself to be thy Saviour; surely, that is an unspeakable gift.

Christ is unspeakable, next, in his condescension. Can any one measure or describe how far Christ stooped, when, from the throne of splendour, he came to a manger to be swaddled and lie where the horned oxen fed. Oh, what a stoop of condescension was that! The Infinite becomes an infant. The Eternal is dandled on a woman's knee. He is there in the carpenter's shop, obedient to his parents; there in the temple sitting among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions; there in poverty, crying, "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head;" and there, in thirst, asking of a guilty woman a drink of water. It is unspeakable. That he, before whom all the hosts of heaven veiled their faces, should come here among men, and among the poorest of the poor—that he who dwelt amidst the glory and the bliss of the land of light, should deign to be a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, passes human thought! Such a Saviour is a gift unspeakable.

But if unspeakable so far, what shall I say of the fashion of Christ in his death? Beloved, I cannot speak adequately of Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, nor of the Judas kiss, nor of the traitorous flight of the disciples. It is unspeakable. That binding, scourging, plucking of the beard, and spitting in the face! Man's tongue cannot utter the horror of it. I cannot tell you truly the weight of the false accusations, the slanders, and the blasphemies that were heaped on him; nor would I wish to picture the old soldier's cloak flung over his bleeding shoulders, and the crown of thorns, the buffeting, the mailed fists, and the shame and sorrow he endured, as he was thrust out to execution. Do you wish to follow him along the streets, where weeping women lifted up their hearts in tender sympathy for the Lord of love about to die? If you do, it must be in silence, for words but feebly tell how much he bore on the way to the cross.

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin."

Oh, it was terrible that HE should be nailed to the gibbet, that HE should hang there to be ridiculed by all the mob of Jerusalem! The abjects flouted him, the meanest thought him meaner than themselves. Even dying thieves upbraided him. His eyes are choked, they become dim with blood. He must die. He says, "It is finished." He bows his head. The glorious Victim has yielded up his life to put away his people's sin. This is God's gift to you, divine, unspeakable, O ye sons of men!

But it is not all. Christ is unspeakable in his glory. When we think of his resurrection, of his ascending to heaven, and of his glory at the right hand of God, words languish on our lips; but in everyone of these positions, he is the gift of God to us, and when he shall come with all the glory of the Father, he will still he to his people the Theo-dora. the gift of God, the great unspeakable benediction to the sons of men. I wish that the people of Christ had this aspect of the Lord's glory more continually on their hearts, for though he seems to tarry, yet will he come again the second time, as he promised.

"With that blessed hope before us,
Let no harp remain unstrung;
Let the mighty Advent chorus
Onward roll on every tongue.
Maranatha,
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!"

To me, one of the most wonderful aspects of this gift is Christ in his chosen; all the Father gave him, all for whom he died, these he will glorify with himself, and they shall be with him where he is. Oh, what a sight will that be when we shall see the King in his beauty, and all his saints beautiful in his glory, shining like so many stars around him who is the Sun of them all! Then, indeed, shall we see what an unspeakable gift did God gave to men, when through that gift, he makes his saints all glorious,

even as he predestined them, "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the Firstborn among many brethren."

But we do not need to wait until we see his face to know his glory. Brethren, Christ is unspeakable as the gift of God in the heart here. "Oh," say you, "I trust I have felt the love of God shed abroad in my heart!" I rejoice with you, but could you speak it? Often, when I have tried to preach the love of Christ, I have not been able to preach it rightly, because I did not feel it as I ought; but oftener still, I have not been able to tell it out because I have felt it so much. I would fain preach in that manner always, and feel Christ's love so much that I could speak it but little. Oh, child of God, if you have known much of Christ, you have often had to weep out your joys instead of speaking them, to lay your finger on your mouth, and be silent because you were overpowered by his glory. See how it was with John: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Why did you not preach, John? If he were here to-night, he would say, "I could not preach then, the splendour of the Lord made me dumb. I fell at his feet as dead." This is one reason why the gift of God is unspeakable, because, the more you know about it, the less you can say about it. Christ overpowers us; he makes us tongue-tied with his wondrous revelations. When he reveals himself in full, we are like men that are blinded with excess of vision. Like Paul, on the Damascus road, we are forced to confess, "I could not see for the glory of that light." We cannot speak of it fully. All the apostles and prophets and saints of God have been trying to speak out the love of God as manifested in Christ; but yet they have all failed. I say, with great reverence, that the Holy Ghost himself seems to have laboured for expression, and, as he had to use human pens and mortal tongues, even he has never spoken to the full the measure and value of God's unspeakable gift. It is unspeakable to men by God himself. God can give it; but he cannot make us fully understand it. We have need to be like God himself to comprehend the greatness of his gift when he gives us his Son.

Though we make constant effort, it is unspeakable, even throughout a long life. Do you ministers, who have been a long time in one place, ever say to yourselves, "We shall run dry for subjects by-and-by"? If you preach Christ, you will never run short. If you have preached ten thousand sermons about Christ, you have not yet left the shore; you are

not out in the deep sea yet. Dive, my brother! With splendour of thought, plunge into this great mystery of free grace and dying love; and when you have dived the farthest, you will perceive that you are as far off the bottom as when you first touched the surface. It is an endless theme; it is unspeakable!

"Oh, could I speak the matchless worth,
Oh, could I sound the glories forth
Which in my Saviour shine!
I'd soar and touch the heavenly strings,
And vie with Gabriel while he sings
In notes almost divine."

But I can neither speak it nor sing it as I ought; yet would I finish Medley's hymn, and say,—

"Well, the delightful day will come
When my dear Lord will bring me home,
And I shall see his face;
Then with my Saviour, Brother, Friend,
A blest eternity I'll spend,
Triumphant in his grace."

But, even then, Christ will be still in heaven for ever a gift unspeakable. Perhaps we shall have another talk together, friends, on this subject when we get there. One good woman said to me, "We shall have more time in eternity than we have now;" to which I replied, "I do not know whether there is any time in eternity, the words look like a contradiction." "Oh, but," said she, "I shall get a talk with you, anyhow; I have never had one yet." Well, I dare say we shall commune up there of these blessed things, when we shall know more about them. As we are to be there for ever and ever, we shall need some great subjects with which to keep up the conversation: what vaster theme can we have than this? Addison, in one of her verses, says—

"But, oh! Eternity's too short
To utter half thy praise."

And I have heard simpletons say that the couplet was very faulty; "you cannot make eternity short," they say. That shows the difference between a poet and a critic. A critic is a being all teeth, without any heart; and a poet is one who has much heart, and who sometimes finds that human language is not sufficient to express his thoughts. We shall never have done with Christ in heaven. Oh, my Lord, thy presence will make my heaven!

"Millions of years my wondering eyes,
Shall o'er thy beauties rove;
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of thy love."

This wondrous gift of God is an utterly inexhaustible, unspeakable subject.

III. Now, lastly, I come to this point, that FOR THIS GIFT THANKS SHOULD BE RENDERED. The text says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." By this the apostle not only meant that he gave thanks for Christ; but he thus calls upon the church, and upon every individual believer, to join him in his praise. Here do I adopt his language, and praise God on my own behalf, calling upon all of you who know the preciousness of Christ, the gift of God, to unite with me in thanksgiving. Let us as with one heart say it now, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Some cannot say this, for they never think of the gift of God. You who never think of God, how can you thank God? There must be "think" at the bottom of "thank." Whenever we think, we ought to thank. But some never think, and therefore never thank. Beloved friend, what are you at? That Christ should die; is it nothing to you? That God "gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" is that nothing to you? Let the question drop into your heart. Press it home upon yourself. Will you say that you have no share in this gift? Will you deliberately give up any hope you may have of ever partaking of the grace of God? Are you determined now to say, "I do

not care about Christ"? Well, you would hardly like to say that; but why do you practically declare this to be your intention, if you do not want to say it? Oh, that you might now so think of Christ as to trust him at once, and begin to raise this note of praise!

Some, on the other hand, do not thank God because they are always delaying. Have I not hearers here to-night who were here ten years ago, and were rather more hopeful then than they are now? "There is plenty of time," say you; but you do not say this about other matters. I admired the children, the other day, when the teacher said, "Dear children, the weather is unsettled. You can go out next Wednesday; but do you not think it would be better to stop a month, so that we could go when the weather is more settled?" There was not a child that voted for stopping a month. All the hands we up for going next Wednesday. Now, imitate the children in that. Do not make it seem as if you were in a no hurry to be happy; for as he that believeth in Christ hath eternal life, to postpone having it is an unworthy as well as unwise thing to do. No, you will have it, I hope, at once. There is a man here who is going to be a very rich man when his old aunt dies. You do not wish that she should die, I am sure; but you sometimes wonder why some people are spared to be ninety, do you not? You are very poor now, and you wish that some of this money could come to you at once; you are not for putting that off. Why should you put off heavenly riches and eternal life? I beseech you to believe in Christ now; then you will be willed with thankfulness and joy.

Some cannot say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," for they do not know whether they have it or not. They sometimes think that they have; they oftener fear that they have not. Never tolerate a doubt on this subject, I implore you. Get full assurance. "Lay hold on eternal life." Get a grip of it. Know Christ; trust Christ wholly: and you have God's word for it, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Then you can say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Now, dear friends, let me ask you to join in this exercise. Let us first unitedly thank God for this gift. Put out of your mind the idea that you

ought to thank Christ, but not thank the Father. It was the Father that gave Christ. Christ did not die to make his Father love us, as some say that we preach. We have always preached the very opposite, and we have quoted that verse of Kent—

"'Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from his throne above,
A suffering man became.

" 'Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs he bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before."

He gave his Son because he already loved us. Christ is the exhibition of the Father's love, and the revelation of Christ is made because of "the love of the Spirit." Therefore, "Thanks be unto God"—the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost—"for his unspeakable gift."

While you saved ones, every one, raise your note of gratitude, be very careful to thank God only. Do not be thinking by whose means you were converted, and begin to thank the servant instead of the Lord whom he serves. Let the man who was used as the instrument in God's hand be told, for his comfort, of the blessing God sent you through him; but thank God, and thank only God, that you were led to lay hold of Christ, who is his unspeakable gift.

Moreover, thank God spontaneously. Look at the apostle, and imitate him. When he sounded this peal of praise, his mind was occupied at the time about the collection for the poor saints; but, collection or no collection, he will thank God for his unspeakable gift. I like to see thanks to God come up at what might be an untimely moment, When a man does not feel just as happy as he might be, and yet says, "Thank God," it sounds refreshingly real. I like to hear such a bubbling up of praise as in the case of old father Taylor, of New York, when he broke down in the middle of a sentence. Looking up at the people, he said, "There now! The

nominative has lost its verb; but, hallelujah! I am on the way to glory;" and so he went on again. Sometime we ought to do just like that. Take an opportunity, when there comes a little interval, just to say, "Whether this is in tune or not, I cannot help it: thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Lastly, as you receive the precious gift, thank God practically. Thank God by doing something to prove your thanks. It is a poor gratitude which only effervesces in words, and skirts deeds of kindness. Real thankfulness will not be in word only, but in deed too, and so it will prove that it is in the truth.

"Well, what could I do that would please God?" you say. First, I should think you could look for his lost children. That is a sure way to please him. Go to-night, and see whether you cannot find one of the erring whom you might bring back to the fold. Would you not please a mother, if she had lost her baby, and you set to work to find it? We want to please God. Seek the lost ones, and bring them in.

If you want to please God, next, succour his poor saints. If you know anything of them, help them. Do something for them for Christ's sake. I knew a woman who used always to relieve anybody that came to her door in the dress of a sailor. I do not think that half those who came to her ever had been to sea at all; but, still, if they came to the door as sailors, she used to say, "Ah! my dear boy was a sailor. I have not seen him for years. He is lost somewhere at sea; but for dear Jack's sake, I always help every sailor that comes to my door." It is a right feeling, is it not? I remember, when I first came to London from my country charge, I used to think of that, if I came across a dog or a cat that came from Waterbeach, I would like to feed it. So, for the love of Christ, love Christ's poor people. Whenever you find them, say, "My Lord was poor, and so are you, and for his dear sake I will help you."

If you want to please God, next, bear with the evil ones. Do not lose your temper; I mean, by that, do not get angry with the unthankful and the evil. Let your anger be lost in praise for the gift unspeakable. Please God by bearing with evil men, as he bears with you. But if you have a very bad

temper, I hope that, in another sense, you may lose it, and never find it any more.

And lastly, if you want to please God, watch, like the Thessalonians, "for his Son from heaven." The Lord Jesus is coming again, in like manner as he departed, and there is no attitude with which God is more delighted in his saved people than with that of watching for the time when "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."

Beloved, may God help you thus to magnify his Son; and to him shall be all the praise! Let us again lift up our glad hallelujah: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Amen.

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Praises And Vows Accepted In Zion

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh more. - Psalm 65:1-2

Upon Zion there was erected an altar dedicated to God for the offering of sacrifices. Except when prophets were commanded by God to break through the rule, burnt offering was only to be offered there. The worship of God upon the high places was contrary to the divine command: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee." Hence the tribes on the other side of Jordan,

when they erected a memorial altar, disclaimed all intention of using it for the purpose of sacrifice, and said most plainly, "God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the Lord our God that is before his tabernacle."

In fulfillment of this ancient type, we also "have an altar whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle." Into our spiritual worship, no observers of materialistic ritualism may intrude; they have no right to eat at our spiritual altar, and there is no other at which they can eat and live for ever. There is but one altar Jesus Christ our Lord. All other altars are impostures and idolatrous inventions. Whether of stone, or wood, or brass, they are the toys with which those amuse themselves who have returned to the beggarly elements of Judaism, or else the apparatus with which clerical jugglers dupe the sons and daughters of men. Holy places made with hands are now abolished; they were once the figures of the true, but now that the substance has come, the type is done away with. The all-glorious person of the Redeemer, God and Man, is the great center of Zion's temple, and the only real altar of sacrifice. He is the church's head, the church's heart, the church's altar, priest, and all in all. "To him shall the gathering of the be." Around him we all congregate even as the tribes around the tabernacle of the Lord in the wilderness.

When the church is gathered together, we may liken it to the assemblies upon Mount Zion, whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel. There the song went up, not so much from each separate worshipper as from all combined; there the praise as it rose to heaven was not only the praise of each one, but the praise of all. So where Christ is the center, where his one sacrifice is the altar whereon all offerings are laid; and where the church unites around that common center, and rejoices in that one sacrifice, there is the true Zion. If we this evening —gathering in Christ's name, around his one finished sacrifice, present our prayers and praises entirely to the Lord through Jesus Christ, we are "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." This is Zion, even this house in the far-off islands of the

Gentiles, and we can say indeed and of a truth, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed."

We shall, with devout attention, notice two things: the first is our holy worship, which we desire to render; and then the encouragement, the stimulative encouragement, which God provides for us: "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."

I. First, let us consider the HOLY OFFERING OF WORSHIP WHICH WE DESIRE TO PRESENT TO GOD. It is twofold: there is praise, and there is also a vow, a praise that waiteth, and a vow of which performance is promised.

Let us think, first of all, of the praise. This is the chief ingredient of the adoration of heaven; and what is thought to be worthy of the world of glory, ought to be the main portion of the worship of earth. Although we shall never cease to pray as long as we live here below, and are surrounded by so many wants, yet we should never so pray as to forget to praise. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is heaven," must never be left out because we are pressed with want, and therefore hasten to cry, "Give us this day our daily bread." It will be a sad hour when the worship of the church shall be only a solemn wail. Notes of exultant thanksgiving should ever ascend from her solemn gatherings. "Praise the Lord O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion." "Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Let it abide as a perpetual ordinance, while sun and moon endure, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." Never think little of praise, since holy angels and saints made perfect count it their life-long joy, and even the Lord himself saith, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me." The tendency, I fear, among us has been to undervalue praise as a part of public worship, whereas it should be second to nothing. We frequently hear of prayer-meetings, and but seldom of praise-meetings. We acknowledge the duty of prayer by setting apart certain times for it; we do not always so acknowledge the duty of praise. I hear of "family prayer;" do I always hear of "family praise?" I know you cultivate private prayer: are you as diligent also in private thanksgiving and secret

adoration of the Lord? In everything we are to give thanks; it is as much an apostolic precept as that other, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, make your requests known unto God." I have often said to you, dear brethren, that prayer and praise are like the breathing in and out of the air, and make up that spiritual respiration by which the inner life is instrumentally supported. We take in an inspiration of heavenly air as we pray: we breathe it out again in praise unto God, from whom it came; if, then, we would be healthy in spirit, let us be abundant in thanksgiving. Prayer, like the root of a tree, seeks for and finds nutriment; praise, like the fruit, renders a revenue to the owner of the vineyard. Prayer is for ourselves, praise is for God; let us never be so selfish as to abound in the one and fail in the other. Praise is a slender return for the boundless favors we enjoy; let us not be slack in rendering it in our best music, the music of a devout soul. "Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant."

Let us notice the praise which is mentioned in our text, which is to be so large a matter of concern to the Zion of God whenever the saints are met together.

You will observe, first, that it is praise exclusively rendered to God. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." "Praise for thee, and all the praise for thee," and no praise for man or for any other who may be thought to be, or may pretend to be, worthy of praise. Have I not sometimes gone into places called houses of God where the praise has waited for a woman—for the Virgin, where praise has waited for the saints, where incense has smoked to heaven, and songs and prayers have been sent up to deceased martyrs and confessors who are supposed to have power with God? In Rome it is so, but in Zion it is not so. Praise waiteth for thee, O Mary, in Babylon; but praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion. Unto God, and unto God alone, the praise of his true church must ascend. If Protestants are free from this deadly error, I fear they are guilty of another, for in our worship, we too often minister unto our own selves. We do so when we make the tune and manner of the song to be more important than the matter of it. I am afraid that where organs, choirs, and singing men and singing women are left to do the praise of the congregation, men's minds are more occupied with the due performance

of the music, than with the Lord, who alone is to be praised. God's house is meant to be sacred unto himself, but too often it is made an opera-house, and Christians form an audience, not an adoring assembly. The same thing may, unless great care be taken, happen amid the simplest worship, even though everything which does not savor of gospel plainness is excluded, for in that case we may drowsily drawl out the words and notes, with no heart whatever. To sing with the soul, this only is to offer acceptable song! We come not together to amuse ourselves, to display our powers of melody or our aptness in creating harmony we come to pay our adoration at the footstool of the Great King, to whom alone be glory for ever and ever. True praise is for God—for God alone.

Brethren, you must take heed lest the minister, who would, above all, disclaim a share of praise, should be set up as a demi-god among you. Refute practically the old slander that presbyter is only priest writ large. Look higher than the pulpit, or you will be disappointed. Look far above an arm of flesh, or it will utterly fail you. We may say of the best preacher upon the earth, "Give God the praise, for we know that this man is a sinner." If we thought that you paid superstitious reverence to us, we would, like Paul and Silas at Lystra, rend our clothes, and cry, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." It is not to any man, to any priest, to any order of men, to any being in heaven or earth beside God, that we should burn the incense of worship. We would as soon worship cats with the Egyptians, as popes with the Romanists: we see no difference between the people whose gods grew in their gardens and the sect whose deity is made by their baker. Such vile idolatry is to be loathed. To God alone shall all the praise of Zion ascend.

It is to be feared that some of our praise ascends nowhere at all, but it in as though it were scattered to the winds. We do not always realize God. Now, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" this is as true of praise as of prayer. "God is a Spirit," and they that praise him must praise him "in spirit and in truth," for "the Father seeketh such" to praise him, and only

such; and, if we do not lift our eyes and our hearts to him, we are but misusing words and wasting time. Our praise is not as it should be, if it be not reverently and earnestly directed to the Lord of Hosts. Vain is it to shoot arrows without a target: we must aim at God's glory in our holy songs, and that exclusively.

Note, next, that it should be continual. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." Some translators conceive that the main idea is that of continuance. It remains; it abides; for Zion does not break up when the assembly is gone. We do not leave the holiness in the material house, for it never was in the stone and the timber, but only in the living amenability of the faithful.

"Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is hallow'd ground,

For thou within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring thee where they come,
And going, take thee to their home."

The people of God, as they never cease to be a church, should maintain the Lord's praise perpetually as a community. Their assemblies should begin with praise and end with praise, and ever be conducted in a spirit of praise. There should be in all our solemn assemblies a spiritual incense altar, always smoking with "the pure incense of sweet spices, mingled according to the art of the apothecary": the thanksgiving which is made up of humility, gratitude, love, consecration, and holy joy in the Lord. It should be for the Lord alone, and it should never go out day nor night. "His mercy endureth for ever:" let our praises endure for ever. He makes the outgoings of the morning to rejoice, let us celebrate the rising of the sun with holy psalm and hymn. He makes the closing in of the evening to be glad, let him have our vesper praise. "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." Could his mercy cease, there might be some excuse for staying our praises: but, even

should it seem to be so, men who love the Lord would say with Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord." Let our praise abide, continue, remain, and be perpetual. It was a good idea of Bishop Farrar, that, in his own house he would keep up continual praise to God, and as, with a large family and household, he numbered just twenty-four, he set apart each one for an hour in the day to be engaged specially in prayer and praise, that he might girdle the day with a circle of worship. We could not do that. To attempt it might on our part be superstition; but to fall asleep blessing God, to rise in the night to meditate on him, and when we wake in the morning to feel our hearts leap in the prospect of his presence during the day, this is attainable, and we ought to reach it. It is much to be desired that all day long, in every avocation, and every recreation, the soul should spontaneously pour forth praise, even as birds sing, and flowers perfume the air, and sunbeams cheer the earth. We would be incarnate psalmody, praise enshrined in flesh and blood. From this delightful duty we would desire no cessation, and ask no pause. "Praise waits for thee, O God, in Zion;" thy praise may come and go, from the outside world, where all things ebb and flow, for it lies beneath the moon, and there is no stability in it; but amidst thy people, who dwell in thee, and who possess eternal life—in them thy praise perpetually abides.

A third point, however, is clear upon the surface of the words. "Praise waiteth for thee"—as though praise must always be humble. The servants "wait" in the king's palace. There the messengers stand girt for any mission; the servitors wait, prepared to obey; and the courtiers surround the throne, all eager to receive the royal smile and to fulfill the high command. Our praises ought to stand, like ranks of messengers, waiting to hear what God's will is; for this is to praise him. Furthermore, true praise lies in the actual doing of the divine will, even this,—to pause in sacred reverence until God the Lord shall speak, whatever that will may be; it is true praise to wait subserviently on him. Praises may be looked upon as servants who delight to obey their master's bidding. There is such a thing as an unholy familiarity with God; this age is not so likely to fall into it as some ages have been, for there is little familiarity with God of any sort now; public worship becomes more formal, and stately, and

distant. The intense nearness to God which Luther enjoyed—how seldom do we meet with it! But, however near we come to God, still he is God, and we are his creatures. He is, it is true, "our Father," but be it ever remembered that he is "our Father which art in heaven." "Our Father"—therefore near and intimate: "our Father in heaven," therefore we humbly, solemnly bow in his presence. There is a familiarity that runs into presumption: there is another familiarity, is so sweetly tempered with humility that it doth not intrude. "Praise waiteth for thee" with a servant's livery on, a servant's ear to hear, and a servant's heart to obey. Praise bows at thy foot-stool, feeling that it is still an unprofitable servant.

But, perhaps, you are aware, dear friends, that there are other translations of this verse. "Praise waiteth for thee," may be read, "Praise is silent unto thee"—"is silent before thee." One of the oldest Latin commentators reads it, "Praise and silence belong unto thee;" and Dr. Gill tells us, that in the King of Spain's Bible, it runs "The praise of angels is only silence before thee, O Jehovah," so that when we do our best our highest praise is but silence before God, and we must praise him with confession of shortcomings. Oh, that we too, as our poet puts it, might,

"Loud as his thunders speak his praise,
And sound it lofty as his throne!"

But we cannot do that, and when our notes are most uplifted, and our hearts most joyous, we have not spoken all his praise. Compared to what his nature and glory deserve, our most earnest praise has been little more than silence. Oh, brethren, have you not often felt it to be so? Those who are satisfied with formal worship, think that they have done well when the music has been correctly sung; but those who worship God in spirit, feel that they cannot magnify him enough. They blush over the hymns they sing, and retire from the assembly of the saints mourning that they have fallen far short of his glory. O for an enlarged mind, rightly to conceive the divine majesty; next for the gift of utterance to clothe the thought in fitting language; and then for a voice like many waters, to sound forth the noble strain. Alas! as yet, we are humbled at our failures to praise the Lord as we would.

"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
And his compassions are divine;

How, then, shall we proclaim to men God's glory? When we have done our best, our praise is but silence before the merit of his goodness, and the grandeur of his greatness.

Yet it may be well to observe here, that the praise which God accepts, presents itself under a variety of forms. There is praise for God in Zion, and it is often spoken; but there is often praise for God in Zion, and it is silence. There are some who cannot sing vocally, but perhaps, before God, they sing best. There are some, I know, who sing very harshly and inharmoniously—that is to say, to our ears; and yet God may accept them rather than the noise of stringed instruments carefully touched. There is a story told of Rowland Hill's being much troubled by a good old lady who would sit near him and sing with a most horrible voice, and very loudly—as those people generally do who sing badly—and he at last begged her not to sing so loudly. But when she said, "It comes from my heart," the honest man of God retracted his rebuke, and said, "Sing away, I should be sorry to stop you." When praise comes from the heart, who would wish to restrain it. Even the shouts of the old Methodists, their "hallelujahs" and "glorys," when uttered in fervor, were not to be forbidden; for if these should hold their peace, even the stones would cry out. But there are times when those who sing, and sing well, have too much praise in their soul for it to enclose itself in words. Like some strong liquors which cannot use a little vent, but foam and swell until they burst each hoop that binds the barrel; so, sometimes, we want a larger channel for our soul than that of mouth and tongue, and we long to have all our nerves and sinews made into harpstrings, and all the pores of our body made mouths of thankfulness. Oh, that we could praise with our whole nature, not one single hair of our heads, or drop of blood in our veins, keeping back from adoring the Most High! When this desire for praise is most vehement, we fall back upon silence, and quiver with the adoration which we cannot speak. Silence becomes our praise.

"A sacred reverence cheeks our songs,

And praise sits silent on our tongues."

It would be well, perhaps, in our public service, if we had more often the sweet relief of silence. I am persuaded that silence, ay, frequent silence, is most beneficial; and the occasional unanimous silence of all the saints when they bow before God would, perhaps, better express, and more fully promote, devout feeling than any hymns which have been composed or songs that could be sung. To make silence a part of worship habitually might be affectation and formalism, but to introduce it occasionally, and even frequently into the service, would be advantageous and profitable. Let us, then, by our silence, praise God, and let us always confess that our praise, compared with God's deserving, is but silence.

I would add that there is in the text the idea that praise waits for God expectantly. When we praise God, we expect to see more of him by and by, and therefore wait for him. We bless the King, but we desire to draw nearer to him. We magnify him for what we have seen, and we expect to see more. We praise him in his outer courts, for we shall soon be with him in the heavenly mansions. We glorify him for the revelation of himself in Jesus, for we expect to be like Christ, and to be with him where he is. When I cannot praise God for what I am, I will praise him for what I shall be. When I feel dull and dead about the present, I will take the words of our delightful hymn and say,

"And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

My praise shall not only be the psalmody of the past, which is but discharging a debt of gratitude, but my faith shall anticipate the future, and wait upon God to fulfill his purposes; and I will begin to pay my praise even before the mercy comes.

Dear brethren and sisters, let us for a moment present our praise to God, each one of us on his own account. We have our common mercies. We call them common, but, oh, how priceless they are. Health to be able to

come here and not to be stretched on a bed of sickness, I count this better than bags of gold. To have our reason, and not to be confined in yonder asylum; to have our children still about us and dear relatives spared still to us—to have bread to eat and raiment to put on—to have been kept from defiling our character—to have been preserved to-day from the snares of the enemy! These are godlike mercies, and for all these our praises shall wait upon God.

But oh! take up the thoughts suggested by the psalm itself in the next verse, and you will doubly praise God. "Iniquities prevail against me. As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Infinite love has made us clean every whit!—though we were black and filthy. We are washed—washed in priceless blood. Praise him for this! Go on with the passage, "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth and causeth to approach unto thee." Is not the blessing of access to God an exceeding choice one? Is it a light thing to feel that, though once far off, we are made nigh through the blood of Christ; and this because of electing love! "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth." Ye subjects of eternal choice, can you be silent? Has God favored you above others, and can your lips refuse to sing? No, you will magnify the Lord exceedingly, because he hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. Let us read on, and praise God that we have an abiding place among his people—"That he may dwell in thy courts."—Blessed be God we are not to be cast forth and driven out after a while, but we have an entailed inheritance amongst the sons of God. We praise him that we have the satisfaction of dwelling in his house as children. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." But I close the psalm, and simply say to you, there are ten thousand reasons for taking down the harp from the willows; and I know no reason for permitting it to hang there idle. There are ten thousand times ten thousand reasons for speaking well of "him who loved us, and gave himself for us." "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad." I remember hearing in a prayer-meeting this delightful verse mutilated in prayer, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we desire to be glad." Oh, brethren, I dislike mauling, and mangling, and adding to a text of Scripture. If we are to have the Scriptures revised, let it be by scholars, and not by every ignoramus. "Desire to be glad," indeed? This is fine

gratitude to God when he hath done great things for us." If these great things have been done, our souls must be glad, and cannot help it; they must overflow with gratitude to God for all his goodness.

2. So much on the first part of our holy sacrifice. Attentively let us consider the second, namely, the vow. "Unto thee shall the vow be performed."

We are not given to vow-making in these days. Time was when it was far oftener done. It may be that had we been better men we should have made more vows; it may possibly be that had we been more foolish men we should have done the same. The practice was so abused by superstition, that devotion has grown half-ashamed of it. But we have, at any rate, most of us bound ourselves with occasional vows. I do confess to-day a vow I have not kept as I should desire; the vow made on my first conversion. I surrendered myself, body, soul, and spirit, to him that bought me with a price, and the vow was not made by way of excess of devotion or supererogation, it was but my reasonable service. You have done that. Do you remember the love of your espousals, the time when Jesus was very precious, and you had just entered into the marriage bond with him? You gave yourselves up to him, to be his for ever and for ever. O brethren and sisters, it is a part of worship to perform that vow. Renew it to-night, make another surrender of yourselves to him whose you are and whom you serve. Say to-night, as I will, with you, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." Oh, for another thong to strap the victim to the altar-horn! Does the flesh struggle? Then let it be more fastly bound, never to escape from the altar of God.

Beloved, many of us did, in effect, make a most solemn vow at the time of our baptism. We were buried with Christ in baptism unto death, and, unless we were greatly dissembling, we avowed that we were dead in Christ and buried with him; wherein, also, we professed that we were risen with him. Now, shall the world live in those who are dead to it, and shall Christ's life be absent from those who are risen with him? We gave ourselves up there and then, in that solemn act of mystic burial. Recall that scene, I pray you; and as you do it blush, and ask God that your vow may yet be performed, as Doddridge well expresses it: -

"Baptised into your Saviour's death
Your souls to sin must die;
With Christ your Lord ye live anew,
With Christ ascend on high."

Some such vow we made, too, when we united ourselves to the church of God. There was an understood compact between us and the church, that we would serve it, that we would seek to honor Christ by holy living, increase the church by propagating the faith, seek its unity, its comfort, by our own love and sympathy with the members. We had no right to join with the church if we did not mean to give ourselves up to it, under Christ, to aid in its prosperity and increase. There was a stipulation made, and a covenant understood, when we entered into communion and league with our brethren in Christ. How about that? Can we say that, as unto God and in his sight, the vow has been performed? Yes, we have been true to our covenant in a measure, brethren. Oh, that it were more fully so! Some of us made another vow, when we gave ourselves, as I trust, under divine call, altogether to the work of the Christian ministry; and though we have taken no orders, and received no earthly ordination, for we are no believers in man-made priests, yet tacitly it is understood that the man who becomes a minister of the church of God is to give his whole time to his work—that body, soul, and spirit should be thrown into the cause of Christ. Oh, that this vow were more fully performed by pastors of the church! You, my brethren, elders and deacons, when you accepted office, you knew what the church meant. She expected holiness and zeal of you. The Holy Ghost made you overseers that you might feed the flock of God. Your office proves your obligation. You are practically under a vow. Has that vow been performed? Have you performed it in Zion unto the Lord?

Besides that, it has been the habit of godly men to make vows occasionally, in times of pain, and losses, and affliction. Did not the psalm we just now sang it so?

"Among the saints that fill thine house,
My offerings shall be paid;

There shall my zeal perform the vows
My soul in anguish made.

Now I am thine, for ever thine,
Nor shall my purpose move!
Thy hand hath loosed my bands of pain,
And bound me with thy love.

Here in thy courts I leave my vow,
And thy rich grace record;
Witness, ye saints, who hear me now,
If I forsake the Lord."

You said, "If I am ever raised up, and my life is prolonged, it shall be better spent." You said, also, "If I am delivered out of this great trouble, I hope to consecrate my substance more to God." Another time you said, "If the Lord will return to me the light of his countenance, and bring me out of this depressed state of mind, I will praise him more than ever before." Have you remembered all this? Coming here myself so lately from a sick bed, I at this time preach to myself. I only wish I had a better hearer; I would preach to myself in this respect, and say, "I charge thee, my heart, to perform thy vow." Some of us, dear friends, have made vows in time of joy, the season of the birth of the first-born child, the recovery of the wife from sickness, the merciful restoration that we have ourselves received, times of increasing goods, or seasons when the splendor of God's face has been unveiled before our wondering eye. Have we not made vows, like Jacob when he woke up from his wondrous dream, and took the stone which had been his pillow, and poured oil on its top, and made a vow unto the Most High? We have all had our Bethels. Let us remember that God has heard us, and let us perform unto him our vow which our soul made in her time of joy. But I will not try to open the secret pages of your private note-books. You have had tender passages, which you would not desire me to read aloud: the tears start at their memory. If your life were written, you would say, "Let these not be told; they were only between God and my soul"—some chaste and blessed love passages between you and Christ, which must not be revealed to men. Have you forgotten how then you said, "I am my beloved's, and he is

mine," and what you promised when you saw all his goodness made to pass before you. I have now to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and bid you present unto the Lord to-night the double offering of your heart's praise and of your performed vow. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

II. And now, time will fail me, but I must have a few words upon THE BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT afforded us in the text for the presentation of these offerings unto God. Here it is, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come?"

Observe, here, that God hears prayer. It is, in some aspects, the lowest form of worship, and yet he accepts it. It is not the worship of heaven, and it is, in a measure, selfish. Praise is superior worship, for it is elevating; it is the utterance of a soul that has received good from God, and is returning its love to him in acknowledgment. Praise has a sublime aspect. Now, observe, if prayer is heard, then praise will be heard too. If the lower form, on weaker wing as it were, reaches the throne of the majesty on high, how much more shall the seraphic wing of praise bear itself into the divine presence. Prayer is heard of God: therefore our praises and vows will be. And this is a very great encouragement, because it seems terrible to pray when you are not heard, and discouraging to praise God if he will not accept it. What would be the use of it? But if prayer and yet more praise be most surely heard, ah, brethren, then let us continue and abide in thanksgiving. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, saith the Lord."

Observe too according to the text, that all prayer, if it be true prayer, is heard of God, for so it is put—"Unto thee shall all flesh come." Oh, how glad I am at that word. My poor prayer—shall God reject it? Yes, I might have feared so if he had said, "Unto thee shall all spirits come." Behold, my brethren, he takes the grosser part as it were, and looks at prayer in his infinite compassion, perceiving it to be what it is—a feeble thing—a cry coming from poor fallen flesh, and yet he puts it, "Unto thee shall all flesh come. My broken prayer, my groaning prayer shall get to thee, though it seems to me a thing of flesh, it is nevertheless wrought in me by thy Spirit. And, O my God, my song, though my voice be hoarse and

oftentimes my notes most feeble, shall reach thee. Though I groan because it is so imperfect, yet even that shall come to thee. Prayer, if true, shall be received of God, notwithstanding all its faultiness, through Jesus Christ. Then so it will be with our praises and our vows.

Again, prayer is always and habitually received of God. "O thou that hearest prayer." Not that didst hear it or on a certain occasion may have heard it, but thou that ever hearest prayer. If he always hears prayer, then he always hears praise. Is not this delightful to think of my praise, though it be but that of a child or a poor unworthy sinner—God does hear it, does accept it, in spite of its imperfections, and does accept it always? Oh, I will have another hymn to-morrow, I will sing a new song to-morrow. I will forget my pain, I will forget for a moment all my care, and if I cannot sing aloud by reason of those that are with me, yet will I set the bells of my heart ringing, I will make my whole soul full of praise. If I cannot let it out of my mouth, I will praise him in my soul, because he always hears me. You know it is hard to do things for one who never accepts what you do. Many a wife has said, "Oh! it is hard. My husband never seems pleased. I have done all I can, but he takes no notice of little deeds of kindness." But how easy it is to serve a person who, when you have done any little thing, saw, "How kind it was of you" and thinks much of it. Ah, poor child of God, the Lord thinks much of thy praises, much of thy vows, much of thy prayers. Therefore, be not slack to praise and magnify him unceasingly.

And this all the more, because we have not quite done with that word, "Unto thee shall all flesh come." All flesh shall come because the Lord hears prayer. Then all my praises will be heard and all the praises of all sorts of men, if sincere, come unto God. The great ones of the earth shall present praise, and the poorest of the poor also, for thou shalt not reject them.

And, Lord, wilt thou put it so; "Unto thee shall all flesh come," and wilt thou say, "but not such a one?" Wilt thou exclude me? Brethren, fear not that God will reject you. I remind you of what I told you the other night concerning a good earnest believing woman, who in prayer said, "Lord, I am content to be the second thou shalt forsake, but I cannot be the first."

The Lord says all flesh shall come to him, and it is implied that he will receive them when they come—all sorts of men, all classes and conditions of men. Then he cannot reject me if I go, nor my prayers if I pray, nor my praise if I praise him, nor my vows if I perform them. Come then, let us praise the Lord, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

I have done when I have said this. Dear brethren and sisters, there may be difficulties in your way; iniquities may hinder you, or infirmities; but there is the promise, "thou shalt purge them away." Infirmities may check you, but note the word of divine help, "Blessed is the man whom thou causest to approach unto thee." He will come to your aid, and lead you to himself. Infirmities, therefore, are overcome by divine grace. Perhaps your emptiness hinders you: "He shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house." It is not your goodness that is to satisfy either God or you, but God's goodness is to satisfy. Come, then, with thine iniquity, come with thine infirmity; come with thy emptiness. Come, dear brethren, if you have never come to God before. Come and confess your sin to God, and ask for mercy; you can do no less than ask. Come and trust his mercy, which endures for ever; it has no limit. Think not hardly of him, but come and lay yourself down at his feet. If you perish, perish there. Come and tell your grief; pour out your hearts before him. Bottom upwards turn the vessel of your nature, and drain out the last dreg, and pray to be filled with the fullness of his grace. Come unto Jesus; he invites you, he enables you. A cry from that pew will reach the sacred ear: "You have not prayed before," you say. Everything must have a beginning. Oh that that beginning might come now. It is not because you pray well that you are to come, but because the Lord hears prayer graciously, therefore, all flesh shall come. You are welcome; none can say you nay. Come! 'tis mercy's welcome hour. May the Lord's bands of love be cast about you; may you be drawn now to him. Come by way of the cross; come resting in the precious atoning sacrifice, believing in Jesus; and he has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The grace of our Lord be with you. Amen.

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Pray Without Ceasing

Pray without ceasing. - 1 Thessalonians 5:17

The position of our text is very suggestive. Observe what it follows. It comes immediately after the precept, "Rejoice evermore;" as if that command had somewhat staggered the reader, and made him ask "How can I always rejoice?" and, therefore, the apostle appended as answer, "Always pray." The more praying the more rejoicing. Prayer gives a channel to the pent-up sorrows of the soul, they flow away, and in their stead streams of sacred delight pour into the heart. At the same time the more rejoicing the more praying; when the heart is in a quiet condition, and full of joy in the Lord, then also will it be sure to draw nigh unto the Lord in worship. Holy joy and prayer act and react upon each other.

Observe, however, what immediately follows the text: "In everything give thanks." When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude. When we joy in God for what we have, and believingly pray to him for more, then our souls thank him both in the enjoyment of what we have, and in the prospect of what is yet to come. Those three texts are three companion pictures, representing the life of a true Christian, the central sketch is the connecting link between those on either side. These three precepts are an ornament of grace to every believer's neck, wear them every one of you, for glory and for beauty; "Rejoice evermore;" "Pray without ceasing;" "in everything give thanks."

But we cannot spare any time for the consideration of the context, but must advance to the precept in hand. Our text though exceedingly short is marvellously full, and we will discuss it under the following heads. We shall ask and answer four questions. What do these words imply?

Secondly, What do they actually mean? Thirdly, How shall we obey them? And, fourthly, Why should WE especially obey them?

I. WHAT DO THESE WORDS IMPLY? "Pray without ceasing." Do they not imply that the use of the voice is not an essential element in prayer? It would be most unseemly even if it were possible for us to continue unceasingly to pray aloud. There would of course be no opportunity for preaching and hearing, for the exchange of friendly intercourse, for business, or for any other of the duties of life; while the din of so many voices would remind our neighbors rather of the worship of Baal than that of Zion. It was never the design of the Lord Jesus that our throats, lungs, and tongues should be for ever at work. Since we are to pray without ceasing, and yet could not pray with the voice without ceasing, it is clear that audible language is not essential to prayer. We may speak a thousand words which seem to be prayer, and yet never pray; on the other hand, we may cry into God's ear most effectually, and yet never say a word. In the book of Exodus God is represented as saying to Moses, "Why criest thou unto me?" And yet it is not recorded that Moses had uttered so much as a single syllable at that time. It is true that the use of the voice often helps prayer. I find, personally, that I can pray best when alone if I can hear my own voice; at the same time it is not essential, it does not enter at all into the acceptability, reality, or prevalence of prayer. Silence is as fit a garment for devotion as any that language can fashion.

It is equally clear that the posture of prayer is of no great importance, for if it were necessary that we should pray on our knees we could not pray without ceasing, the posture would become painful and injurious. To what end has our Creator given us feet, if he desires us never to stand upon them? If he had meant us to be on our knees without ceasing, he would have fashioned the body differently, and would not have endowed us with such unnecessary length of limb. It is well to pray on one's knees; it is a most fitting posture; it is one which expresses humility, and when humility is truly felt, kneeling is a natural and beautiful token of it, but, at the same time, good men have prayed flat upon their faces, have prayed sitting, have prayed standing, have prayed in any posture, and the posture does not enter into the essence of prayer. Consent not to be placed in bondage by those to whom the bended knee is reckoned of more

importance than the contrite heart.

It is clear, too, from the text, that the place is not essential to prayer, for if there were only certain holy places where prayer was acceptable, and we had to pray without ceasing, our churches ought to be extremely large, that we might always live in them, and they would have to comprise all the arrangements necessary for human habitations. If it be true that there is some sanctity this side of a brick-wall more than there is on the other side of it, if it be true that the fresh air blows away grace, and that for the highest acceptance we need groined arches, pillars, aisle, chancel, and transept, then farewell, ye green lanes, and fair gardens, and lovely woods, for henceforth we must, without ceasing, dwell where your fragrance and freshness can never reach us. But this is ridiculous; wherefore I gather that the frequenting of some one particular place has little or nothing to do with prayer; and such a conclusion is consistent with the saying of Paul upon Mars' Hill, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

"Pray without ceasing." That precept at one stroke overthrows the idea of particular times wherein prayer is more acceptable or more proper than at others. If I am to pray without ceasing, then every second must be suitable for prayer, and there is not one unholy moment in the hour, nor one unaccepted hour in the day, nor one unhallowed day in the year. The Lord has not appointed a certain week for prayer, but all weeks should be weeks of prayer: neither has he said that one hour of the day is more acceptable than another. All time is equally legitimate for supplication, equally holy, equally accepted with God, or else we should not have been told to pray without ceasing. It is good to have your times of prayer; it is good to set apart seasons for special supplication—we have no doubt of that; but we must never allow this to gender the superstition that there is a certain holy hour for prayer in the morning, a specially acceptable hour for prayer in the evening, and a sacred time for prayer at certain seasons of the year. Wherever we seek the Lord with true hearts he is found of us; whenever we cry unto him he heareth us. Every place is hallowed ground to a hallowed heart, and every day is a holy day to a holy man. From January to December the calendar has not one date in which prayer is

forbidden. All the days are red-letter days, whether Sabbaths or week days they are all accepted times for prayer. Clear, then, is it from the text, that the voice, the posture, the place, the time—none of them enter into the essence of prayer, or else, in this case, we should be commanded to perform an impossibility, which we are quite certain is not after the manner of the Lord our God.

There is one other thing implied in the text, namely, that a Christian has no right to go into any place where he could not continue to pray. Pray without ceasing? Then I am never to be in a place where I could not pray without ceasing. Hence, many worldly amusements without being particularized may be judged and condemned at once. Certain people believe in ready-made prayers, cut and dried for all occasions, and, at the same time, they believe persons to be regenerated in baptism though their lives are any thing but Christian; ought they not to provide prayers for all circumstances in which these, the dear regenerated but graceless sons and daughters of their church, are found? As, for instance, a pious collect for a young prince or nobleman, who is about to go to a shooting-match, that he may be forgiven for his cruelty towards those poor pigeons who are only badly wounded and made to linger in misery, as also a prayer for a religious and regenerated gentleman who is going to a horserace, and a collect for young persons who have received the grace of confirmation, upon their going to the theater to attend a very questionable play. Could not such special collects be made to order? You revolt at the idea. Well, then, have nothing to do with that which you cannot ask God's blessing upon, have nothing to do with it, for if God cannot bless it, you may depend upon it the devil has cursed it. Anything that is right for you to do you may consecrate with prayer, and let this be a sure gauge and test to you, if you feel that it would be an insult to the majesty of heaven for you to ask the Lord's blessing upon what is proposed to you, then stand clear of the unholy thing. If God doth not approve, neither must you have fellowship therewith.

These matters are clearly implied in the precept, "Pray without ceasing."

II. But now, WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN? If it does not mean we are to be always on our knees, nor always saying prayers nor always in

church or in meeting and does not mean that we are to consider any day as unfit for praying what then? The words mean, first, a privilege; secondly, a precept—"Pray without ceasing." Our Lord Jesus Christ in these words assures you that you may pray without ceasing. There is no time when we may not pray. You have here permission given to come to the mercy-seat when you will, for the veil of the Most Holy place is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and our access to the mercy-seat is undisputed and indisputable. Kings hold their levees upon certain appointed days, and then their courtiers are admitted; but the King of Kings holds a constant levee. The monarch whose palace was in Shushan would have none approach him unless he sent for them, but the King of kings has called for all his people, and they may come at all times. They were slain who went in unto the king Ahasuerus, unless he stretched out his scepter to them; but our King never withdraws his scepter, it is always stretched out, and whosoever desires to come to him may come now, and come at any time. Among the Persians there were some few of the nobility who had the peculiar and special right of an audience with the king at any time they chose. Now, that which was the peculiar right of a very few and of the very great is the privilege of every child of God. He may come in unto the King at all times. The dead of night is not too late for God; the breaking of the morning, when the first grey light is seen, is not too early for the Most High; at midday he is not too busy; and when the evening gathers he is not weary with his children's prayers. "Pray without ceasing," is, if I read it aright, a most sweet and precious permit to the believer to pour out his heart at all times before the Lord. I hear its still small voice saying, "Come to the mercy seat, O my child, whenever thou wilt; come to the treasury of grace whenever thou desirest -

"The happy gates of gospel grace
Stand open night and day."

The doors of the temple of divine love shall not be shut. Nothing, can set a barrier between a praying soul and its God. The road of angels and of prayers is ever open. Let us but send out the dove of prayer and we may be certain that she will return unto us with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. Evermore the Lord hath regard unto the pleadings of his servants, and waiteth to be gracious unto them.

Still, however, it is a precept, "Pray without ceasing." And what does it mean? It means a great truth which I cannot very well convey to you in a few words, and, therefore, must try and bring out under four or five points.

It means, first, never abandon prayer. Never for any cause or reason cease to pray. Imagine not that you must pray until you are saved, and may then leave off. For those whose sins are pardoned prayer is quite as needful as for those mourning under a sense of sin. "Pray without ceasing," for in order that you may persevere in grace you must persevere in prayer. Should you become experienced in grace and enriched with much spiritual knowledge, you must not dream of restraining prayer because of your gifts and graces. "Pray without ceasing," or else your flower will fade and your spiritual fruit will never ripen. Continue in prayer until the-last moment of your life.

"Long as they live must Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."

As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing. As there is no attainment in life, of health, or of strength, or of muscular vigor which can place a man beyond the necessity of breathing, so no condition of spiritual growth or advance in grace will allow a man to dispense with prayer.

"Let us pray! our life is praying;
Prayer with time alone may cease:
Then in heaven, God's will obeying,
Life is praise and perfect peace."

Never give up praying, not even though Satan should suggest to you that it is in vain for you to cry unto God. Pray in his teeth; "pray without ceasing." If for awhile the heavens are as brass and your prayer only echoes in thunder above your head, pray on; if month after month your prayer appears to have miscarried, and no reply has been vouchsafed to you, yet still continue to draw nigh unto the Lord. Do not abandon the

mercy-seat for any reason whatever. If it be a good thing that you have been asking for, and you are sure it is according to the divine will, if the vision tarry wait for it, pray, weep, entreat, wrestle, agonise till you get that which you are praying for. If your heart be cold in prayer, do not restrain prayer until your heart warms, but pray your soul unto heat by the help of the everblessed Spirit who helpeth our infirmities. If the iron be hot then hammer it, and if it be cold hammer it till you heat it. Never cease prayer for any sort of reason or argument. If the philosopher should tell you that every event is fixed, and, therefore, prayer cannot possibly change anything, and, consequently, must be folly; still, if you cannot answer him and are somewhat puzzled, go on with your supplications notwithstanding all. No difficult problem concerning digestion would prevent your eating, for the result justifies the practice, and so no quibble should make us cease prayer, for the assured success of it commends it to us. You know what your God has told you, and if you cannot reply to every difficulty which man can suggest, resolve to be obedient to the divine will, and still "Pray without ceasing." Never, never, never renounce the habit of prayer, or your confidence in its power.

A second meaning is this. Never suspend the regular offering of prayer. You will, if you are a watchful Christian, have your times of daily devotion, fixed not by superstition, but for your convenience and remembrance; just as David, three times a day, and as another saint, seven times a day, sought the Lord: now be sure to keep up this daily prayer without intermission. This advice will not comprehend the whole range of the text, I am not pretending that it does; I am only mentioning it now as supplementary to other thoughts. "Pray without ceasing;" that is, never give up the morning prayer, nor the evening prayer, nor the prayer at midday if such has grown to be your habit. If you change hours and times, as you may, yet keep up the practice of regularly recurring retirement, meditation, and prayer. You may be said to continue in prayer if your habitual devotions be maintained. It would be quite correct for me to say that I know a man who has been always begging ever since I have been in London. I do not think that I ever passed the spot where he stands without seeing him there. He is a blind person, and stands near a church. As long as my recollection serves me he has been begging without ceasing; of course he has not begged when he has been asleep, he has not

begged when he has gone home to his meals, nor did you understand me to have asserted anything so absurd when I said he had begged without ceasing for years. And so, if at those times when it is proper for you to separate yourself from your ordinary labors, you continue perseveringly begging at mercy's throne, it may be with comparative correctness said of you that you pray without ceasing. Through all hours are alike to me, I find it profitable to meet with God at set periods, for these seem to me to be like the winding up of the clock. The clock is to go all day, but there is a time for winding it up; and the little special season that we set apart and hedge round about for communion with our God, seems to wind us up for the rest of the day. Therefore, if you would pray without ceasing, continue in the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, and let it be perpetually an ordinance with you, that your times of prayer are not broken in upon.

That, however, is only a help, for I must add, thirdly, between these times of devotion, labor to be much in ejaculatory prayer. While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God; not in twenty sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling, but in broken sentences and interjections. It is always wrong to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, and that we should do if we spoiled study or labor by running away to pray at all hours; but we may, without this, let short sentences go up to heaven, ay, and we may shoot upwards cries, and single words, such as an "Ah," an "Oh," an "O that;" or, without words we may pray in the upward glancing of the eye or the sigh of the heart. He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand-grenades of godly desire, which he casts forth at every available interval. Sometimes he will blow the furnace of his desires to a great heat in regular prayer, and as a consequence at other times, the sparks will continue to rise up to heaven in the form of brief words, and looks, and desires.

Fourthly, if we would pray without ceasing, we must be always in the spirit of prayer. Our heart, renewed by the Holy Ghost, must be like the magnetized needle, which always has an inclination towards the pole. It does not always point to that pole, you can turn it aside if you will; in an iron ship it exhibits serious deflections, under all circumstances it is not

exactly true; but if you put your finger to that needle and force it round to the east, you have only to take away the pressure, and immediately it returns to its beloved pole again. So let your heart be magnetized with prayer, so that if the finger of duty turns it away from the immediate act of prayer, there may still be the longing desire for prayer in your soul, and the moment you can do so, your heart reverts to its beloved work. As perfume lies in flowers even when they do not shed their fragrance upon the gale, so let prayer lie in your hearts.

But, perhaps, the last meaning that I shall give has the most of the truth of the text in it, namely this: Let all your actions be consistent with your prayers, and be in fact a continuation of your prayers. If I am to pray without ceasing, it cannot mean that I am always to be in the act of direct devotion; for the human mind, as at present constituted, needs variety of occupation, and it could not without producing madness or imbecility continue always in the exercise of one function. We must, therefore, change the modus or the manner of operation if we are ceaselessly to continue in prayer. We must pursue our prayers, but do it in another manner. Take an instance. This morning I prayed to God to arouse his people to prayerfulness; very well; as I came to this house my soul continued to ejaculate, "O Lord, awaken thy children to prayerfulness.": Now, while I am preaching to you and driving at the same point, am I not praying? Is not my sermon the continuation of my prayer, for I am desiring and aiming at the same thing? Is it not a continuing to pray when we use the best means towards the obtaining of that which we pray for? Do you not see my point? He who prays for his fellow creatures, and then seeks their good, is praying still. In this sense there is truth in that old distich.

"He prayeth best that loveth best
Both man, and bird, and beast."

Loving is praying. If I seek in prayer the good of my fellow creature, and then go and try to promote it, I am practically praying for his good in my actions. If I seek, as I should do, God's glory above everything, then if all my actions are meant to tend to God's glory, I am continuing to pray, though I may not be praying with my thoughts or with my lips. Oh, that

our whole life might be a prayer. It can be. There can be a praying without ceasing before the Lord, though there be many pausings in what the most of men would call prayer. Pray then without ceasing, my brother. Let thy whole life be praying. If thou changest the method, yet change not the pursuit; but continue still to worship, still to adore. This I think to be the meaning of our text,—never altogether abandon prayer; do not suspend the regular offering of prayer; be much in earnest ejaculations, be always in the spirit of prayer, and let the whole of your life be consistent with your prayer, and become a part of it.

III. HOW CAN WE OBEY THESE WORDS? First, let us labor as much as we can to prevent all sinful interruptions. "Pray without ceasing." Then if it be impossible to be in the act of prayer always, at least let us be as much as possible in that act; and let us prevent those interruptions which I mentioned in the early part of my discourse, the interruptions occasioned by our own sin. Let us endeavor to keep clear, as far as we can, of anything and everything in ourselves, or round about us, that would prevent our abounding in supplication. And let us also keep clear of interruptions from the sins of others. Do others forbid us to pray? Let us not be afraid of their wrath. Remember Daniel, who while he was under the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, yet opened his window towards Jerusalem, and prayed seven times a day as he had done aforetime. Under no threats: and for no bribes, let us ever cease to pray. In private let us always pray, and if duty calls us to do so where others observe us, let us so much fear the eye of God that we shall not dare to fear the eye of man.

Let us next avoid all unnecessary interruptions of every sort to our prayer. If we know that any matter, from which we can escape, has a tendency to disturb the spirit of prayer within us, let us avoid it earnestly. Let us try, as much as possible, not to be put off the scent in prayer. Satan's object will be to distract the mind, to throw it off the rails, to divert its aim, but let us resolve before God, we will not turn aside from following hard after him. Sir Thomas Abney had for many years practiced family prayer regularly; he was elected Lord Mayor of London, and on the night of his election he must be present at a banquet, but when the time came for him to call his family together in prayer, having no wish either

to be a Pharisee or to give up his practice, he excused himself to the guests in this way,—he said he had an important engagement with a very dear friend, and they must excuse him for a few minutes. It was most true, his dearest friend was the Lord Jesus, and family prayer was an important engagement; and so he withdrew for awhile to the family altar, and in that respect prayed without ceasing. We sometimes allow good things to interrupt our prayer, and thus make them evil. Mrs. Rowe observes in one of her letters, that if the twelve apostles were preaching in the town where she lived and she could never hear them again, if it were her time for private devotion, she would not be bribed out of her closet by the hope of hearing them. I am not sure but what she might have taken another time for her private devotions, and so have enjoyed both privileges, but at the same time, supposing she must; have lost the prayer and have only got the preaching in exchange, I agree with her, it would have been exchanging gold for silver. She would be more profited in praying than she would be in hearing, for praying is the end of preachings. Preaching is but the wheat-stalk, but praying is the golden grain itself, and he hath the best who gets it.

Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. That also is a great mistake, for praying is a saving of time. You remember Luther's remark, "I have so much to do to-day that I shall never get through it with less than three hours' prayer." He had not been accustomed to take so much time for pray on ordinary days, but since that was a busy day, he must needs have more communion with his God. But, perhaps, our occupations begin early, and we therefore say, "How can I get alone with God in prayer?" It is said of Sir Henry Havelock that every morning when the march began at six, he always rose at four, that he might not miss his time for the reading of the Scripture and communion with his God. If we have no time we must make time, for if God has given us time for secondary duties, he must have given us time for primary ones, and to draw near to him is a primary duty, and we must let nothing set it on one side. There is no real need to sacrifice any duty, we have time enough for all if we are not idle; and, indeed, the one will help the other instead of clashing with it. When Edward Payson was a student at College, he found he had so much to do to attend his classes and prepare for examinations, that he could not spend as much time as he should in private prayer; but, at last, waking up

to the feeling that he was going back in divine things through his habits, he took due time for devotion and he asserts in his diary that he did more in his studies in a single week after he had spent time with God in prayer, than he had accomplished in twelve months before. God can multiply our ability to make use of time. If we give the Lord his due, we shall have enough for all necessary purposes. In this matter seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Your other engagements will run smoothly if you do not forget your engagement with God.

We must, dear friends, in order to pray without ceasing, strive against indolence in prayer. I believe that no man loves prayer until the Holy Spirit has taught him the sweetness and value of it. If you have ever prayed without ceasing you will pray without ceasing. The men who do not love to pray must be strangers to its secret joy. When prayer is a mechanical act, and there is no soul in it, it is a slavery and a weariness; but when it is really living prayer, and when the man prays because he is a Christian and cannot help praying, when he prays along the street, prays in his business, prays in the house, prays in the field, when his whole soul is full of prayer, then he cannot have too much of it. He will not be backward in prayer who meets Jesus in it, but he who knows not the Well-beloved will count it a drudgery.

Let us avoid, above all things, lethargy and indifference in prayer. Oh, it is a dreadful thing that ever we should insult the majesty of heaven by words from which our heart has gone. I must, my spirit, I must school thee to this, that thou must have communion with God, and if in thy prayer thou dost not talk with God, thou shalt keep on praying till thou dost. Come not away from the mercy-seat till thou hast prayed.

Beloved brother, say unto thy soul, thus—"here have I come to the throne of grace to worship God and seek his blessing, and I am not going away till I have done this; I will not rise from my knees, because I have spent my customary minutes, but here will I pray till I find the blessing." Satan will often leave off tempting when he finds you thus resolute in prayer. Brethren, we need waking up. Routine grows upon us. We get into the mill-horse way—round, and round, and round the mill. From this may

God save us. It is deadly. A man may pray twenty years with regularity, as far as the time goes, and the form goes, and never have prayed a single grain of prayer in the whole period. One real groan fetched from the heart is worth a million litanies, one living breath from a gracious soul is worth ten thousand collects. May we be kept awake by God's grace, praying without ceasing.

And we must take care, dear brethren, again, if we would perform this duty, that we fight against anything like despair of being heard. If we have not been heard after six times we must, as Elijah, go again seven times; if our Peter is in prison, and the church has prayed God to liberate him, and he still is in fetters bound in the inner prison, let us pray on, for one of these days Peter will knock at the gate. Be importunate, heaven's gate does not open to every runaway knock. Knock, and knock, and knock again; and add to thy knocking and to thy asking seeking, and be not satisfied till thou gettest a real answer.

Never cease from prayer through presumption; guard against that. Feel, O Christian, that you always need to pray. Say not, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Thou art by nature still naked, and poor, and miserable; therefore, persevere in prayer, and buy of the Lord fine gold, and clean raiment, that thou mayst be rich, and fitly clothed.

Thus I have tried to set before you, beloved, how by resisting presumption and despair, indolence and lethargy, and trying to put aside all sinful and other interruptions, we may pray without ceasing.

IV. Now, very briefly, in the last place, WHY SHOULD WE OBEY THIS PRECEPT? Of course we should obey it because it is of divine authority; but, moreover, we should attend to it because the Lord always deserves to be worshipped. Prayer is a method of worship; continue, therefore, always to render to your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Father, the homage of your prayers. With such a King let us not be slack in homage. Let us pay him the revenue of praise continually. Evermore may we magnify and bless his name. His enemies curse him; let us bless him without ceasing. Moreover, brethren, the spirit of love within us

surely prompts us to draw near to God without ceasing. Christ is our husband. Is the bride true to her marriage vows if she cares not for her beloved's company? God is our Father. What sort of a child is that which does not desire to climb its father's knee and receive a smile from its father's face? If you and I can live day after day and week after week without anything like communion with God, how dwelleth the love of God in us? "Pray without ceasing," because the Lord never ceases to love you, never ceases to bless you, and never ceases to regard you as his child.

"Pray without ceasing," for you want a blessing on all the work you are doing. Is it common work? "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Is it business? It is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for without God you cannot prosper. You are taught to say, "Give us this day our daily bread,"—an inspired prayer for secular things. Oh, consecrate your seculars by prayer. And, if you are engaged in God's service, what work is there in which you can hope for success without his blessing? To teach the young, to preach the gospel, to distribute tracts, to instruct the ignorant, do not all these want his blessing? What are they if that favor be denied? Pray, therefore, as long as you work.

You are always in danger of being tempted; there is no position in life in which you may not be assaulted by the enemy. "Pray without ceasing," therefore. A man who is going along a dark road where he knows that there are enemies, if he must be alone and has a sword with him, he carries it drawn in his hand, to let the robbers know that he is ready for them. So Christian, pray without ceasing; carry your sword in your hand, wave that mighty weapon of all-prayer of which Bunyan speaks. Never sheathe it; it will cut through coats of mail. You need fear no foe if you can but pray. As you are tempted without ceasing, so pray without ceasing.

You need always to pray, for you always want something. In no condition are you so rich as not to need something from your God. It is not possible for you to say, "I have all things," or, if you can, you have them only in Christ, and from Christ you must continue to seek them. As you are always in need, so beg always at mercy's gate. Moreover, blessings are

always waiting for you. Angels are ready with favors that you know not of, and you have but to ask and have. Oh, could you see what might be had for the asking you would not be so slack. The priceless benisons of heaven which lie on one side as yet, oh, did you but perceive that they are only waiting for you to pray, you would not hesitate a moment. The man who knows that his farming is profitable, and that his land brings forth abundantly, will be glad to sow a broader stretch of land another year; and he who knows that God answers prayer, and is ready still to answer it, will open his mouth yet wider that God may fill it.

Continue to pray, brethren, for even if you should not want prayer yourself there are others who do—there are the dying, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, the backsliding, the blaspheming, the heathen at home, and the heathen abroad. "Pray without ceasing," for the enemy works incessantly, and as yet the kingdom has not come unto Zion. You shall never be able to say, "I left off praying, for I had nothing to pray for." This side heaven objects for prayer are as multitudinous as the stars of the sky.

And, now, I said I would say a word as to why WE ought to pray especially, and that shall close the sermon. Beloved friends, this church ought to pray without ceasing. We have been in years past notable for prayer. If ever a church has prayed it has been this church. I might find many faults with some who hinder prayer, but yet I must say in God's sight I know and feel that there has been living prayer in this church for many years, and hence it is we have had many years of peace and prosperity. We have lacked nothing because we have not lacked prayer. I do not doubt we might have had much more if we had prayed more; still prayer has been very mighty here. Now, brethren, suppose you had no pastor, suppose the preacher was gone from you, and that the black cloth upon this pulpit was not for a deceased elder of the church but for the preacher himself, you would pray, would you not? Will you not pray for me then while I live? If you would pray for another to come, will you not pray for me while I am here? I desire to discharge my office before you in God's sight with all earnestness, but I cannot without your prayers, and as being gone from you, you would lift up many sighs, and you would with prayers ask for a successor, pray for me while I am yet with you. Beloved, you have prayed very earnestly for the pastor when he has been

sick, your prayers have been his consolation and his restoration; will you not pray for him now that he is able to preach the gospel, that his health may be sanctified to God's service, and the ministry of the truth may be mighty in the winning of souls. I ask it of you, I think I might claim it of you. I do beseech you, brethren, pray for us.

Suppose again, dear brethren, there were no conversions in our midst, would not you pray? And since there are a great many conversions, should that be a reason for leaving off? Shall we worship God the less because he gives us more? Instead of one prayer which would go up were there no conversions, there should be ten now that he continues to work salvation among us.

Suppose we were divided, and had many schisms, and jealousies, and bickerings, would not the faithful ones pray in bitterness of spirit? Will you not pray since there are no divisions, and much Christian love? Surely, I say again, you will not treat God the worse because he treats you the better. That were foolish indeed.

Suppose we were surrounded to-day with hosts of persecutors, and that error everywhere crept into our midst and did us damage, would you not pray, you who love the Lord? And now that we live in days of peace, and error, though it prowls around, is kept out of our fold, will you not commune with the Lord all the more? I will say yet a third time, shall we pray the less because God gives the more? Oh no, but the better he is to us the more let us adore and magnify his name.

Just now we need to pray, for some are growing cold, and turning to their old sins. We need to pray, for we are doing much for Christ. Every agency is in full work. We want a great blessing upon great efforts. We have had such results from prayer as might make a man's ears to tingle who should hear of them for the first time: our history as a church has not been second even to apostolic history itself: we have seen God's arm made bare in the eyes of all the people, and to the ends of the earth the testimony of this pulpit has gone forth, and thousands have found the Savior,—all in answer to many prayers. Pray, then, without ceasing. O church in the Tabernacle, hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Oh,

continue to be a praying church that we together; when we shall stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, pastor and people, may not be accused of being prayerless, nor of being slack in the work of the Lord. I earnestly hope all this will tend to make to-morrow's day of prayer more earnest and intense; but yet more do I pray that at all times all of us may be fervent, frequent, instant, and constant in prayer; praying in the Holy Ghost, in the name of Jesus.

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Prayer Answered, Love Nourished

I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication. -
Psalm 116:1

IN the Christian pilgrimage it is well for the most part to be looking forward. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future after all must be the grand object of the eye of faith. Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And looking further yet, the believer's soul can see Death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded; he can behold the hills of light on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than a conqueror - crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with him, made to sit together with him on his throne, even as *he* has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon his throne. The sight of the future may well relieve the darkness of the past, the hopes of the world to come may banish all the doubtings of the present. Hush, my fears! this world is but a narrow span, and thou shalt soon have passed it. Hush, hush, my doubts! death is but a narrow stream, and thou shalt soon have forded it.

Time, how short - eternity, how long! Death, how brief - immortality, how endless!

"Oh the transporting, rapturous scene
That rises to my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight.
Filled with delight my raptured soul
Would here no longer stay,
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,
Fearless I'd launch away."

Yet nevertheless the Christian may do well sometimes to look backward; he may look back to the hole of the pit and the miry clay whence he was digged - the retrospect will help him to be humble, it will urge him to be faithful. He may look back with satisfaction to the glorious hour when first he saw the Lord, when spiritual life for the first time quickened his dead soul. Then he may look back through all the changes of his life, to his troubles and his joys, to his Pisgahs and to his Engedis, to the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar. He must not keep his eye always backward, for the fairest scene lies beyond, it will not benefit him to be always considering the past, for the future is more glorious far; but nevertheless at times a retrospect may be as useful as a prospect; and memory may be as good a teacher as even faith itself. This morning I bid you stand upon the hill-top of your present experience and look back upon the past, and find therein motives for love to God; and may the Holy Spirit so help me in preaching and you in hearing, that your love may be inflamed, and that you may retire from this hall, declaring in the language of the Psalmist, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication."

The particular objects which you are now to look back upon are the manifold and manifest answers to prayer, which God has given you. I want you now to take up a book which you ought often to read, the book of remembrance which God has written in your heart of his great goodness and continued mercies; and I want you to turn to that golden page wherein are recorded the instances of God's grace in having listened to your voice and having answered your supplications. I shall give you

seven reflections, each of which shall stir up your hearts to love our God whose memorial is that he hears and answers prayers.

I. And the first thing I would have you recollect is, YOUR OWN PRAYERS. If you look at them with an honest eye, you will be struck with wonder that ever God should have heard them. There may be some men who think their prayers worthy of acceptance: I dare say the Pharisee did. But all such men shall find that however worthy they may esteem their prayers, God will not answer them at all. The true Christian in looking back weeps over his prayers, and if he could retrace his steps he would desire to pray better, for he sees that all his attempts at prayer in the past have been rather blundering attempts than actual successes. Look back now Christian upon thy prayers, and remember what *cold* things they have been. Thou hast been on thy knees in the closet, and there thou oughtest to have wrestled as Jacob did, but instead of that thy hands have fallen down, and thou hast forgotten to strive with God. Thy desires have been but faint, and they have been expressed in such sorry language, that the desire itself seemed to freeze upon the lips that uttered it. And yet, strange to say, God has heard those cold prayers, and has answered them too, though they have been such that we have come out of our closets and have wept over them. At other times our hearts have been broken, because we felt as if we could not feel, and our only prayer was, "God forgive us that we cannot pray." Yet, notwithstanding, God has heard this inward groaning of spirit. The feeble prayer which we ourselves despised, and which we thought would have died at the gate of mercy, has been nursed, and nurtured, and fostered, and accepted, and it has come back to us a full grown blessing, bearing mercy in both its hands.

Then again, believer, *how infrequent and few are your prayers, and yet how numerous and how great have God's blessings been.* Ye have prayed in times of difficulty very earnestly, but when God has delivered you, where was your former fervency? In the day of trouble you besieged his throne with all your might and in the hour of your prosperity, you could not wholly cease from supplication, but oh! how faint was the prayer compared with that which was wrung out of your soul by the rough hand of your agony. Yet, notwithstanding that, though you have ceased to pray as you once did, God has not ceased to bless. When you have forgotten

your closet, he has not forgotten your house, nor your heart. When you have neglected the mercy-seat, God has not left it empty, but the bright light of the Shekinah has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim. Oh! I marvel that the Lord should regard those intermittent spasms of importunity which come and go with our necessities. Oh! what a God is he that he should hear the prayers of men who come to him when they have wants, but who neglect him when they have received a mercy, who approach him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to go to him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few.

Look at your prayers, again, in another aspect. *How unbelieving have they often been!* You and I have gone to the mercy-seat, and we have asked God to bless us, but we have not believed that he would do so. He has said, "whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believe that ye shall have it, and ye shall have it." Oh! how I could smite myself this morning, when I think how on my knees I have doubted my God! What would you think of a man who came before you with a petition, and said, "Sir, you have promised to give me such-and-such a thing if I asked for it; I ask for it, but I do not believe you will give it me." You would say "Get you gone until you believe me better. I will give nothing to a man who doubts my word." Often might the Lord have spurned us from his mercy-seat, when we have come to him, not believing the very promises which we were pretending to plead.

How small, too, the faith of our most faithful prayers! When we believe the most, how little do we trust; how full of doubting is our heart, even when our faith has grown to its greatest extent! What Christian is there here who is not ashamed of himself for having so often doubted a God who never yet denied himself, who was never once untrue, nor once unfaithful to his word? Yet, strange to tell, God has heard our prayers; though we believed not, he abode faithful. He has said "Poor heart, thy weakness makes thee doubt me, but my love compels me to fulfill the promise, even though thou doubttest." He has heard us in the day of our trouble; he has brought us sweet deliverance, even when we dishonored him by trembling at his mercy-seat. I say again, look back upon your prayers, and wonder that God should ever have heard them. Often, when we awake in the morning, and find our house and family all secure, and

remember what a poor family prayer we uttered the night before, we must wonder the house was not burnt and all in it. And you in the church, after you have been to the prayer-meeting and prayed there, and God has actually listened to you, and multiplied the church and blessed the minister, do you not say afterwards, "I wonder that he should have heard such poor prayers as those that were uttered at the prayer-meeting?" I am sure, beloved, we shall find much reason to love God, if we only think of those pitiful abortions of prayer, those unripe figs, those stringless bows, those headless arrows, which we call prayers, and which he has borne with in his longsuffering. The fact is, that sincere prayer may often be very feeble to us, but it is always acceptable to God. It is like some of those one-pound notes, which they use in Scotland - dirty, ragged bite of paper; one would hardly look at them, one seems always glad to get rid of them for something that looks a little more like money. But still, when they are taken to the bank, they are always acknowledged and accepted as being genuine, however rotten and old they may be. So with our prayers: they are foul with unbelief, decayed with imbecility, and worm-eaten with wandering thoughts; but nevertheless, God accepts them at heaven's own bank, and gives us rich and ready blessings, in return for our supplications.

II. Again: I hope we shall be led to love God for having heard our prayers, if we consider THE GREAT VARIETY OF MERCIES WHICH WE HAVE ASKED IN PRAYER, AND THE LONG LIST OF ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE RECIEVED. Now, Christian, again - be thine own preacher. It is impossible for me to depict thine experience as well as thou canst read it thyself. What multitudes of prayers have you and I put up from the first moment when we learnt to pray! The first prayer was a prayer for ourselves; we asked that God would have mercy upon us, and blot out our sin. He heard that. But when he had blotted out our sins like a cloud, then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for sanctifying grace, for constraining and restraining grace; we have been led to ask for a fresh assurance of faith, for the comfortable application of the promise, for deliverance in the hour of temptation, for help in the time of duty, and for succor in the day of trial. We have been compelled to go to God for our soup, as constant beggars asking for everything. Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere.

All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from heaven, and all the water of which it has drank has come out of that living rock, - Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself; it has always been a pensioner upon the daily bounty of God; and hence your prayers have had to ascend to heaven for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your wants were innumerable, and, therefore, the supplies have been innumerable, and your prayers have been as varied as the mercies have been countless.

But it is not for your *soul* alone that you have pleaded, your *body* has had its cries. You have been poor, and you have asked for food and raiment. How frequently have they been given to you. Not by miracles it is true. The ravens do not bring you bread and meat, but bread and meat comes without the ravens which is a greater miracle still. It is true your raiment has waxed old, and therefore you have not realized the miracle of the children of Israel in the wilderness, whose clothes never grew old, nevertheless you have had a greater miracle still, for you have had new ones when you wanted them. All your necessities have been provided for as they have arisen. How often have these necessities come upon you? So great have they been at times, that you have said, "Surely the Lord will forsake me and deliver me over; I shall not have my bread given me, nor shall my water be sure." But hitherto God has fed you; you are not starved yet, and by the grace of God you won't be. You have been told many a time by unbelief that you would die in the workhouse; but you are out of it even now, though it seems as if a thousand miracles had been put together to keep you from it.

Then again; how often sickness has laid hold upon you, and like Hezekiah, you have turned your face to the wall, and cried, "Lord, spare thy servant, and let him not go down to the grave in the midst of his days:" and here you are, the living, the living to praise God. Recollect the fever and the cholera, and all those other fierce diseases which have laid you low; remember those prayers you uttered, and those vows you made. Oh! do not you love the Lord because he hath heard your voice and your supplication? How frequently too have you prayed for journeying mercies, and he has protected you in the midst of accidents. You have asked for blessings in your going out and your coming in blessings of the

day and of the night, and of the sun and of the moon; and all these have been vouchsafed to you. Your prayers were innumerable; you asked for countless mercies, and they have all been given. Only look at yourself: are not you adorned and bejewelled with mercies as thickly as the sky with stars. Think how you have prayed for your family. When you first knew the Lord your husband feared him not; but how you wrestled for your husband's soul! and now the tear is in your eye while you see your husband sitting by your side in the house of God, and recollect, it is not many months ago since he would have been in the tavern. Your children too have through your prayers been brought to God. Mothers, you wrestled with God that your children might be God's children, and you have lived to see them converted. How great the mercy to see our offspring called in early youth. Oh! love the Lord, because in this respect too he has heard your voice and your supplication. How often have you presented before God your business, and he has helped you in that matter. How frequently have you laid your household sorrows before him, and he has delivered you in that case. And some of us can sing of blessings given to us in the service of God in his church. We have lived to see the empty sanctuary crowded to the full, we have seen our largest attempts successful beyond our most sanguine hopes; we have prayed for sinners, and seen them saved; we have asked for backsliders, and have seen them restored; we have cried for a Pentecost, and we have had it; and by God's grace we are crying for it again, and we shall have it once more. O minister, deacon, elder, church member, father, mother, man of business, hast thou not indeed cause to say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications?" I am afraid the very fact that God hears our prayers so constantly, leads us to forget the greatness of his mercy. Let it not be so, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Let this to-day be brought to mind, and let me raise a song to the God who hath heard the voice of my supplication.

III. Let us note again THE FREQUENCY OF HIS ANSWERS TO OUR FREQUENT PRAYERS. If a beggar comes to your house, and you give him alms, you will be greatly annoyed if within a month he shall come again; and if you then discover that he has made it a rule to wait upon you monthly for a contribution, you will say to him, "I gave you something once, but I did not mean to establish it as a rule." Suppose, however, that

the beggar should be so impudent and impertinent that he should say, "But I intend sir to wait upon you every morning and every evening:" then you would say, "I intend to keep my gate locked that you shall not trouble me." And suppose he should then look you in the face and add still more, "Sir, I intend waiting upon you every hour, nor can I promise that I won't come to you sixty times in an hour; but I just vow and declare that as often as I want anything so often will I come to you: if I only have a wish I will come and tell it to you; the least thing and the greatest thing shall drive me to you; I will always be at the post of your door." You would soon be tired of such importunity as that, and wish the beggar anywhere, rather than that he should come and tease you so. Yet recollect, this is just what you have done to God, and he has never complained of you for doing it; but rather he has complained of you the other way. He has said, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." He has never murmured at the frequency of your prayers, but has complained that you have not come to him enough. Every morning when you have risen your cry has gone up to him; again with the family you have cried to the God of Jacob; at eventide you have gathered together and have prayed to him, and whenever ye have a trial, or a want, or a doubt, or a fear, ye have, if ye have done rightly, sped away swiftly to his throne and told him all. Speak now, saint, has he once said to you "Get you gone, thou weariest me?" Has he ever said "Mine ear is heavy that it cannot hear, my arm is shortened that I cannot save?" Has he said, "Away with thee, I want not thus to be perpetually hearing thee? What is thy harsh grating voice, that I should always give mine ear to it? Am I not hearkening to the songs of angels, to the shouts of cherubim? Away with thee, tease me not. At certain seasons thou mayest come, on the Sabbath-day thou mayest pray, but I want not to hear thee in the week?" No, no, he has sweetly embraced us every time, he has always bowed the heaven and come down to listen to our feeble cries; he has never denied a promise, never broken his word, even when we have pleaded a thousand times a day. Oh I will love the name of such a patient God as this, who bears with my prayers though they be as a cloud of hornets in the air.

IV. Go a little further and you will have another thought arising. Think of THE GREATNESS OF THE MERCY FOR WHICH YOU HAVE OFTEN ASKED HIM. We never know the greatness of our mercies till we get into

trouble and want them. I talk to-day of pardoned sin, but I confess I do not feel its preciousness as once I did. There was a time when my sins lay heavy on me; conscience accused me, and the law condemned me, and I thought if God would but pardon me, it would be the greatest thing he ever did. The creating of a world seemed to me to be but little compared with the taking away of my desperately evil sins. Oh, how I cried, how I groaned before him; and he has pardoned me, and blessed be his name for it. But I cannot estimate the value of his pardon to-day so well as I could when I was seeking it - almost driven to despair. Oh, remember soul, when thou didst ask for pardon thou wast asking for that which worlds could not buy; thou wast asking for that which could only be procured through the lifeblood of the Son of God. Oh! what a boon was that! And yet he did not look thee in the face and say, "Thou hast asked too much." No, but he gave it freely. He upbraided not; he blotted out all thy sins, and washed thee at once in the river of the Saviour's blood. Since that time what large things hast thou asked! Thou wast in trouble once, it seemed as if bankruptcy must overtake thee, and thou didst cry to him. If the world heard it it would have said, "What a fool art thou to ask this of thy God - he will never deliver thee!" Unbelief, like Rabshekeh, wrote a blasphemous letter, and thou didst lay it before the Lord; but even when thou wast in prayer, thy heart said, "The Lord will not deliver thee this time. The lion will surely devour thee. The furnace will most certainly burn thee up." But you did put up a poor, groaning prayer, and you dared to ask great things, namely, that God would put his hand out of heaven and save you from the waters, that the flood might not overflow you. Are you not surprised at this time that you dared to ask so much! You would not dare to ask so largely of any of your friends; you would not have gone to one and said, "I must have a thousand pounds by such and such a day, will you lend it to me?" - you knew you would not get it. Yet you asked it of your God. It came, and here you are, the living to praise his name; and if this were the right place you would stand up and testify that God did hear you, that in the day of sorrow and tribulation he delivered you. Now do you not love him for giving you such great things as these? God's mercies are so great that they cannot be magnified; they are so numerous they cannot be multiplied, so precious they cannot be over-estimated. I say, look back to-day upon these great mercies with which the Lord has favored thee in answer to thy great desires, and wilt thou not say, "I love

the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications?"

V. Another aspect of this case, perhaps, will reach our hearts more closely still. HOW TRIVIAL HAVE BEEN THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE OFTEN TAKEN BEFORE GOD, AND YET HOW KINDLY HAS HE CONDESCENDED TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS. It is a singular thing, that our hearts are often more affected by little than by great things. You may feed a child all the year round, and never get its thanks, but give it a sweetmeat or an orange, and you may have its heart and its gratitude. Strange that the bounties of a whole year should seem to be lost, while the gift of a moment is greatly prized. A little thing, I say, may often touch the heart more than a great thing. Now, how often have we, if we have acted rightly, taken little things before the Lord. I believe it is the Christian's privilege to take all his sorrows to his God, be they little or be they great. I have often prayed to God about a matter at which you would laugh if I should mention it. In looking back I can only say it was a little thing, but it seemed great at the time. It was like a little thorn in the finger, it caused much pain, and might have brought forth, at last, a great wound. I learned to lay my little troubles at the feet of Jesus. Why should we not? Are not our great ones little? and is there, after all, much difference between great troubles and little ones in the sight of God? The queen will stand at one hour listening to her ministers, who talk with her about public business, but does she seem less a queen when, afterwards, her little child runs to her as its mother, because a gnat has stung it? Is there any great condescension the matter? She who was a right royal queen when she stood in the privy chamber is as right royal a queen and as well-beloved a mother of the nation, when she takes the little child upon her knee, and gives it a maternal kiss. Her ministers must not present trifling petitions, but her children may. So the worldling may say this morning, "How absurd to think of taking little troubles to God." Ah! it might be absurd to you, but to God's children it is not. Though you were God's prime minister, if you were not his child, you would have no right to take your private troubles to him; but God's meanest child has the privilege of casting his care upon his Father, and he may rest assured that his Father's heart will not disdain to consider even his mean affairs. Now let me think of the innumerable little things God has done for me. In looking back, my unbelief compels me to wonder at myself, that I should

have prayed for such little things. My gratitude compels me to say, "I love the Lord, because he has heard those little prayers, and answered my little supplications, and made me blessed, even in little things which, after all, make up the life of man."

VI. Once more, let me remind you, in the sixth place, of THE TIMELY ANSWERS WHICH: GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO YOUR PRAYERS, and this should compel you to love him. God's answers have never come too soon nor yet too late. If the Lord had given you his blessing one day before it did come, it might have been a curse, and there have been times when if he had withheld it an hour longer it would have been quite useless, because it would have come too late. In the life of Mr. Charles Wesley, there occurs a memorable scene at Devizes. When he went there to preach, the curate of the parish assembled a great mob of people, who determined to throw him into the horse-pond, and if he would not promise that he would never come into the town again they would kill him. He escaped into the house and hid himself upstairs. They besieged the house for hours, battering at the doors, breaking every pane of glass in the windows, and at last to his consternation, they climbed the roof, and began to throw the tiles down into the street, so as to enter the house from above. He had been in prayer to God to deliver him, and he said, "I believe my God will deliver me;" but when he saw the heads of the people over the top of the room in which he was concealed, and when they were just about to leap down he very nearly gave up all hope, and he thought surely God would not deliver him, when in rushed one of the leaders of the mob, a gentleman of the town who did not wish to incur the guilt of murder, and proposed to him that he would get him away if he would only promise that he would never come back again. "No," said he, "I will never promise that. "But," said the man, "Is it your intention that you will not return immediately?" "Well" he said, "I do not say I shall come back just yet, I do not see any use in it. As you drive me away, therefore I shall shake off the dust of my feet against you, but I mean to come back again before I die." "Well," said the man, that will do, if you only promise you will not come back directly I will get you away." And so, by a great deliverance, he was saved from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. His prayer was answered at the right time. Five minutes afterwards he would have been dead. Now cannot you say that the answer has come

to you punctually at the very tick of the clock of wisdom, not before nor after.

VII. Now, the seventh recollection with which I would inspire you is this - will you not love the Lord, when you recollect the special and great instances of his mercy to you? You have had seasons of special prayer and of special answer. Let me picture a man. There was one who feared not God, nor regarded man. He was engaged in business, and his affairs were not propitious, but rather everything went against him. He went against God, and kicked the more because God kicked against him. He had servants about him that feared God and worshipped him; but as for himself, he had no thought or regard for religion. His affairs became more and more perplexed and involved. One day he passed by the house of one of his workmen, where prayer was wont to be made, and listening, he heard words uttered in supplication that touched his heart. Though he was the master, he went inside and listened to his servant while he preached. God touched that man's heart, and made him feel his need of a Saviour. He went home, and he had now double cause for prayer. He went to the Lord, and told him he was a poor, wretched undone sinner, and that he wanted mercy; and then he told the Lord beside though he did not make it very prominent, that he was a poor, almost broken merchant; and that if God did not appear for him, he knew not but that he must be driven out of house and home. These two cases were laid before God. First of all, God heard his prayer for his soul. He gave him joy and peace in believing; and poor as he was at that time, he found enough to assist in erecting a house where the gospel might be preached. The Lord who had delivered him spiritually, now came to his assistance temporally. His affairs took a different turn, floods of prosperity rolled in upon him, and he is at this very day a living witness of the power of God to answer man's prayer for spiritual and for temporal things too. And if it were needed, he could bear his willing witness of special answer in that special time of necessity. And does he not love his God? I know he does; for he delights to honor him, he delights to give of his substance to him. And there may be others of you here present whose characters have been pictured in this one which I have pourtrayed before you; who are saying, "Surely he means me." Oh, will you not then, at the recollection of what God did in that double mercy, say, "love him. What can I do for him?"

There is nothing too great for me to give; nothing too large for me to do. Only let me know my duty, and the recollection of his marvellous bounty shall lead me to give of my substance to him; to give my whole heart to him. I will be wholly his, and hope that in death he will receive me to himself." Men and women, my brethren and sisters in Christ, - will you look back a few short years, and recollect the time when you were on your knees before God, seeking him? I could fix my eye to-day upon many a man who has been a drunkard, a swearer, a breaker of God's holy day, a hater of everything good. I think I see you in that upper chamber of yours. Oh, how you cried, how you groaned! Oh, with what agony did you pour out your unutterable sighs! You rose up, and you thought God would not have mercy on you. You went to your business; but how wretched you were! You went back again to the chamber. And how the beam out of the wall could speak now, and tell you how you cried and cried, and cried again before his mercy-seat. Do you love him but a little to-day? has your love grown cold? Go home and look again upon the chair against which you kneeled. Look at the very walls, and see if they do not accuse you, saying, "I heard you pray to God for mercy, and he has heard you. How I see your cold-heartedness; I mark your lukewarmness in his cause." Go home to your chamber, fall on your knees, and with tears of gratitude say

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"O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord;
And all that in me is
Be stirred up, his holy name
To magnify and bless!"

Some of us can recollect other special seasons of prayer. Members of my church, I remind you of that solemn season, when, like a hurricane of desolation, the judgment of God swept through our midst. Standing in this pulpit this very morning, I recall to myself that evening of sorrow, when I saw my people scattered like sheep, without a shepherd, trodden upon, injured, and many of them killed. Do you recollect how you cried for your minister, that he might be restored to a reason that was then tottering? Can you recollect how ye prayed that out of evil God would bring forth good, that all the curses of the wicked might be rolled back upon themselves, and God would yet fill this place with his glory? And do

you remember how long ago that is, and how God has been with us ever since, and how many of those who were injured that night, are now members of our church, and are praising God that they ever entered this house? Oh! shall we not love the Lord? There is not a church in London, that has had such answers to prayer as we have; there has not been a church that has had such cause to pray. We have had special work, special trial, special deliverance, and we ought pre-eminently to be a church, loving God, and spending and being spent in his service. Remember again the varied times of your sickness, when you have been sick, sore, and nigh unto death. Let me picture, my own experience that I may remind you of yours. I remember when I came to this pulpit in agony, and preached you a sermon which seemed to cost me my life's blood at every word I uttered. I was taken home to my bed full of grief and agony I remember those weary nights, those doleful days, that burning brow, those roaming thoughts, those spectres that haunted my dreams, that sleep without sleep, that rest that knew no rest, that torture, and that pain. Then I sought God, and cried that he would spare me to stand in this pulpit once again. Oh! I thought then, in my poor foolish way, that I would preach as I ne'er had preached before, as "a dying man to dying men." I hoped my ministry was not over; I trusted I might have another opportunity of freeing myself from the blood of hearers, if any of that blood were on my skirts. Here I stand, and I have to chide myself that I do not love him as I ought: yet nevertheless, in the recollection of his great mercy, saving my soul from death, and mine eyes from tears, I must love him, and I must praise him; and I must in reminding each of you of similar deliverances, beseech and entreat you to bless the Lord with me. O let us magnify his name together. We must do something fresh, something greater, something larger than we have done before.

Having thus delivered these thoughts, I shall want you now for about three minutes to listen to me while I teach you three lessons which ought to spring from this sevenfold retrospect. What shall I say then? God has heard my voice in my prayer. The first lesson, then, is this - He shall hear my voice in my praise. If he heard me pray, he shall hear me sing; if he listened to me when the tear was in mine eye, he shall listen to me when my eye is sparkling with delight. My piety shall not be that of the dungeon and sick bed; it shall be that also of deliverance and of health.

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life and thought and being last,
Or immortality endures."

Another lesson. Has God heard my voice? Then I will hear his voice. If he heard me I will hear him. Tell me, Lord, what wouldst thou have thy servant do, and I will do it; what wouldst thou have me believe, and I will believe it. If there be a labor which I have never attempted before, tell me to do it, and I will say, "Here am I; Lord, send me." Is there an ordinance to which I never attended? Dost thou say, "Do this in remembrance of me;" is it thy command? However non-essential it seems to be, I will do it, because thou hast told me to do it. If thou hast heard my feeble voice, I will hear thine, even though it be but a still small voice. Oh that you would learn that lesson!

The last lesson is, Lord, hast thou heard my voice? then I will tell others that thou wilt hear their voice too. Didst thou save me? O Lord, if thou savedst me thou canst save anybody. Didst thou hear my prayer?
"Then will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;"

and I will bid them pray too. O you that never pray, I beseech you begin from this hour. May God the Spirit lead you to your chambers, to cry to him! Remember, if you ask through Jesus, you cannot ask in vain. I can prove that in a thousand instances God has heard my supplication. There was nothing more in me than there is in you. Go and plead the promise; plead the blood, and ask for the help of God's Spirit; and there is not one in this assembly who shall not receive the blessing, if God shall lead him to pray. Young man, young woman, go home; plead with God for yourself first; you that love him, plead for others. Let every one of us practice the second verse of this Psalm, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

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The Prayer Of Jabez

Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed! - 1 Chronicles 4:10

We know very little about Jabez, except that he was more honorable than his brethren, and that he was called Jabez because his mother bare him with sorrow. It will sometimes happen that where there is the most sorrow in the antecedents, there will be the most pleasure in the sequel. As the furious storm gives place to the clear sunshine, so the night of weeping precedes the morning of joy. Sorrow the harbinger; gladness the prince it ushers in. Cowper says: -

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

To a great extent we find that we must sow in tears before we can reap in joy. Many of our works for Christ have cost us tears. Difficulties and disappointments have wrung our soul with anguish. Yet those projects that have cost us more than ordinary sorrow, have often turned out to be the most honorable of our undertakings. While our grief called the offspring of desire "Benoni," the son of my sorrow, our faith has been afterwards able to give it a name of delight, "Benjamin," the son of my right hand. You may expect a blessing in serving God if you are enabled to persevere under many discouragements. The ship is often long coming home, because detained on the road by excess of cargo. Expect her freight to be the better when she reaches the port. More honorable than his brethren was the child whom his mother bore with sorrow. As for this Jabez, whose aim was so well pointed, his fame so far sounded, his name so lastingly embalmed—he was a man of prayer. The honor he enjoyed would not have been worth having if it had not been vigorously contested

and equitably won. His devotion was the key to his promotion. Those are the best honors that come from God, the award of grace with the acknowledgment of service. When Jacob was surnamed Israel, he received his principedom after a memorable night of prayer. Surely it was far more honorable to him than if it had been bestowed upon him as a flattering distinction by some earthly emperor. The best honor is that which a man gains in communion with the Most High. Jabez, we are told, was more honorable than his brethren, and his prayer is forthwith recorded, as if to intimate that he was also more prayerful than his brethren. We are told of what petitions his prayer consisted. All through it was very significant and instructive. We have only time to take one clause of it—indeed, that one clause may be said to comprehend the rest: "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" I commend it as a prayer for yourselves, dear brethren and sisters; one which will be available at all seasons; a prayer to begin Christian life with, a prayer to end it with, a prayer which would never be unseasonable in your joys or in your sorrows.

Oh that thou, the God of Israel, the covenant God, would bless me indeed! The very pith of the prayer seems to lie in that word, "indeed." There are many varieties of blessing. Some are blessings only in name: they gratify our wishes for a moment, but permanently disappoint our expectations. They charm the eye, but pall on the taste. Others are mere temporary blessings: they perish with the using. Though for awhile they regale the senses, they cannot satisfy the higher cravings of the soul. But, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" I wot whom God blesseth shall be blessed. The thing good in itself is bestowed with the good-will of the giver, and shall be productive of so much good fortune to the recipient that it may well be esteemed as a blessing "indeed," for there is nothing comparable to it. Let the grace of God prompt it, let the choice of God appoint it, let the bounty of God confer it, and then the endowment shall be something godlike indeed; something worthy of the lips that pronounce the benediction, and verily to be craved by every one who seeks honor that is substantial and enduring. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" Think it over, and you will see that there is a depth of meaning in the expression.

We may set this in contrast with human blessings: "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" It is very delightful to be blessed by our parents, and those venerable friends whose benedictions come from their hearts, and are backed up by their prayers. Many a poor man has had no other legacy to leave his children except his blessing, but the blessing of an honest, holy, Christian father is a rich treasure to his son. One might well feel it were a thing to be deplored through life if he had lost a parent's blessing. We like to have it. The blessing of our spiritual parents is consolatory. Though we believe in no priestcraft, we like to live in the affections of those who were the means of bringing us to Christ, and from whose lips we were instructed in the things of God. And how very precious is the blessing of the poor! I do not wonder that Job treasured that up as a sweet thing. "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me." If you have relieved the widow and the fatherless, and their thanks are returned to you in benediction, it is no mean reward. But, dear friends, after all—all that parents, relatives, saints, and grateful persons can do in the way of blessing, falls very far short of what we desire to have. O Lord, we would have the blessings of our fellow-creatures, the blessings that come from their hearts; but, "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!" for thou canst bless with authority. Their blessings may be but words, but thine are effectual. They may often wish what they cannot do, and desire to give what they have not at their own disposal, but thy will is omnipotent. Thou didst create the world with but a word. O that such omnipotence would now bespeak me thy blessing! Other blessings may bring us some tiny cheer, but in thy favor is life. Other blessings are mere tittles in comparison with thy blessing; for thy blessing is the title "to an inheritance incorruptible" and unfading, to "a kingdom which cannot be moved." Well therefore might David pray in another place, "With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever." Perhaps in this place, Jabez may have put the blessing of God in contrast with the blessings of men. Men will bless thee when thou doest well for thyself. They will praise the man who is successful in business. Nothing succeeds like success. Nothing has so much the approval of the general public as a man's prosperity. Alas! they do not weigh men's actions in the balances of the sanctuary, but in quite other scales. You will find those about you who will commend you if you are prosperous; or like Job's comforters, condemn you if you suffer adversity. Perhaps there may be some feature

about their blessings that may please you, because you feel you deserve them. They commend you for your patriotism: you have been a patriot. They commend you for your generosity: you know you have been self-sacrificing. Well, but after all, what is there in the verdict of man? At a trial, the verdict of the policeman who stands in the court, or of the spectators who sit in the court-house, amounts to just nothing. The man who is being tried feels that the only thing that is of importance at all will be the verdict of the jury, and the sentence of the judge. So it will little avail us whatever we may do, how others commend or censure. Their blessings are not of any great value. But, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me," that thou wouldest say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Commend thou the feeble service that through thy grace my heart has rendered. That will be to bless me indeed.

Men are sometimes blessed in a very fulsome sense by flattery. There are always those who, like the fox in the fable, hope to gain the cheese by praising the crow. They never saw such plumage, and no voice could be so sweet as yours. The whole of their mind is set, not on you, but on what they are to gain by you. The race of flatterers is never extinct, though the flattered usually flatter themselves it is so. They may conceive that men flatter others, but all is so palpable and transparent when heaped upon themselves, that they accept it with a great deal of self-complacency, as being perhaps a little exaggerated, but after all exceedingly near the truth. We are not very apt to take a large discount off the praises that others offer us; yet, were we wise, we should press to our bosom those who censure us; and we should always keep at arm's length those who praise us, for those who censure us to our face cannot possibly be making a market of us; but with regard to those who extol us, rising early, and using loud sentences of praise, we may suspect, and we shall very seldom be unjust in the suspicion, that there is some other motive in the praise which they render to us than that which appears on the surface. Young man, art thou placed in a position where God honors thee? Beware of flatterers. Or hast thou come into a large estate? Hast thou abundance? There are always flies where there is honey. Beware of flattery. Young woman, art thou fair to look upon? There will be those about thee that will have their designs, perhaps their evil designs, in lauding thy beauty. Beware of flatterers. Turn thou aside from all these who have honey on

their tongue, because of the poison of asps that is under it. Bethink thee of Solomon's caution, "meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." Cry to God, "Deliver thou me from all this vain adulation, which nauseates my soul." So shalt thou pray to him the more fervently, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" Let me have thy benediction, which never says more than it means; which never gives less than it promises. If you take then the prayer of Jabez as being put in contrast with the benedictions which come from men, you see much force in it.

But we may put it in another light, and compare the blessing Jabez craved with those blessings that are temporal and transient. There are many bounties given to us mercifully by God for which we are bound to be very grateful; but we must not set too much store by them. We may accept them with gratitude, but we must not make them our idols. When we have them we have great need to cry, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and make these inferior blessings real blessings;" and if we have them not, we should with greater vehemence cry, "Oh that we may be rich in faith, and if not blessed with these external favors, may we be blessed spiritually, and then we shall be blessed indeed."

Let us review some of these mercies, and just say a word or two about them.

One of the first cravings of men's hearts is wealth. So universal the desire to gain it, that we might almost say it is a natural instinct. How many have thought if they once possessed it they should be blessed indeed! but there are ten thousand proofs that happiness consists not in the abundance which a man possesseth. So many instances are well known to you all, that I need not quote any to show that riches are not a blessing indeed. They are rather apparently than really so. Hence, it has been well said, that when we see how much a man has we envy him; but could we see how little he enjoys we should pity him. Some that have had the most easy circumstances have had the most uneasy minds. Those who have acquired all they could wish, had their wishes been at all sane, have been led by the possession of what they had to be discontented because they had not more.

"Thus the base miser starves amidst his store,
Broods o'er his gold, and griping still at more,
Sits sadly pining, and believes he's poor."

Nothing is more clear to any one who chooses to observe it, than that riches are not the chief good at whose advent sorrow flies, and in whose presence joy perennial springs. Full often wealth cozens the owner. Dainties are spread on his table, but his appetite fails, minstrels wait his bidding, but his ears are deaf to all the strains of music; holidays he may have as many as he pleases, but for him recreation has lost all its charms: or he is young, fortune has come to him by inheritance, and he makes pleasure his pursuit till sport becomes more irksome than work, and dissipation worse than drudgery. Ye know how riches make themselves wings; like the bird that roosted on the tree, they fly away. In sickness and despondency these ample means that once seemed to whisper, "Soul, take thine ease," prove themselves to be poor comforters. In death they even tend to make the pang of separation more acute, because there is the more to leave, the more to lose. We may well say, if we have wealth, "My God, put me not off with these husks; let me never make a god of the silver and the gold, the goods and the chattels, the estates and investments, which in thy providence thou hast given me. I beseech thee, bless me indeed. As for these worldly possessions, they will be my bane unless I have thy grace with them." And if you have not wealth, and perhaps the most of you will never have it, say, "My Father, thou hast denied me this outward and seeming good, enrich me with thy love, give me the gold of thy favor, bless me indeed; then allot to others whatever thou wilt, thou shalt divide my portion, my soul shall wait thy daily will; do thou bless me indeed, and I shall be content."

Another transient blessing which our poor humanity fondly covets and eagerly pursues is fame. In this respect we would fain be more honorable than our brethren, and outstrip all our competitors. It seems natural to us all to wish to make a name, and gain some note in the circle we move in at any rate, and we wish to make that circle wider if we can. But here, as of riches, it is indisputable that the greatest fame does not bring with it any equal measure of gratification. Men, in seeking after notoriety or honor, have a degree of pleasure in the search which they do not always possess

when they have gained their object. Some of the most famous men have also been the most wretched of the human race. If thou hast honor and fame, accept it; but let this prayer go up, "My God, bless thou me indeed, for what profit were it, if my name were in a thousand mouths, if thou shouldest spue it out of thy mouth? What matter, though my name were written on marble, if it were not written in the Lamb's Book of Life? These blessings are only apparently blessings, windy blessings, blessings that mock me. Give me thy blessing: then the honor which comes of thee will make me blessed indeed." If you happen to have lived in obscurity, and have never entered the lists for honors among your fellow-men, be content to run well your own course and fulfill truly your own vocation. To lack fame is not the most grievous of ills; it is worse to have it like the snow, that whitens the ground in the morning, and disappears in the heat of the day. What matters it to a dead man that men are talking of him? Get thou the blessing indeed.

There is another temporal blessing which wise men desire, and legitimately may wish for rather than the other two—the blessing of health. Can we ever prize it sufficiently? To trifle with such a boon is the madness of folly. The highest eulogiums that can be passed on health would not be extravagant. He that has a healthy body is infinitely more blessed than he who is sickly, whatever his estates may be. Yet if I have health, my bones well set, and my muscles well strung, if I scarcely know an ache or pain, but can rise in the morning, and with elastic step go forth to labor, and cast myself upon my couch at night, and sleep the sleep of the happy, yet, oh let me not glory in my strength! In a moment it may fail me. A few short weeks may reduce the strong man to a skeleton. Consumption may set in, the cheek may pale with the shadow of death. Let not the strong man glory in his strength. The Lord "delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man." And let us not make our boast concerning these things. Say, thou that art in good health, "My God, bless me indeed. Give me the healthy soul. Heal me of my spiritual diseases. Jehovah Rophi come, and purge out the leprosy that is in my heart by nature: make me healthy in the heavenly sense, that I may not be put aside among the unclean, but allowed to stand amongst the congregation of thy saints. Bless my bodily health to me that I may use it rightly, spending the strength I have in thy service

and to thy glory; otherwise, though blessed with health, I may not be blessed indeed." Some of you, dear friends, do not possess the great treasure of health. Wearisome days and nights are appointed you. Your bones are become an almanac, in which you note the changes of the weather. There is much about you that is fitted to excite pity. But I pray that you may have the blessing indeed, and I know what that is. I can heartily sympathise with a sister that said to me the other day, "I had such nearness to God when I was sick, such full assurance, and such joy in the Lord, and I regret to say I have lost it now; that I could almost wish to be ill again, if thereby I might have a renewal of communion with God." I have oftentimes looked gratefully back to my sick chamber. I am certain that I never did grow in grace one half so much anywhere as I have upon the bed of pain. It ought not to be so. Our joyous mercies ought to be great fertilizers to our spirit; but not unfrequently our griefs are more salutary than our joys. The pruning knife is best for some of us. Well, after all, whatever you have to suffer, of weakness, of debility, of pain, and anguish, may it be so attended with the divine presence, that this light affliction may work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and so you may be blessed indeed.

I will only dwell upon one more temporal mercy, which is very precious—I mean the blessing of home. I do not think any one can ever prize it too highly, or speak too well of it. What a blessing it is to have the fireside, and the dear relationships that gather round the word "Home," wife, children, father, brother, sister! Why, there are no songs in any language that are more full of music than those dedicated to "Mother." We hear a great deal about the German "Fatherland"—we like the sound. But the word, "Father," is the whole of it. The "land" is nothing: the "Father" is key to the music. There are many of us, I hope, blessed with a great many of these relationships. Do not let us be content to solace our souls with ties that must ere long be sundered. Let us ask that over and above them may come the blessing indeed. I thank thee, my God, for my earthly father; but oh, be thou my Father, then am I blessed indeed. I thank thee, my God, for a mother's love; but comfort thou my soul as one whom a mother comforteth, then am I blessed indeed. I thank thee, Savior, for the marriage bond; but be thou the bridegroom of my soul. I thank thee for the tie of brotherhood; but be thou my brother born for adversity, bone of

my bone, and flesh of my flesh. The home thou hast given me I prize, and thank thee for it; but I would dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, and be a child that never wanders, wherever my feet may travel, from my Father's house with its many mansions. You can thus be blessed indeed. If not domiciled under the paternal care of the Almighty, even the blessing of home, with all its sweet familiar comforts, does not reach to the benediction which Jabez desired for himself. But do I speak to any here that are separated from kith and kin? I know some of you have left behind you in the bivouac of life graves where parts of your heart are buried, and that which remains is bleeding with just so many wounds. Ah, well! the Lord bless you indeed! Widow, thy maker is thy husband. Fatherless one, he hath said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Oh, to find all your relationships made up in him, then you will be blessed indeed! I have perhaps taken too long a time in mentioning these temporary blessings, so let me set the text in another light. I trust we have had human blessings and temporary blessings, to fill our hearts with gladness, but not to foul our hearts with worldliness, or to distract our attention from the things that belong to our everlasting welfare.

Let us proceed, thirdly, to speak of imaginary blessings. There are such in the world. From them may God deliver us. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" Take the Pharisee. He stood in the Lord's house, and he thought he had the Lord's blessing, and it made him very bold, and he spoke with unctuous self-complacency, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are," and so on. He had the blessing, and well indeed he supposed himself to have merited it. He had fasted twice in the week, paid tithes of all that he possessed, even to the odd farthing on the mint, and the extra halfpenny on the cummin he had used. He felt he had done everything. His the blessing of a quiet or a quiescent conscience; good, easy man. He was a pattern to the parish. It was a pity everybody did not live as he did; if they had, they would not have wanted any police. Pilate might have dismissed his guards, and Herod his soldiers. He was just one of the most excellent persons that ever breathed. He adored the city of which he was a burgess! Ay; but he was not blessed indeed. This was all his own overweening conceit. He was a mere wind-bag, nothing more and the blessing which he fancied had fallen upon him, had never come. The poor publican whom he thought accursed, went to his home justified

rather than he. The blessing had not fallen on the man who thought he had it. Oh, let every one of us here feel the sting of this rebuke, and pray: "Great God, save us from imputing to ourselves a righteousness which we do not possess. Save us from wrapping ourselves up in our own rags, and fancying we have put on the wedding garments. Bless me indeed. Let me have the true righteousness. Let me have the true worthiness which thou canst accept, even that which is of faith in Jesus Christ."

Another form of this imaginary blessing is found in persons who would scorn to be thought self-righteous. Their delusion, however, is near akin. I hear them singing -

"I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me,
And on his cross he shed his blood,
From sin to set me free."

You believe it, you say. Well, but how do you know? Upon what authority do you make so sure? Who told you? "Oh, I believe it." Yes, but we must mind what we believe. Have you any clear evidence of a special interest in the blood of Jesus? Can you give any spiritual reasons for believing that Christ has set you free from sin? I am afraid that some have got a hope that has not got any ground, like an anchor without any fluke—nothing to grasp, nothing to lay hold upon. They say they are saved, and they stick to it they are, and think it wicked to doubt it; but yet they have no reason to warrant their confidence. When the sons of Kohath carried the ark, and touched it with their hands, they did rightly; but when Uzzah touched it he died. There are those who are ready to be fully assured; there are others to whom it will be death to talk of it. There is a great difference between presumption and full assurance. Full assurance is reasonable: it is based on solid ground. Presumption takes for granted, and with brazen face pronounces that to be its own to which it has no right whatever. Beware, I pray thee, of presuming that thou art saved. If with thy heart thou dost trust in Jesus, then art thou saved; but if thou merely sayest, "I trust in Jesus," it doth not save thee. If thy heart be renewed, if thou shalt hate the things that thou didst once love, and love the things that thou didst once hate; if thou hast really repented; if there be a thorough

change of mind in thee; if thou be born again, then hast thou reason to rejoice: but if there be no vital change, no inward godliness; if there be no love to God, no prayer, no work of the Holy Spirit, then thy saying, "I am saved," is but thine own assertion, and it may delude, but it will not deliver thee. Our prayer ought to be, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, with real faith, with real salvation, with the trust in Jesus that is the essential of faith; not with the conceit that begets credulity. God preserve us from imaginary blessings!" I have met with persons who said, "I believe I am saved, because I dreamt it." Or, "Because I had a text of Scripture that applied to my own case. Such and such a good man said so and so in his sermon." Or, "Because I took to weeping and was excited, and felt as I never felt before." Ah! but nothing will stand the trial but this, "Dost thou abjure all confidence in everything but the finished work of Jesus, and dost thou come to Christ to be reconciled in him to God?" If thou dost not, thy dreams, and visions, and fancies, are but dreams, and visions, and fancies, and will not serve thy turn when most thou needest them. Pray the Lord to bless thee indeed, for of that sterling verity in all thy walk and talk there is a great scarcity.

Too much I am afraid, that even those who are saved—saved for time and eternity—need this caution, and have good cause to pray this prayer that they may learn to make a distinction between some things which they think to be spiritual blessings, and others which are blessings indeed. Let me show you what I mean. Is it certainly a blessing to get an answer to your prayer after your own mind? I always like to qualify my most earnest prayer with, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Not only ought I to do it, but I would like to do it, because otherwise I might ask for something which it would be dangerous for me to receive. God might give it me in anger, and I might find little sweetness in the grant, but much soreness in the grief it caused me. You remember how Israel of old asked for flesh, and God gave them quails; but while the meat was yet in their mouths the wrath of God came upon them. Ask for the meat, if you like, but always put in this: "Lord, if this is not a real blessing, do not give it me." "Bless me indeed." I hardly like to repeat the old story of the good woman whose son was ill—a little child near death's door—and she begged the minister, a Puritan, to pray for its life. He did pray very earnestly, but he put in, "If it be thy will, save this child." The woman said, "I cannot bear that: I must have you

pray that the child shall live. Do not put in any ifs or buts." "Woman," said the minister, "it may be you will live to rue the day that ever you wished to set your will up against God's will." Twenty years afterwards, she was carried away in a fainting fit from under Tyburn gallows-tree, where that son was put to death as a felon. Although she had lived to see her child grow up to be a man, it would have been infinitely better for her had the child died, and infinitely wiser had she left it to God's will. Do not be quite so sure that what you think an answer to prayer is any proof of divine love. It may leave much room for thee to seek unto the Lord, saying, "Oh that thou wouldst blessed me indeed!" So sometimes great exhilaration of spirit, liveliness of heart, even though it be religious joy, may not always be a blessing. We delight in it, and oh, sometimes when we have had gatherings for prayer here, the fire has burned, and our souls have glowed! We felt at the time how we could sing -

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

So far as that was a blessing we are thankful for it; but I should not like to set such seasons up, as if my enjoyments were the main token of God's favor; or as if they were the chief signs of his blessing. Perhaps it would be a greater blessing to me to be broken in spirit, and laid low before the Lord at the present time. When you ask for the highest joy, and pray to be on the mountain with Christ, remember it may be as much a blessing; yea, a blessing indeed to be brought into the Valley of Humiliation, to be laid very low, and constrained to cry out in anguish, "Lord, save, or I perish!"

"If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardon'd sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within,
All to make us
Sick of self, and fond of him."

These variable experiences of ours may be blessings indeed to us, when, had we been always rejoicing, we might have been like Moab, settled on our lees, and not emptied from vessel to vessel. It fares ill with those who have no changes; they fear not God. Have we not, dear friends, sometimes envied those persons that are always calm and unruffled, and are never perturbed in mind? Well, there are Christians whose evenness of temper deserves to be emulated. And as for that calm repose, that unwavering assurance which comes from the Spirit of God, it is a very delightful attainment; but I am not sure that we ought to envy anybody's lot because it is more tranquil or less exposed to storm and tempest than our own. There is a danger of saying, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace, and there is a calmness which arises from callousness. Dupes there are who deceive their own souls. "They have no doubts," they say, but it is because they have little heart searching. They have no anxieties, because they have not much enterprise or many pursuits to stir them up. Or it may be they have no pains, because they have no life. Better go to heaven, halt and maimed, than go marching on in confidence down to hell. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" My God, I will envy no one of his gifts or his graces, much less of his inward mood or his outward circumstances, if only thou wilt "bless me indeed." I would not be comforted unless thou comfortest me, nor have any peace but Christ my peace, nor any rest but the rest which cometh from the sweet savor of the sacrifice of Christ. Christ shall be all in all, and none shall be anything to me save himself. O that we might always feel that we are not to judge as to the manner of the blessing, but must leave it with God to give us what we would have, not the imaginary blessing, the superficial and apparent blessing, but the blessing indeed!

Equally too with regard to our work and service, I think our prayer should always be, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" It is lamentable to see the work of some good men, though it is not ours to judge them, how very pretentious, but how very unreal it is. It is really shocking to think how some men pretend to build up a church in the course of two or three evenings. They will report, in the corner of the newspapers, that there were forty-three persons convinced of sin, and forty-six justified, and sometimes thirty-eight sanctified; I do not know what besides of wonderful statistics they give as to all that is accomplished. I have

observed congregations that have been speedily gathered together, and great additions have been made to the church all of a sudden. And what has become of them? Where are those churches at the present moment? The dreariest deserts in Christendom are those places that were fertilised by the patent manures of certain revivalists. The whole church seemed to have spent its strength in one rush and effort after something, and it ended in nothing at all. They built their wooden house, and piled up the hay, and made a stubble spire that seemed to reach the heavens, and there fell one spark, and all went away in smoke; and he that came to labor next time—the successor of the great builder—had to get the ashes swept away before he could do any good. The prayer of every one that serves God should be, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." Plod on, plod on. If I only build one piece of masonry in my life, and nothing more, if it be gold, silver, or precious stones, it is a good deal for a man to do; of such precious stuff as that, to build even one little corner which will not show, is a worthy service. It will not be much talked of, but it will last. There is the point: it will last. "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." If we are not builders in an established church, it is of little use to try at all. What God establishes will stand, but what men build without his establishment will certainly come to nought. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" Sunday-school teacher, be this your prayer. Tract distributor, local preacher, whatever you may be, dear brother or sister, whatever your form of service, do ask the Lord that you may not be one of those plaster builders using sham compo that only requires a certain amount of frost and weather to make it crumble to pieces. Be it yours, if you cannot build a cathedral, to build at least one part of the marvellous temple that God is piling for eternity, which will outlast the stars.

I have one thing more to mention before I bring this sermon to a close. The blessings of God's grace are blessings indeed, which in right earnest we ought to seek after. By these marks shall ye know them. Blessings indeed, are such blessings as come from the pierced hand; blessings that come from calvary's bloody tree, streaming from the Savior's wounded side—thy pardon, thine acceptance, thy spiritual life: the bread that is meat indeed, the blood that is drink indeed—thy oneness to Christ, and all that comes of it—these are blessings indeed. Any blessing that comes

as the result of the Spirit's work in thy soul is a blessing indeed; though it humble thee, though it strip thee, though it kill thee, it is a blessing indeed. Though the harrow go over and over thy soul, and the deep plough cut into thy very heart; though thou be maimed and wounded, and left for dead, yet if the Spirit of God do it, it is a blessing indeed. If he convinceth thee of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, even though thou hast not hitherto been brought to Christ, it is a blessing indeed. Anything that he does, accept it; do not be dubious of it; but pray that he may continue his blessed operations in thy soul. Whatsoever leads thee to God is in like manner a blessing indeed. Riches may not do it. There may be a golden wall between thee and God. Health will not do it: even the strength and marrow of thy bones may keep thee at a distance from thy God. But anything that draws thee nearer to him is a blessing indeed. What though it be a cross that raiseth thee? Yet if it raise thee to God it shall be a blessing indeed. Anything that reaches into eternity, with a preparation for the world to come, anything that we can carry across the river, the holy joy that is to blossom in those fields beyond the swelling flood, the pure cloudless love of the brotherhood which is to be the atmosphere of truth for ever—anything of this kind that has the eternal broad arrow on it—the immutable mark—is a blessing indeed. And anything which helps me to glorify God is a blessing indeed. If I be sick, and that helps me to praise him, it is a blessing indeed. If I be poor, and I can serve him better in poverty than in wealth, it is a blessing indeed. If I be in contempt, I will rejoice in that day and leap for joy, if it be for Christ's sake—it is a blessing indeed. Yea, my faith shakes off the disguise, snatches the vizard from the fair forehead of the blessing, and counts it all joy to all into divers trials for the sake of Jesus and the recompense of reward that he has promised. "Oh that we may be blessed indeed!"

Now, I send you away with these three words: "Search." See whether the blessings are blessings indeed, and be not satisfied unless you know that they are of God, tokens of his grace, and earnest of his saving purpose. "Weigh"—that shall be the next word. Whatever thou hast, weigh it in the scale, and ascertain if it be a blessing indeed, conferring such grace upon you as causeth you to abound in love, and to abound in every good word and work. And lastly, "Pray." So pray that this prayer may mingle with all thy prayers, that whatsoever God grants or whatever he withholds thou

mayest be blessed indeed. Is it a joy-time with thee? O that Christ may mellow thy joy, and prevent the intoxication of earthly blessedness from leading thee aside from close walking with him! In the night of sorrow, pray that he will bless thee indeed, lest the wormwood also intoxicate thee and make thee drunk, lest thy afflictions should make thee think hardly of him. Pray for the blessing, which having, thou art rich to all the intents of bliss, or which lacking, thou art poor and destitute, though plenty fill thy store. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." But "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!"

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Prayer Perfumed With Praise

In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. - Philippians 4:6

According to the text, we are both by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God. If any distinction be intended here, I suppose that by prayer is meant the general act of devotion and the mention of our usual needs; and by supplication I think would be intended our distinct entreaties and special petitions. We are to offer the general prayer common to all the saints, and we are to add thereto the special and definite petitions which are peculiar to ourselves. We are to worship in prayer, for God is to be adored by all his saints, and then we are to beseech his favours for ourselves, according to the words of the text, letting our requests be made known unto God. Do not forget this second form of worship. There is a good deal of generalizing in prayer, and God forbid that we should say a word against it, so far as it is sincere worship, but we want to have more of specific, definite pleading with God, asking him for such-and-such things, with a clear knowledge of what we ask. You will hear prayers at prayer-meetings, in which everything is asked in general but nothing in particular, and yet the reality and heartiness of prayer will often be best manifested by the putting up of requests for distinct blessings. See how Abraham, when he went to worship the Lord, did not merely adore him, and in general pray for his glory, but on a special occasion he pleaded concerning the promised heir, at another time he cried, "O that Ishmael might live before thee," and on one special occasion he interceded for Sodom. Elijah, when on the top of Carmel, did not pray for all the blessings of providence in general, but for rain, for rain there and then. He knew what he was driving at, kept to his point, and prevailed. So, my beloved friends, we have many wants which are so pressing as to be very distinct and definite, and we ought to have just so many clearly defined petitions which we offer unto God by way of supplication, and for the divine answers to these we are bound to watch with eager expectancy, so that when we receive

them we may magnify the Lord.

The point to which I would draw your attention is this: that whether it be the general prayer or the specific supplication we are to offer either or both "with thanksgiving." We are to pray about everything, and with every prayer we must blend our thanksgivings. Hence it follows that we ought always to be in a thankful condition of heart: since we are to pray without ceasing, and are not to pray without thanksgiving, it is clear that we ought to be always ready to give thanks unto the Lord. We must say with the Psalmist, "Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name." The constant tenor and spirit of our lives should be adoring gratitude, love, reverence, and thanksgiving to the Most High.

This blending of thanks with devotion is always to be maintained. Always must we offer prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. No matter though the prayer should struggle upward out of the depths, yet must its wings be silvered o'er with thanksgiving. Though the prayer were offered upon the verge of death, yet in the last few words which the trembling lips can utter there should be notes of gratitude as well as words of petition. The law saith: "With all thy sacrifices thou shalt offer salt;" and the gospel says with all thy prayers thou shalt offer praise. "One thing at a time" is said to be a wise proverb, but for once I must venture to contradict it, and say two things at a time are better, when the two are prayer and thanksgiving. These two holy streams flow from one common source, the Spirit of life which dwells within us; and they are utterances of the same holy fellowship with God; and therefore it is right that they should mingle as they flow, and find expression in the same holy exercise. Supplication and thanksgiving so naturally run into each other that it would be difficult to keep them separate: like kindred colours, they shade off into each other. Our very language seems to indicate this, for there is small difference between the words "to pray," and "to praise." A psalm may be either a prayer or praise, or both; and there is yet another form of utterance which is certainly prayer, but is used as praise, and is really both. I refer to that joyous Hebrew word which has been imported into all Christian languages, "Hosanna." Is it a prayer? Yes. "Save, Lord." Is it not praise? Yes; for it is tantamount to "God save the king," and is used to extol the Son of David. While we are here on earth we should never

attempt to make such a distinction between prayer and praise that we should either praise without prayer or pray without praise; but with every prayer and supplication we should mingle thanksgiving, and thus make known our requests unto God.

This commingling of precious things is admirable. It reminds me of that verse in the Canticles where the king is described as coming up from the wilderness in his chariot, "like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant." There is the myrrh of prayer, and the frankincense of praise. So, too, the holy incense of the sanctuary yielded the smoke of prayer which filled the holy place, but with it there was the sweet perfume of choice spices, which may be compared to praise. Prayer and praise are like the two cherubim on the ark, they must never be separated. In the model of prayer which our Saviour has given us, saying, "After this manner pray ye," the opening part of it is rather praise than prayer—"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," and the closing part of it is praise, where we say, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." David, who is the great tutor and exemplar of the church as to her worship, being at once her poet and her preacher, takes care in almost every psalm, though the petition may be agonizing, to mingle exquisite praise. Take for instance, that psalm of his after his great sin with Bathsheba. There one would think, with sighs and groans and tears so multiplied, he might have almost forgotten or have feared to offer thanksgiving while he was trembling under a sense of wrath; and yet ere the psalm that begins "Have mercy upon me, O God," can come to a conclusion the psalmist has said: "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise," and he cannot pen the last word without beseeching the Lord to build the walls of Jerusalem, adding the promise, "then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shalt they offer bullocks upon thine altar." I need not stop to quote other instances, but it is almost always the case that David by the fire of prayer warms himself into praise. He begins low, with many a broken note of complaining, but he mounts and glows, and, like the lark, sings as he ascends. When at first his harp is muffled he warbles a few mournful notes and becomes excited, till he cannot restrain his hand from that well-known and accustomed

string which he had reserved for the music of praise alone. There is a passage in the eighteenth Psalm, at the third verse, in which indeed he seems to have caught the very idea which I want to fix upon your minds this morning. "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." He was in such a condition that he says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me." Driven by distress, he declares that he will call upon the Lord, that is, with utterances of prayer; but he does not alone regard his God as the object of prayer, but as One who is to be praised. "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised;" and then, as if inspired to inform us of the fact that the blending of thanksgiving with prayer renders it infallibly effectual, as I shall have to show you it does, he adds, "So shall I be saved from mine enemies."

Now, if this habit of combining thanksgiving with prayer is found in the Old Testament saints, we have a right to expect it yet more in New Testament believers, who in clearer light perceive fresh reasons for thanksgiving; but I shall give you no instance except that of the writer of my text. Does he not tell us in the present chapter that those things which we have seen in him we are to do, for his life was agreeable with his teachings? Now, observe, how frequently he commences his epistles with a blending of supplication and thanksgiving. Turn to Romans 1:8-9, and note this fusion of these precious metals—"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." There is "I thank my God," and "I make mention of you always in my prayers." This was not written with a special eye to the percept of our text; it was natural to Paul so to thank God when he prayed. Look at Colossians 1:3—"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." To the same effect we read in First Thessalonians 1:2—"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." Look also at Second Timothy 1:3—"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." And if it be so in other epistles, we are not at all surprised to find it

so in Philippians 1:3-4—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." Nor need I confine you to the language of Paul's epistle, since it is most noteworthy that in Philippi itself (and those to whom he wrote must have remembered the incident) Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God at midnight, so that the prisoners heard them. It is clear that Paul habitually practised what he here enjoins. His own prayers had not been offered without thanksgiving; what God hath joined together he had never put asunder.

With this as a preface, I invite you to consider, carefully and prayerfully, first, the grounds of thanksgiving in prayer; secondly, the evil of its absence; and thirdly, the result of its presence.

I. First, then, there are REASONS FOR MINGLING THANKSGIVING WITH PRAYER. In the nature of things it ought to be so. We have abundant cause, my brethen, for thanksgiving at all times. We do not come to God in Prayer as if he had left us absolutely penniless, and we cried to him like starving prisoners begging through prison bars. We do not ask as if we had never received a single farthing of God before, and hardly thought we should obtain anything now; but on the contrary, having been already the recipients of immense favours, we come to a God who abounds in lovingkindness, who is willing to bestow good gifts upon us, and waits to be gracious to us. We do not come to the Lord as slaves to an unfeeling tyrant craving for a boon, but as children who draw nigh to a loving father, expecting to receive abundantly from his liberal hands. Thanksgiving is the right spirit in which to come before the God who daily loadeth us with benefits. Bethink you for awhile what cause you have for thanksgiving in prayer.

And first you have this, that such a thing as prayer is possible, that a finite creature can speak with the infinite Creator, that a sinful being can have audience with the thrice-holy Jehovah. It is worthy of thanksgiving that God should have commanded prayer and encouraged us to draw near unto him; and that moreover he should have supplied all things necessary to the sacred exercise. He has set up a mercy seat, blood besprinkled; and he has prepared a High Priest, ever living to make intercession; and to

these he has added the Holy Ghost to help our infirmities and to teach us what we should pray for as we ought. Everything is ready, and God waits for us to enquire at his hands. He has not only set before us an open door and invited us to enter, but he has given us the right spirit with which to approach. The grace of supplication is poured out upon us and wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. What a blessing it is that we do not attempt prayer with a peradventure, as if we were making a doubtful experiment, nor do we come before God as a forlorn hope, desperately afraid that he will not listen to our cry; but he has ordained prayer to be the ordinary commerce of heaven and earth, and sanctioned it in the most solemn manner. Prayer may climb to heaven, for God has himself prepared the ladder and set it down just by the head of his lonely Jacob, so that though that head be pillowed on a stone it may rest in peace. Lo, at the top of that ladder is the Lord himself in his covenant capacity, receiving our petitions and sending his attendant angels with answers to our requests. Shall we not bless God for this?

Let us praise his name, dear friends, also especially that you and I are still spared to pray and permitted to pray. What if we are greatly afflicted, yet it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. If we had received our deserts we should not now have been on praying ground and pleading terms with him. But let it be for our comfort and to God's praise that still we may stand with bowed head and cry each one—"God be merciful to me a sinner." Still may we cry like sinking Peter, "Lord save, or I perish." Like David, we may be unable to go up to the temple, but we can still go to our God in prayer. The prodigal has lost his substance, but he has not lost his power to supplicate. He has been feeding swine, but as yet he is still a man, and has not lost the faculty of desire and entreaty. He may have forgotten his father, but his father has not forgotten him; he may arise and he may go to him, and he may pour out his soul in his father's bosom. Therefore, let us give thanks unto God that he has nowhere said unto us—"Seek ye my face in vain." If we find a desire to pray trembling within our soul, and if though almost extinct we feel some hope in the promise of our gracious God, if our heart still groans after holiness and after God, though she hath lost her power to pray with joyful confidence as once she did, yet let us be thankful that we can pray even if it be but a little. In the will and power to pray there lies the capacity for infinite blessedness: he

who hath the key of prayer can open heaven, yea, he hath access to the heart of God; therefore, bless God for prayer.

And then, beloved, beyond the fact of prayer and our power to exercise it, there is a further ground of thanksgiving that we have already received great mercy at God's hands. We are not coming to God to ask favours and receive them for the first time in our lives. Why, blessed be his name, if he never granted me another favour, I have enough for which to thank him as long as I have any being. And this, moreover, is to be recollected, that whatever great things we are about to ask, we cannot possibly be seeking for blessings one-half so great as those which we have already received if we are indeed his children. If thou art a Christian, thou hast life in Christ. Art thou about to ask for meat and raiment? The life is more than these. Thou hast already obtained Christ Jesus to be thine, and he that spared him not will deny thee nothing. Is there, I was about to say, anything to compare with the infinite riches which are already ours in Christ Jesus? Let us perpetually thank our Benefactor for what we have while we make request for something more. Should it not be so? Shall not the abundant utterances of the memory of his great goodness run over into our requests, till our petitions are baptized in gratitude. While we come before God, in one aspect, empty handed to receive of his goodness, on the other hand we should never appear before him empty, but come with the fat of our sacrifices, offering praise and glorifying God.

Furthermore, there is this to be remembered, that when we come before God in the hour of trouble, remembering his great goodness to us in the past, and therefore thanking him, we ought to have faith enough to believe that the present trouble, about which we are praying, is sent in love. You will win with God in prayer if you can look at your trials in this light:—"Lord, I have this thorn in the flesh. I beseech thee, deliver me from it, but meanwhile I bless thee for it; for though I do not understand the why or the wherefore of it, I am persuaded there is love within it; therefore, while I ask thee to remove it, so far as it seemeth evil to me, yet wherein it may to thy better knowledge work my good, I bless thee for it, and I am content to endure it so long as thou seest fit." Is not that a sweet way of praying? "Lord, I am in want, be pleased to supply me; but, meanwhile, if thou do not, I believe it is better for me to be in need, and

so I praise thee for my necessity while I ask thee to supply it. I glory in mine infirmity, even while I ask thee to overcome it. I triumph before thee in my affliction, and bless thee for it even while I ask thee to help me in it and to rescue me out of it." This is a royal way of praying: such an amalgam of prayer and thanksgiving is more precious than the gold of Ophir.

Furthermore, beloved, whenever we are on our knees in prayer, it becomes us to bless God that prayer has been answered so many times before. Here thy poor petitioner bends before thee to ask again, but ere he asks he thanks thee for having heard him so many times before. I know that thou hearest me always, therefore do I continue still to cry to thee. My thanksgivings urge me to make fresh petitions, encouraging me in the full confidence that thou wilt not send me away empty. Why, many of the mercies which you possess today, and rejoice in, are answers to prayer. They are dear to you because, like Samuel, whom his mother so named because he was "asked of God," they came to you as answers to your supplications. When mercies come in answer to prayer they have a double delight about them, not only because they are good in themselves, but because they are certificates of our favour with the Lord. Well, then, as God has heard us so often and we have the proofs of his hearing, should we ever pray with murmurings and complainings? Should we not rather feel an intense delight when we approach the throne of grace, a rapture awakened by sunny memories of the past?

Again, we ought to pray with thanksgiving in its highest of all senses, by thanking God that we have the mercy which we seek. I wish we could learn this high virtue of faith. When I was conversing lately with our dear friend George Mller, he frequently astonished me with the way in which he mentioned that he had for so many months and years asked for such and such a mercy, and praised the Lord for it. He praised the Lord for it as though he had actually obtained it. Even in praying for the conversion of a person, as soon as he had begun to intercede he began also to praise God for the conversion of that person. Though I think he told us he had in one instance already prayed for thirty years and the work was not yet done, yet all the while he had gone on thanking God, because he knew the prayer would be answered. He believed that he had his petition, and

commenced to magnify the Giver of it. Is this unreasonable? How often do we antedate our gratitude among the sons of men! If you were to promise some poor person that you would pay his rent when it came due, he would thank you directly, though not a farthing had left your pocket. We have enough faith in our fellow-men to thank them beforehand, and surely we may do the same with our Lord. Shall we not be willing to trust God for a few months ahead, ay, and for years beforehand, if his wisdom bids us wait. This is the way to win with him. When ye pray, believe that ye receive the boons ye ask, and ye shall have them. "Believe that ye have it," says the Scripture, "and ye shall have it." As a man's note of hand stands for the money, so let God's promise be accounted as the performance. Shall not heaven's bank-notes pass as cash? Yea, verily, they shall have unquestioned currency among believers. We will bless the Lord for giving us what we have sought, since our having it is a matter of absolute certainty. We shall never thank God by faith and then find that we were befooled. He has said, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And therefore we may rest assured that the thanksgiving of faith shall never bring shame into the face of the man who offers it.

Once again, and then I will say no more upon these grounds of thanksgiving; surely, brethren, if the Lord do not answer the prayer which we are offering, yet still he is so good, so supremely good, that we will bless him whether or no. We ought even to praise him when he does not answer us, ay, and bless him for refusing our desires. How devoutly might some of us thank him that he did not answer our prayers when we sought for evil things in the ignorance of our childish minds. We asked for flesh, and He might have sent us quails in His anger, and while the flesh was yet in our mouths his wrath might have come upon us; but in love he would not hear us. Blessed be his name for closing his ear in pity! Let us adore him when he keeps us waiting at his doors; thank him for rebuffs, and bless him for refusals, believing always that Ralph Erskine spoke the truth when he said:

"I'm heard when answered soon or late,
Yea, heard when I no answer get:
Yea, kindly answered when refused,

And treated well when harshly used."

Faith glorifies the love of God, for she knows that the Lord's roughest usage is only love in disguise. We are not so sordid as to make our songs depend upon the weather, or on the fulness of the olive-press and the wine-fat. Blessed be his name, he must be right even when he seems at cross purposes with his people; we are not going to quarrel with him, like silly babes with their nurses, because he does not happen to grant us every desire of our foolish hearts. Though he slay us we will trust in him, much more if he decline our requests. We ask him for our daily bread, and if he withhold it we will praise him. Our praises are not suspended upon his answers to our prayers. If the labour of the olive should fail, and the field should yield no fruit; if the flock should be cut off from the fold, and the herd from the stall, yet still would we rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation. Blessed Spirit, raise us to this state of grace and keep us there.

Of that which we have spoken this is the sum: under every condition, and in every necessity, draw nigh to God in prayer, but always bring thanksgiving with you. As Joseph said to his brethren, "Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you;" so may the Lord say to you, "You shall not receive my smile unless you bring thankfulness with you." Let your prayers be like those ancient missals which one sometimes sees, in which the initial letters of the prayers are gilded and adorned with a profusion of colours, the work of cunning writers. Let even the general confession of sin and the litany of mournful petitions have at least one illuminated letter. Illuminate your prayers; light them up with rays of thanksgiving all the way through; and when you come together to pray forget not to make melody unto the Lord with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

II. Secondly, I shall drive at the same point, while I try to show **THE EVIL OF THE ABSENCE OF THANKSGIVING** in our prayers.

First and foremost, we should be chargeable with ingratitude. Are we to be always receiving and never to return thanks? Aristotle rightly observes: "A return is required to preserve friendship between two

persons," and as we have nothing else to give to God except gratitude, let us abound therein. If we have no fruit of the field, let us at least render to him the fruit of our lips. Have you no thanks to bring? How, then, can you expect further favours? Does not liberality itself close its hand when ingratitude stands in the way? What, never a word of gratitude to him from whom all blessings flow! Then may even the ungodly despise you.

Next, it would argue great selfishness if we did not combine praise with prayer. Can it be right to think only of ourselves, to pray for benefits and never honour our Benefactor? Are we going to import the detestable vice of avarice into spiritual things, and only care for our own souls' good? What, no thought for God's glory! No idea of magnifying his great and blessed name! God forbid that we should fall into a spirit so mean and narrow. Healthy praise and thanksgiving must be cultivated, because they prevent prayer from becoming overgrown with the mildew of selfishness.

Thanksgiving also prevents prayer from becoming an exhibition of the want of faith; for indeed some prayer is rather a manifestation of the absence of faith than the exercise of confidence in God. If when I am in trouble I still bless the Lord for all I suffer, therein my faith is seen. If before I obtain the mercy, I thank God for the grace which I have not yet tasted, therein my faith is manifest. What, is our faith such that it only sings in the sunshine? Have we no nightingale music for our God? Is our trust like the swallow, which must leave us in winter? Is our faith a flower which needs the conservatory to keep it alive? Can it not blossom like the gentian at the foot of the frozen glacier, where the damp and chill of adversity surround it? I trust it can, it ought to do so, and we ought to feel that we can praise and bless God when outward circumstances appear rather to demand sighs than songs.

Not to thank God in our prayers would argue willfulness, and want of submission to his will. Must everything be ordered according to our mind? To refuse to praise unless we have our own way is great presumption, and shows that like a naughty child we will sulk if we cannot be master. I might illustrate the willfulness of many a supplication by that of a little boy who was very diligent in saying his prayers, but was at the same time disobedient, ill-tempered, and the pest of the house. His

mother told him that she thought it was mere hypocrisy for him to pretend to pray. He replied, "No, mother, indeed it is not, for I pray God to lead you and father to like my ways better than you do." Numbers of people want the Lord to like their ways better, but they do not intend to follow the ways of the Lord. Their minds are contrary to God and will not submit to his will, and therefore there is no thanksgiving in them. Praise in a prayer is indicative of an humble, submissive, obedient spirit, and when it is absent we may suspect willfulness and self-seeking. Very much of the prayer of rebellious hearts is the mere growling of an angry obstinacy, the whine of an ungratified self-conceit. God must do this and he must do that, or else we will not love him. What baby talk! What spoiled children such are! A little whipping will do them good. "I have never believed in the goodness of God," said one, "ever since he took my dear mother away." I knew a good man whose child was on the verge of the grave; when I went to see her he charged me not to mention death to her, for he said, "I do not believe God could do such an unkind action as take my only child away." When I assured him that she would surely die in a few days, and that he must not quarrel with the will of the Lord, he stood firm in his rebellion. He prayed, but he could not bless God, and it was no marvel that his heart sank within him, and he refused to be comforted, when at last his child died, as we all felt sure she would. He became afterwards resigned, but his want of acquiescence cost him many a smart. This will not do; this quarreling with God is poor work! Resignation comes to the heart like an angel unawares, and when we entertain it our soul is comforted. We may ask for the child's life, but we must also thank the Lord that the dear life has been prolonged so long as it has been, and we must put the child and everything else into our Father's hands and say, "If thou shouldest take all away, yet still will I bless thy name, O thou Most High." This is acceptable prayer, because it is not soured by the leaven of self-will, but salted with thankfulness.

We must mingle our thanksgivings with our prayers, or else we may fear that our mind is not in harmony with the divine will. Recollect, dear friends, that prayer does not alter the mind of God: it never was the intent of prayer that it should attempt anything of the kind. Prayer is the shadow of the decrees of the Eternal. God has willed such a thing, and he makes his saints to will it, and express their will in prayer. Prayer is the

rustling of the wings of the angels who are bringing the blessing to us. It is written, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." It is not said that he will give the desire of his heart to every Jack and Tom; but you must first delight in the Lord, and when your mind finds all her joy in God then it is clear that God and you, as far as it can be, are standing on the same plane and moving in the same direction, and now you shall have the desire of your heart because the desire of your heart is the desire of God's heart. Character, as much as faith, lies at the basis of prevalence in prayer. I do not mean in the case of the prayer of the sinner when he is seeking mercy, but I mean in the habitual prayers of the godly. There are some men who cannot pray so as to prevail, for sin has made them weak, and God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to him. He who has lost the light of God's countenance has also lost much of the prevalence of his prayers. You do not suppose that every Israelite could have gone to the top of Carmel and opened the windows of heaven as Elijah did. No, he must first be Elijah, for it is the effectual, fervent prayer, not of every man, but of a righteous man, that availeth much; and when the Lord has put your heart and my heart into an agreement with him then we shall pray and prevail. What did our Lord say—"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Doubtless many lose power in prayer because their lives are greivous in the sight of the Lord, and he cannot smile upon them. Will any father listen to the requests of a child who has set himself up in opposition to parental authority? The obedient, tender, loving child, who would not wish for anything which you did not think right to give, is he whose requests you are pleased to consider and fulfil; yea, more, you even anticipate the wishes of such a child, and before he calls you answer him. May we be such children of the great God.

III. And now, in the third place, let us consider THE RESULT OF THE PRESENCE OF THIS THANKSGIVING IN CONNECTION WITH PRAYER. According to the context, the presence of thanksgiving in the heart together with prayer is productive of peace. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Now that peace,

that conscious calm, that divine serenity, which is described as the peace of God, is not produced by prayer alone, but by prayer with thanksgiving. Some men pray, and therein they do well; but for lack of mixing thanksgiving with it their prayer agitates them, and they come away from the closet even more anxious than when they entered it. If they mingled in their petitions that sweet powder of the merchants, which is called praise, and mixed it after the art of the apothecary, in due proportions, the blessing of God would come with it, causing repose of heart. If we bless our gracious Lord for the very trouble we pray against; if we bless him for the very mercy which we need, as though it had already come; if we resolve to praise him whether we receive the boon or not, learning in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content, then "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." Brethren, as you value this divine rest of spirit, as you prize constant serenity of soul, I beseech you, mingle praises with your prayers.

The next effect of it will be this: the thanksgiving will often warm the soul, and enable it to pray. I believe it is the experience of many who love secret devotion that at times they cannot pray, for their heart seems hard, cold, dumb, and almost dead. Do not pump up unwilling and formal prayer, my brethren; but take down the hymn-book and sing. While you praise the Lord for what you have, you will find your rocky heart begin to dissolve and flow in rivers. You will be encouraged to plead with the Lord because you will remember what you have aforesaid received at his hand. If you had an empty wagon to raise to the mouth of a coal-pit, it might be a very difficult task for you; but the work is managed easily by the common-sense of the miners. They make the full wagons, as they run down, pull the empty wagons up the incline. Now, when your heart is loaded with praise for mercy received, let it run down the incline, and draw up the empty wagon of your desires, and you will thus find it easy to pray. Cold and chill prayers are always to be deplored, and if by so simple a method as entreating the Lord to accept our thanksgiving our hearts can be warmed and renewed, let us by all means take care to use it.

Lastly, I believe that when a man begins to pray with thanksgiving he is upon the eve of receiving the blessing. God's time to bless you has come when you begin to praise him as well as pray to him. God has his set time

to favour us, and he will not grant us our desire until the due season has arrived. But the time has come when you begin to bless the Lord. Now, take an instance of this in Second Chronicles 20:20—Jehoshaphat went out to fight with an exceeding great army, and mark how he achieved the victory. "They rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people he appointed"—what? warriors, captains? No, that was all done, but he "appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." Victory came when they began to sing and praise. You shall get your answers to prayer when you multiply your thanksgivings in all your prayers and supplications: rest you sure of that.

Our thanksgiving will show that the reason for our waiting is now exhausted; that the waiting has answered its purpose, and may now come to a joyful end. Sometimes we are not in a fit state to receive a blessing, but when we reach the condition of thankfulness, then is the time when it is safe for God to indulge us. A professing Christian came to his minister once and said, "Sir, you say we should always pray." "Yes, my friend, undoubtedly." "But then, Sir, I have been praying for twelve months that I might enjoy the comforts of religion, and I am no happier than before. I have made that my one perpetual prayer, that I might enjoy the comforts of religion, and I do not feel joy nor even peace of mind; in fact, I have more doubts and fears than ever I had." "Yes," said his minister, "and that is the natural result of such a selfish prayer. Why, dear friend," he said, "come and kneel down with me, and let us pray in another manner, 'Father, glorify thy name! Thy kingdom come.' Now," said he, "go and offer those petitions and get to work to try to make it true, and see if you do not soon enjoy the comforts of religion." There is a great deal in that fact: if you will but desire God to be glorified, and aim at glorifying him yourself, then shall the joys of true godliness come to you in answer to

prayer.

The time for the blessing is when you begin to praise God for it. For, brethren, you may be sure that when you put up a thanksgiving on the ground that God has answered your prayer, you really have prevailed with God. Suppose you had promised to some poor woman that you would give her a meal tomorrow. You might forget it, you know; but suppose when the morning came she sent her little girl with a basket for it, she would be likely to get it I think. But, suppose that she sent in addition a little note in which the poor soul thanked you for your great kindness, could you have the heart to say, "My dear girl, I cannot attend to you today. Come another time"? Oh dear no, if the cupboard was bare you would send out to get something, because the good soul so believed in you that she had sent you thanks for it before she received your gift. Well, now, trust the Lord in the same manner. He cannot run back from his Word, my brethren. Believing prayer holds him, but believing thanksgiving binds him. If it is not in your own heart, though you be evil, to refuse to give what you have promised when that promise is so believed that the person rejoices as though he had it; then depend upon it the good God will not find it in his heart to refuse. The time for reception is fully come because thanksgiving for that reception fills your heart. I leave the matter with you. If you are enabled to pray in that fashion, great good will come to yourselves, and to the church of God, and to the world at large by such prayers.

Now, I think I hear in this audience somebody saying, "But I cannot pray so. I do not know how to pray. Oh, that I knew how to pray! I am a poor, guilty sinner. I cannot mix any thanksgiving with my supplications." Ah, my dear soul, do not think about that just now. I am not so much preaching to you as I am preaching to the people of God. For you it is quite enough to say—"God be merciful to me a sinner." And yet I will venture to say that there is praise in such a petition. You are implicitly praising the justice of God, and you are praising his mercy by appealing to him. When the prodigal returned, and he began his prayer by saying, "I am not worthy to be called thy son," there was in that confession a real praise of the father's goodness, of which he was unworthy to partake. But you need not to think about this matter at present, for first you have to

find Jesus, and eternal life in him. Go and plead the merit of Jesus, and cast yourself upon the love and mercy of God in him and he will not cast you away: and then another day, when you thus have found and known him, take care that the thanksgiving for your salvation never ceases. Even when you are most hungry, and poor, and needy in the future continue to bless your saving Lord, and say, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him: and because the LORD inclined his ear unto me I will praise his name as long as I live."

God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Prayer - The Forerunner Of Mercy

Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. - Ezekiel 36:37

In reading the chapter we have seen the great and exceeding precious promises which God had made to the favored nation of Israel. God in this verse declares, that though the promise was made, and though he would fulfill it, yet he would not fulfill it until his people asked him so to do. He would give them a spirit of prayer, by which they should cry earnestly for the blessing, and then when they should have cried aloud unto the living God, he would be pleased to answer them from heaven, his dwelling-place. The word used here to express the idea of prayer is a suggestive one. "I will yet for this be *enquired of* by the house of Israel." Prayer, then, is an enquiry. No man can pray aright, unless he views prayer in that light. First, I enquire what the promise is. I turn to my Bible and I seek to find the promise whereby the thing which I desire to seek is certified to me as being a thing which God is willing to give. Having enquired so far as that, I take that promise, and on my bended knees I

enquire of God whether he will fulfill his own promise. I take to him his own word of covenant, and I say to him, "O Lord, wilt thou not fulfill it, and wilt thou not fulfill it *now*?" So that there, again, prayer is enquiry. After prayer I look out for the answer; I expect to be heard, and if I am not answered I pray again, and my repeated prayers are but fresh enquiries. I expect the blessing to arrive; I go and enquire whether there is any tidings of its coming. I ask; and thus I say "Wilt thou answer me, O Lord? Wilt thou keep thy promise? Or wilt thou shut up thine ear, because I misunderstand my own wants and mistake thy promise." Brethren, we must use enquiry in prayer, and regard prayer as being, first, *an enquiry for the promise*, and then on the strength of that promise *an enquiry for the fulfillment*. We expect something to come as a present from a friend: we first have the note, whereby we are informed it is upon the road. We enquire as to what the present is by the reading of the note, and then, if it arrive not, we call at the accustomed place where the parcel ought to have been left, and we ask or enquire for such and such a thing. We have enquired about the promise, and then we go and enquire again, until we get an answer that the promised gift has arrived and is ours. So with prayer. We get the promise by enquiry, and we get the fulfillment of it by again enquiring at God's hands.

Now, this morning I shall try, as God shall help me, first to speak of prayer as *the prelude of blessing*: next I shall try to show why prayer is thus constituted by God *the forerunner of his mercies*, and then I shall close by *an exhortation*, as earnest as I can make it, exhorting you to pray, if you would obtain blessings.

I. Prayer is the FORERUNNER OF MERCIES. Many despise prayer: they despise it, because they do not understand it. He who knoweth how to use that sacred art of prayer will obtain so much thereby, that *from its very profitableness* he will be led to speak of it with the highest reverence.

Prayer, we assert, is the prelude of all mercies. We bid you turn back to sacred history, and you will find that never did a great mercy come to this world, unheralded by prayer. The promise comes alone, with no preventing merit to precede it, but the blessing promised always follows its herald, prayer. You shall note that all the wonders that God did in the

old times were first of all sought at his hands by the earnest prayers of his believing people. But the other Sabbath we beheld Pharaoh cast into the depths of the Red Sea, and all his hosts "still as a stone" in the depths of the waters. Was there a prayer that preceded that magnificent overthrow of the Lord's enemies? Turn ye to the Book of Exodus, and ye will read, "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage." And mark ye not, that just before the sea parted and made a highway for the Lord's people through its bosom, Moses had prayed unto the Lord, and cried earnestly unto him, so that Jehovah said, "Why criest thou unto me?" A few Sabbaths ago, when we preached on the subject of the rain which came down from heaven in the days of Elijah, you will remember how we pictured the land of Judea as an arid wilderness, a mass of dust, destitute of all vegetation. Rain had not fallen for three years; the pastures were dried up; the brooks had ceased to flow; poverty and distress stared the nation in the face. At an appointed season a sound was heard of abundance of rain, and the torrents poured from the skies, until the earth was deluged with the happy floods. Do you ask me, whether prayer was the prelude to that? I point you to the top of Carmel. Behold a man kneeling before his God, crying, "O my God! send the rain;" lo! the majesty of his faith - he sends his servant Gehazi to look seven times for the clouds, because he believes that they will come, in answer to his prayer. And mark the fact, the torrents of rain were the offspring of Elijah's faith and prayer. Wherever in Holy Writ you shall find the blessing you shall find the prayer that went before it. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest blessing that men ever had. He was God's best boon to a sorrowing world. And did prayer precede Christ's advent? Was there any prayer which went before the coming of the Lord, when he appeared in the temple? Oh yes, the prayers of saints for many ages had followed each other. Abraham saw his day, and when he died Isaac took up the note, and when Isaac slept with his fathers, Jacob and the patriarchs still continued to pray; yea, and in the very days of Christ, prayer was still made for him continually: Anna the prophetess, and the venerable Simeon, still looked for the coming of Christ; and day by day they prayed and interceded with God, that he would suddenly come to his temple.

Ay, and mark you, as it has been in Sacred Writ, so it shall be with regard to greater things that are yet to happen in the fulfillment of promise. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of heaven. It is my firm belief, in common with all who read the Sacred Scriptures aright, that the day is approaching when the Lord Jesus shall stand a second time upon the earth, when he shall reign with illimitable sway over all the habitable parts of the globe, when kings shall bow before him, and queens shall be nursing mothers of his Church, But when shall that time come? We shall know its coming by its prelude when prayer shall become more loud and strong, when supplication shall become more universal and more incessant, then even as when the tree putteth forth her first green leaves we expect that the spring approacheth, even so when prayer shall become more hearty and earnest, we may open our eyes, for the day of our redemption draweth nigh. Great prayer is the preface of great mercy, and in proportion to our prayer is the blessing that we may expect.

It has been so *in the history of the modern Church*. Whenever she has been roused to pray, it is then that God has awaked to her help. Jerusalem, when thou hast shaken thyself from the dust, thy Lord hath taken his sword from the scabbard. When thou hast suffered thy hands to hang down, and thy knees to become feeble, he has left thee to become scattered by thine enemies; thou hast become barren and thy children have been cut off, but when thou hast learned to cry, when thou hast begun to pray, God hath restored unto thee the joy of his salvation, he hath gladdened thine heart, and multiplied thy children. The history of the Church up to this age has been a series of waves, a succession of ebbs and flows. A strong wave of religious prosperity has washed over the sands of sin, again it has receded, and immorality has reigned. Ye shall read in English history: it has been the same. Did the righteous prosper in the days of Edward VI? They shall again be tormented under a bloody Mary. Did Puritanism become omnipotent over the land, did the glorious Cromwell reign, and did the saints triumph? Charles the second's debaucheries and wickedness became the black receding wave. Again, Whitfield and Wesley poured throughout the nation a mighty wave of religion, which like a torrent drove everything before it. Again it receded, and there came the days of Payne, and of men full of infidelity and

wickedness. Again there came a strong impulse, and again God glorified himself. And up to this date, again, there has been a decline. Religion, though more fashionable than it once was, has lost much of its vitality and power, much of the zeal and earnestness of the ancient preachers has departed, and the wave has receded again. But, blessed be God, flood tide has again set in: once more God hath aroused his Church. We have seen in these days what our fathers never hoped to see: we have seen the great men of a Church, not too noted for its activity, at last coming forth - and God be with them in their coming forth! They have come forth to preach unto the people the unsearchable riches of God. I do hope we may have another great wave of religion rolling in upon us. Shall I tell you what I conceive to be the moon that influences these waves? My brethren, even as the moon influences the tides of the sea, even so doth prayer, (which is the reflection of the sunlight of heaven, and is God's moon in the sky,) influence the tides of godliness; for when our prayers become like the crescent moon, and when we stand not in conjunction with the sun, then there is but a shallow tide of godliness, but when the full orb shines upon the earth, and when God Almighty makes the prayers of his people full of joy and gladness, it is then that the sea of grace returneth to its strength. In proportion to the prayerfulness of the Church shall be its present success, though its ultimate success is beyond the reach of hazard.

And now again, to come nearer home: this truth is true of each of you my dearly beloved in the Lord *in your own personal experience*. God has given you many an unsolicited favor, but still great prayer has always been the great prelude of great mercy with you. When you first found peace through the blood of the cross you had been praying much beforehand, and earnestly interceding with God that he would remove your doubts, and deliver you from your distresses. Your assurance was the result of prayer. And when at any time you have had high and rapturous joys, you have been obliged to look upon them as answers to your prayers, when you have had great deliverances out of sore troubles, and mighty helps in great dangers, you have been able to say, "I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me out of all my fears." Prayer, we say, in your case, as well as in the case of the Church at large, is always the preface to blessing.

And now some will say to me, "In what way do you regard prayer, then, as affecting the blessing? God, the Holy Ghost vouchsafes prayer before the blessing; but in what way is prayer connected with the blessing?" I reply, prayer goes before the blessing in several senses. It goes before the blessing, *as the blessing's shadow*. When the sunlight of God's mercy rises upon our necessities, it casts the shadow of prayer far down upon the plain, or, to use another illustration, when God piles up a hill of mercies, he himself shines behind them, and he casts on our spirits the shadow of prayer, so that we may rest certain, if we are in prayer, our prayers are the shadows of mercy. Prayer is the rustling of the wings of the angels that are on their way bringing us the boons of heaven. Have you heard prayer in your heart? You shall see the angel in your house. When the chariots that bring us blessings do rumble, their wheels do sound with prayer. We hear the prayer in our own spirits, and that prayer becomes the token of the coming blessings. Even as the cloud foreshadoweth rain, so prayer foreshadoweth the blessing; even as the green blade is the beginning of the harvest, so is prayer the prophecy of the blessing that is about to come.

Again: prayer goes before mercy, *as the representative of it*. Often times the king, in his progress through his realms, sends one before him, who blows a trumpet; and when the people see him they know that the king cometh, because the trumpeter is there. But, perhaps, there is before him a more important personage, who says, "I am sent before the king to prepare for his reception, and I am this day to receive aught that you have to send the king, for I am his representative." So prayer is the representative of the blessing before the blessing comes. The prayer comes, and when I see the prayer, I say, "Prayer, thou art the vice-regent of the blessing, if the blessing be the king, thou art the regent. I know and look upon thee as being the representative of the blessing I am about to receive."

But I do think also that sometimes, and generally, prayer goes before the blessing, *even as the cause goes before the effect*. Some people say, when they get anything, that they get it because they prayed for it, but if they are people who are not spiritually minded, and who have no faith, let them know, that whatever they may get it is not in answer to prayer, for

we know that God heareth not sinners, and the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "Well," says one, "I asked God for such-and-such a thing the other day. I know I am no Christian, but I got it. Don't you consider that I had it through my prayers?" No, sir, no more than I believe the reasoning of the old man who affirmed that the Goodwin Sands had been caused by the building of Tenterden steeple, for the sands had not been there before, and the sea did not come up till it was built, and therefore, said he, the steeple must have caused the flood. Now, your prayers have no more connection with your blessing than the sea with the steeple, in the Christian's case it is far different. Oft-times the blessing is actually brought down from heaven by the prayer. An objector may reply, "I believe that prayer may have much influence on yourself, sir, but I do not believe that it has any effect on the Divine Being." Well, sir, I shall not try to convince you; because it is useless for me to try to convince you of that, unless you believe the testimonies I bring, as it would be to convince you of any historical fact by simply reasoning about it. I could bring out of this congregation not one, nor twenty, but many hundreds, who are rational, intelligent persons, and who would, each of them, most positively declare, that some hundreds of times in their lives they have been led to seek most earnestly deliverance out of trouble, or help in adversity, and they have received the answers to their prayers in so marvellous a manner that they themselves did no more doubt their being answers to their cries than they could doubt the existence of a God. They felt sure that he heard them; they were certain of it. Oh! the testimonies to the power of prayer are so numberless, that the man who rejects them flies in the face of good testimonies. We are not all enthusiasts; some of us are cool blooded enough, we are not all fanatics; we are not all quite wild in our piety, some of us in other things, we reckon, act in a tolerably common sense way. But yet we all agree in this, that our prayers have been heard; and we could tell many stories of our prayers, still fresh upon our memories, where we have cried unto God, and he has heard us. But the man, who says he does not believe God hears prayer, knows he does. I have no respect to his scepticism, any more than I have any respect to a man's doubt about the existence of a God. The man does not doubt it; he has to choke his own conscience before he dares to say he does. It is complimenting him too much to argue with him. Will you argue with a liar? He affirms a lie, and knows it is so. Will you condescend to argue

with him, to prove that he is untrue! The man is incapable of reasoning; he is beyond the pale of those who ought to be treated as respectable persons. If a man rejects the existence of a God, he does it desperately against his own conscience, and if he is bad enough to stifle his own conscience so much as to believe that, or pretend that he believes it, we think we shall demean ourselves if we argue with so loose a character. He must be solemnly warned, for reason is thrown away upon deliberate liars. But you know, sir, God hears prayer; because if you do not, either way you must be a fool. You are a fool for not believing so, and a worse fool for praying yourself; when you do not believe he hears you. "But I do not pray sir." Do not pray? Did I not hear a whisper from your nurse when you were sick? She said you were a wonderful saint when you had the fever. You do not pray! No, but when things do not go quite well in business you would to God that they would go better, and you do sometimes cry out to him a kind of prayer which he cannot accept, but which is still enough to show that there is an instinct in man that teaches him to pray, I believe that even as birds build their nests without any teaching, so men use prayer in the form of it (I do not mean spiritual prayer): I say, men use prayer from the very instinct of nature. There is something in man which makes him a praying animal. He cannot help it; he is obliged to do it. He laughs at himself when he is on the dry land; but he prays when he is on the sea and in a storm, he seeks at prayer when he is well, but when he is sick he prays as fast as anybody. He - he would not pray when he is rich; but when he is poor, he prays then strongly enough. He knows God hears prayer, and he knows that men should pray. There is no disputing with him. If he dares to deny his own conscience he is incapable of reasoning, he is beyond the pale of morality, and therefore we dare not try to influence him by reasoning. Other means we may and hope we shall use with him, but not that which compliments him by allowing him to answer. O saints of God! whatever ye can give up, ye can never give up this truth, that God heareth prayer; for if ye did disbelieve it to-day, ye would have to believe it again to-morrow; for ye would have such another proof of it through some other trouble that would roll over your head that ye would be obliged to feel, if ye were not obliged to say, "Verily, God heareth and answereth prayer."

Prayer, then, is the prelude of mercy, for very often it is the cause of the

blessing; that is to say, it is a part cause; the mercy of God being the great first cause, prayer is often the secondary agency whereby the blessing is brought down.

II. And now I am going to try to show you, in the second place, WHY IT IS THAT GOD IS PLEASED TO MAKE PRAYER THE TRUMPETER OF MERCY, OR THE FORERUNNER OF IT.

1. I think it is, in the first place, *because God loves that man should have some reason for having a connexion with him.* Saith God, "My creatures will shun me, even my own people will too little seek me - they will flee from me, instead of coming to me. What shall I do? I intend to bless them: shall I lay the blessings at their doors so that when they open them in the morning they may find them there, unasked and unsought?" "Yes," saith God, "many mercies I will so do with; I will give them much that they need, without their seeking for it, but in order that they may not wholly forget me, there are some mercies that I will not put at their doors but I will make them come to my house after them. I love my children to visit me," says the heavenly Father; "I love to see them in my courts, I delight to hear their voices and to see their faces; they will not come to see me if I give them all they want; I will keep them sometimes without, and then they will come to me and ask, and I shall have the pleasure of seeing them, and they will have the profit of entering into fellowship with me." It is as if some father should say to his son who is entirely dependent upon him, "I might give you a fortune at once, so that you might never have to come upon me again; but, my son, it delights me, it affords me pleasure to supply your wants. I like to know what it is you require, that I may oftentimes have to give you, and so may frequently see your face. Now I shall give you only enough to serve you for such a time, and if you want to have anything you must come to my house for it. O, my son, I do this because I desire to see thee often; I desire often to have opportunities of showing how much I love thee." So doth God say to his children, "I do not give you all at once; I give all to you in the promise, but if you want to have it in the detail, you must come to me to ask me for it: so shall you see my face, and so shall you have a reason for often coming to my feet."

2. But there is another reason. God would make prayer the preface to

mercy, *because often prayer itself gives the mercy.* You are full of fear and sorrow, you want *comfort*, God says, pray, and you shall get it; and the reason is because prayer is of itself a comforting exercise. We are all aware, that when we have any heavy news upon our minds, it often relieves us if we can tell a friend about it. Now there are some troubles we would not tell to others, for perhaps many minds could not sympathize with us: God has therefore provided prayer, as a channel for the flow of grief. "Come," saith he, "thy troubles may find vent here; come, put them into my ear; pour out thine heart before me, and so wilt thou prevent its bursting. If thou must weep, come and weep at my mercy-seat; if thou must cry come and cry in the closet, and I will hear thee." And how often have you and I tried that! We have been on our knees overwhelmed with sorrow, and we have risen up, and said, "Ah! I can meet it all now!"

"Now I can say my God is mine
Now I can all my joys resign,
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great."

Prayer itself sometimes gives the mercy.

Take another case. You are in difficulty, you don't know which way to go, nor how to act. God has said that he will *direct* his people. You go forth in prayer and pray to God to direct you. Are you aware that your very prayer will frequently of itself furnish you with the answer? For while the mind is absorbed in thinking over the matter, and in praying concerning the matter, it is just in the likeliest state to suggest to itself the course which is proper, for whilst in prayer I am spreading all the circumstances before God, I am like a warrior surveying the battle-field, and when I rise I know the state of affairs, and know how to act. Often, thus, you see, prayer gives the very thing we ask for in itself. Often when I have had a passage of Scripture that I cannot understand, am I in the habit of spreading the Bible before me, and if I have looked at all the commentators, and they do not seem to agree, I have spread the Bible on my chair, kneeled down, put my finger upon the passage, and sought of God instruction. I have thought that when I have risen from my knees I understood it far better than before; I believe that the very exercise of prayer did of itself bring

the answer, to a great degree, for the mind being occupied upon it, and the heart being exercised with it, the whole man was in the most excellent position for truly understanding it. John Bunyan says, "The truths that I know best I have learned on my knees;" and says he again, "I never know a thing well till it is burned into my heart by prayer." Now that is in a great measure through the agency of God's Holy Spirit; but I think that it may in some measure also be accounted for by the fact that prayer exercises the mind upon the thing, and then the mind is led by an insensible process to lay hold upon the right result. Prayer, then is a suitable prelude to the blessing, because often it carrieth the blessing in itself.

3. But again it seemeth but right, and just, and appropriate, that prayer should go before the blessing, *because in prayer there is a sense of need*. I cannot as a man distribute assistance to those who do not represent their case to me as being destitute and sick. I cannot suppose that the physician will trouble himself to leave his own house to go into the house of one that is ill, unless the need has been specified to him, and unless he has been informed that the case requires his assistance; nor can we expect of God, that he will wait upon his own people, unless his own people should first state their need to him, shall feel their need, and come before him crying for a blessing. A sense of need is a divine gift; prayer fosters it, and is therefore highly beneficial.

4. And yet again, prayer before the blessing *serves to show us the value of it*. If we had the blessings without asking for them, we should think them common things; but prayer makes the common pebbles of God's temporal bounties more precious than diamonds; and in spiritual prayer, cuts the diamond, and makes it glisten more. The thing was precious, but I did not know its preciousness till I had sought for it, and sought it long. After a long chase the hunter prizes the animal because he has set his heart upon it and is determined to have it; and yet more truly, after a long hunger he that eateth findeth more relish in his food. So prayer doth sweeten the mercy. Prayer teaches us its preciousness. It is the reading over of the bill, the schedule, the account, before the estate and the properties are themselves transferred. We know the value of the purchase by reading over the will of it in prayer, and when we have groaned out our

own expression of its peerless price, then it is that God bestows the benediction upon us. Prayer, therefore, goes before the blessing, because it shows us the value of it.

But doubtless even reason itself suggests that it is but natural that God, the all-good, should give his favors to those that ask. It seemeth but right that he should expect of us, that we should first ask at his hands, and then he will bestow. It is goodness great enough that his hand is ready to open: surely it is but little that he should say to his people, "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

III. Let me close BY STIRRING YOU UP TO USE THE HOLY ART OF PRAYER AS A MEANS OF OBTAINING THE BLESSING. Do you demand of me, and for what shall we pray? The answer is upon my tongue. Pray for *yourselves*, pray for *your families*, pray for the *Churches*, pray for *the one great kingdom of our Lord on earth*.

Pray *for yourselves*. Sure you will never lack some subject for intercession. So broad are your wants, so deep are your necessities, that until you are in heaven you will always find room for prayer. Dost thou need nothing? Then I fear thou dost not know thyself. Hast thou no mercy to ask of God? Then I fear thou hast never had mercies of him, and art yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." If thou be a child of God, thy wants will be as numerous as thy moments and thou wilt need to have as many prayers as there are hours. Pray that thou mayest be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; pray that thou mayest have communion with Christ, and enter into the banqueting-house of his love. Pray for thyself, that thou mayest be an example unto others, that thou mayest honor God here, and inherit his kingdom hereafter.

In the next place, pray for your *families*; for your children. If they be pious, you can still pray for them that their piety may be real, that they may be upheld in their profession. And if they be ungodly, you have a whole fountain of arguments for prayer. So long as thou hast a child unpardoned, pray for it; so long as thou hast a child alive that is saved, pray for him, that he may be kept. Thou hast enough reason to pray for those that have proceeded from thine own loins. But if thou hast no cause

to do that, pray for thy servants. Wilt thou not stoop to that? Then surely thou hast not stooped to be saved; for he that is saved knoweth how to pray for all. Pray for thy servants, that they may serve God, that their life in thine house may be of use to them. That is an ill house where the servants are unprayed for. I should not like to be waited upon by one for whom I could not pray, Perhaps the day when this world shall perish will be the day unbrightened by a prayer; and perhaps the day when a great misdeed was done by some man, was the day when his friends left off praying for him. Pray for your households.

And then pray for the *Church*. Let the minister have a place in your heart. Mention his name at your family altar, and in your closet. You expect him to come before you day after day, to teach you the things of the kingdom, and exhort and stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. If he be a true minister, there will be work to be done in this matter. He cannot write his sermon and read it to you; he does not believe Christ said, "Go and *read* the gospel to every creature." Dost thou know the cares of a minister? Dost thou know the trouble he has with his own church - how the erring ones do grieve him, how even the right ones do vex his spirit by their infirmities - how, when the church is large, there will always be some great trouble in the hearts of some of his people? And he is the reservoir of all: they come to him with all their grief; he is to "weep with them that weep." And in the pulpit what is his work? God is my witness, I scarcely ever prepare for my pulpit with pleasure: study for the pulpit is to me the most irksome work in the world I have never come into this house that I know of with a smile upon mine heart; I may have sometimes gone out with one; but never have I had one when I entered. Preach, preach, twice a day I can and will do, but still there is a travailing in preparation for it, and even the utterance is not always accompanied with joy and gladness, and God knoweth that if it were not for the good that we trust is to be accomplished by the preaching of the Word, it is no happiness to a man's life to be well known. It robs him of all comfort to be from morning to night heated for labor, to have no rest for the sole of his foot or for his brain - to be a great religious hack - to bear every burden - to have people asking, as they do in the country, when they want to get into a cart, "Will it hold it?" - never thinking whether the horse can drag it; to have them asking, "Will you preach at such a place? you are

preaching twice, couldn't you manage to get to such a place, and preach again?" Every one else has a constitution; the minister has none, until he kills himself and is condemned as imprudent. If you are determined to do your duty in that place to which God has called you, you need the prayers of your people, that you may be able to do the work, and you will need their abundant prayers that you may be sustained in it. I bless God that I have a valiant corps of men, who day without night besiege God's throne on my behalf. I would speak to you, my brethren and sisters, again, and beseech you, by our loving days that are past, by all the hard fighting that we have had side by side with each other, not to cease to pray now. The time was when in hours of trouble, you and I have bended our knees together in God's house and we have prayed to God that he would give us a blessing. You remember how great and sore troubles did roll over our head - how men did ride over us. We went through fire and through water, and now God has brought us into a large place, and so multiplied us, let us not cease to pray. Let us still cry out unto the living God, that he may give us a blessing. Oh! may God help me, if you cease to pray for me! Let me know the day, and I must cease to preach. Let me know when you intend to cease your prayers, and I shall cry, "O my God, give me this day my tomb, and let me slumber in the dust."

And lastly, let me bid you pray *for the church at large*. This is a happy time we live in. A certain race of croaking souls, who are never pleased with anything, are always crying out about the badness of the times. They cry, "Oh! for the good old times!" Why, these are the good old times, time never was so old as it is now. These are the best times. I do think that many an old puritan would jump out of his grave if he knew what was doing now. If they could have been told of the great movement at Exeter Hall, there is many a man among them who once fought against the Church of England, who would lift his hand to heaven, and cry, "My God, I bless thee that I see such a day as this!" In these times there is a breaking down of many of the barriers. The bigots are afraid; they are crying out most desperately, because they think God's people will soon love each other too well. They are afraid that the trade of persecution will soon be done with, if we begin to be more and more united. So they are making an outcry, and saying, "These are not good times." But true lovers of God will say they have not lived in better days than these; and they all

hopefully look for greater things still. Unless you professors of religion are eminently in earnest in prayer, you will disgrace yourselves by neglecting the finest opportunity that ever men had. I do think that your fathers who lived in days when great men were upon earth, who preached with much power - I do think, if they had not prayed, they would have been as unfaithful as you will be. For now the good ship floats upon a flood tide: sleep now, and you will not cross the bar at the harbour's mouth. Never did the sun of prosperity seem to shine much more fully on the church during the last hundred years than now. Now is your time, neglect now to sow your seed in this good time of seed-sowing; neglect now to reap your harvest in these good days when it is ripe, and darker days may come, and those of peril, when God shall say, "Because they would not cry to me, when I stretched out my hands to bless them, therefore will I put away my hand, and will no more bless them, until again they shall seek me."

And now to close. I have a young man here who has been lately converted. His parents cannot bear him; they entertain the strongest opposition to him, and they threaten him that if he does not leave off praying they will turn him out of doors. Young man! I have a little story to tell you. There was once a young man in your position: he had begun to pray, and his father knew it. He said to him, "John, you know I am an enemy to religion, and prayer is a thing that never shall be offered in my house." Still the young man continued earnest in supplication. "Well," said the father one day, in a hot passion, "you must give up either God or me. I solemnly swear that you shall never darken the threshold of my door again, unless you decide that you will give up praying. I give you till to-morrow morning to choose. The night was spent in prayer by the young disciple. He rose in the morning, sad to be cast away by his friends, but resolute in spirit, that come what might he would serve his God. The father abruptly accosted him - "Well, what is the answer?" "Father," he said, "I cannot violate my conscience, I cannot forsake my God." "Leave immediately," said he. And the mother stood there; the father's hard spirit had made hers hard too and though she might have wept she concealed her tears. "Leave immediately" said he. Stepping outside the threshold the young man said, "I wish you would grant me one request before I go; and if you grant me that, I will never trouble you again."

"Well," said the father, "you shall have anything you like, but mark me, you go after you have had that; you shall never have anything again." "It is," said the son, "that you and my mother would kneel down, and let me pray for you before I go." Well, they could hardly object to it; the young man was on his knees in a moment, and began to pray with such unction and power, with such evident love to their souls, with such true and divine earnestness, that they both fell flat on the ground, and when the son rose there they were; and the father said, "You need not go, John; come and stop, come and stop;" and it was not long before not only he, but the whole of them began to pray and they were united to a Christian Church. So do not give way. Persevere kindly but firmly. It may be that God shall enable you not only to have your own souls saved, but to be the means of bringing your persecuting parents to the foot of the cross. That such may be the case is our earnest prayer.

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Preach The Gospel

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. - 1 Corinthians 9:16

The greatest man of Apostolic times was the apostle Paul. He was always great in everything. If you consider him as a sinner, he was *exceeding* sinful; if you regard him as a persecutor, he was *exceeding* mad against the Christians, and persecuted them even unto strange cities, if you take him as a convert, his conversion was the most notable one of which we read, worked by miraculous power, and by the direct voice of Jesus speaking from heaven - "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" - If we take him simply as a Christian, he was an extraordinary one, loving his

Master more than others, and seeking more than others to exemplify the grace of God in his life. But if you take him as an apostle, and as a preacher of the Word, he stands out pre-eminent as the prince of preachers, and a preacher to kings - for he preached before Agrippa, he preached before Nero Caesar - he stood before emperors and kings for Christ's name's sake. It was the characteristic of Paul, that whatever he did, he did with all his heart. He was one of the men who could not allow one half of his frame to be exercised, while the other half was indolent but, when he set to work, the whole of his energies - every nerve, every sinew - were strained in the work to be done, be it bad work or be it good. Paul, therefore, could speak from experience concerning his ministry; because he was the chief of ministers. There is no nonsense in what he speaks; it is all from the depth of his soul. And we may be sure that when he wrote this, he wrote it with a strong unpalsied hand - "Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

Now, these words of Paul, I trust, are applicable to many ministers in the present day; to all those who are especially called, who are directed by the inward impulse of the Holy Spirit to occupy the position of gospel ministers. In trying to consider this verse, we shall have three inquiries this morning: - First, *What is it to preach the gospel?* Secondly, *Why is it that a minister has nothing to glorify of?* And thirdly, *What is that necessity and that woe, of which it is written, "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel?"*

I. The first enquiry is, WHAT IS IT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL? There are a variety of opinions concerning this question, and possibly amongst my own audience - though I believe we are very uniform in our doctrinal sentiments - there might be found two or three very ready answers to this question: What is it to preach the gospel? I shall therefore attempt to answer it myself according to my own judgment, if God will help me; and if it does not happen to be the correct answer, you are at liberty to supply a better to yourselves at home.

1. The first answer I shall give to the question is this: *To preach the gospel is to state every doctrine contained in God's Word, and to give*

every truth its proper prominence. Men may preach a part of the gospel; they may only preach one single doctrine of it; and I would not say that a man did not preach the gospel at all if he did but maintain the doctrine of justification by faith - "By grace are ye saved through faith." I should put him down for a gospel minister, but not for one who preached the whole gospel. No man can be said to preach the whole gospel of God if he leaves it out, knowingly and intentionally, one single truth of the blessed God. This remark of mine must be a very cutting one, and ought to strike into the consciences of many who make it almost a matter of principle to keep back certain truths from the people, because they are afraid of them. In conversation, a week or two ago, with an eminent professor, he said to me, "Sir, we know that we ought not to preach the doctrine of election, because it is not calculated to convert sinners." "But," said I to him, "who is the man that dares to find fault with the truth of God? You admit, with me, that it is a truth, and yet you say it must not be preached. I dare not have said that thing. I should reckon it supreme arrogance to have ventured to say that a doctrine ought not to be preached when the all-wise God has seen fit to reveal it. Besides, is the whole gospel intended to convert sinners? There are some truths which God blesses to the conversion of sinners; but are there not other portions which were intended for the comfort of the saint? and ought not these to be a subject of gospel ministry as well as the others? And shall I look at one and disregard the other? No: if God says, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people' if election comforts God's people, then must I preach it." But I am not quite so sure, that after all, that doctrine is not calculated to convert sinners. For the great Jonathan Edwardes tells us, that in the greatest excitement of one of his revivals, he preached the sovereignty of God in the salvation or condemnation of man, and showed that God was infinitely just if he sent men to hell! that he was infinitely merciful if he saved any; and that it was all of his own free grace, and he said, "I found no doctrine caused more thought nothing entered more deeply into the heart than the proclamation of that truth." The same might be said of other doctrines. There are certain truths in God's word which are condemned to silence; they, forsooth, are not to be uttered, because, according to the theories of certain persons, looking at these doctrines, they are not calculated to promote certain ends. But is it for me to judge God's truth? Am I to put his words in the scale, and say, "This is good,

and that is evil?' Am I to take God's Bible, and sever it and say, "this is husk, and this is wheat?" Am I to cast away any one truth, and say, "I dare not preach it?" No: God forbid. Whatsoever is written in God's Word is written for our instruction: and the whole of it is profitable, either for reproof, or for consolation, or for edification in righteousness. No truth of God's Word ought to be withheld, but every portion of it preached in its own proper order.

Some men purposely confine themselves to four or five topics continually. Should you step into their chapel, you would naturally expect to hear them preaching, either from this, "Not of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God," or else, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." You know that the moment you step in you are sure to hear nothing but election and high doctrine that day. Such men err also, quite as much as others, if they give too great prominence to one truth to the neglect of the others. Whatsoever is here to be preached, "all it whatever name you please, write it high, write it low - the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the standard of the true Christian. Alas! alas! many make an iron ring of their doctrines, and he who dares to step beyond that narrow circle, is not reckoned orthodox. God bless heretics, then! God send us more of them! Many make theology into a kind of treadmill, consisting of five doctrines, which are everlastingly rotated; for they never go on to anything else. There ought to be every truth preached. And if God has written in his word that "he that believeth not is condemned already," *that* is as much to be preached as the truth that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." If I find it written, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," that man's condemnation is his own fault, I am to preach that as well as the next clause, "In me is thy help found." We ought, each of us who are entrusted with the ministry, to seek to preach all truth. I know it may be impossible to tell you all of it. That high hill of truth hath mists upon its summit. No mortal eye can see its pinnacle; nor hath the foot of man ever trodden it. But yet let us paint the mist, if we cannot paint the summit. Let us depict the difficulty itself if we cannot unravel it. Let us not hide anything, but if the mountain of truth be cloudy at the top, let us say, "Clouds and darkness are around him," Let us not deny it; and let us not think of cutting down the mountain to our own standard, because we cannot see its summit or

cannot reach its pinnacle. He who would preach the gospel must preach all the gospel. He who would have it said he is a faithful minister, must not keep back any part of revelation.

2. Again, am I asked what it is to preach the gospel? I answer *to preach the gospel is to exalt Jesus Christ*. Perhaps this is the best answer that I could give. I am very sorry to see very often how little the gospel is understood even by some of the best Christians. Some time ago there was a young woman under great distress of soul; she came to a very pious Christian man, who said "My dear girl, you must go home and pray." Well I thought within myself, that is not the Bible way at all. It never says, "Go home and pray." The poor girl went home; she did pray, and she still continued in distress. Said he, "You must wait, you must read the Scriptures and study them." That is not the Bible way; that is not exalting Christ; find a great many preachers are preaching that kind of doctrine. They tell a poor convinced sinner, "You must go home and pray, and read the Scriptures; you must attend the ministry;" and so on. Works, works, works - instead of "By grace are ye saved through faith," If a penitent should come and ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I would say, "Christ must save you - believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I would neither direct to prayer, nor reading of the Scriptures nor attending God's house; but simply direct to faith, naked faith on God's gospel. Not that I despise prayer - that must come after faith. Not that I speak a word against the searching of the Scriptures - that is an infallible mark of God's children. Not that I find fault with attendance on God's word - God forbid! I love to see people there. But none of those things are the way of salvation. It is nowhere written - "He that attendeth chapel shall be saved," or, "He that readeth the Bible shall be saved." Nor do I read - "He that prayeth and is baptised shall be saved;" but, "He that believeth," - he that has a naked faith on the "Man Christ Jesus," - on his Godhead, on his manhood, is delivered from sin. To preach that faith alone saves, is to preach God's truth. Nor will I for one moment concede to any man the name of a gospel minister, if he preaches anything as the plan of salvation except faith in Jesus Christ, faith, faith, nothing but faith in his name. But we are, most of us, very much muddled in our ideas. We get so much work stored into our brain, such an idea of merit and of doing, wrought into our hearts, that it is almost impossible for us to

preach justification by faith clearly and fully; and when we do, our people won't receive it. We tell them, "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But they have a notion that faith is something so wonderful, so mysterious, that it is quite impossible that without doing something else they can ever get it. Now, that faith which unites to the Lamb is an instantaneous gift of God, and he who believes on the Lord Jesus is that moment saved, without anything else whatsoever. Ah! my friends, do we not want more exalting Christ in our preaching, and more exalting Christ in our living? Poor Mary said, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him," And she might say so now-a-days if she could rise from the grave. Oh! to have a Christ-exalting ministry! Oh! to have preaching that magnifies Christ in his person, that extols his divinity, that loves his humanity; to have preaching that shows him as prophet, priest, and king to his people! to have preaching whereby the spirit manifests the Son of God unto his children: to have preaching that says, "Look unto him and be ye saved all the ends of the earth," - Calvary preaching, Calvary theology, Calvary books, Calvary sermons! These are the things we want, and in proportion as we have Calvary exalted and Christ magnified, the gospel is preached in our midst.

3. The third answer to the question is: *to preach the gospel is to give every class of character his due.* "You are only to preach to God's dear people, if you go into that pulpit," said a deacon once to a minister. Said the minister, "Have you marked them all on the back, that I may know them?" What is the good of this large chapel if I am only to preach to God's dear people? They are few enough. God's dear people might be held in the vestry. We have many more here besides God's dear people, and how am I to be sure, if I am told to preach only to God's dear people, that somebody else wont take it to himself? At another time some one might say, "Now, be sure you preach to sinners. If you do not preach to sinners this morning, you won't preach the gospel. We shall only hear you once; and we shall be sure you are not right if you do not happen to preach to sinner this particular morning, in this particular sermon." What nonsense, my friends! There are times when the children must be fed, and there are times when the sinner must be warned. There are different times for different objects. If a man is preaching to God's saints if it so

happen that little is said to sinners, is he to be blamed for it, provided that at another time when he is not comforting the saints, he directs his attention specially to the ungodly? I heard a good remark from an intelligent friend of mine the other day. A person was finding fault with "Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions" because they were not calculated to convert sinners. He said to the gentleman, "Did you ever read; 'Grote's History of Greece?'" "Yes." Well, that is a shocking book, is it not? for it is not calculated to convert sinners. "Yes, but," said the other, "'Grote's History of Greece' was never meant to convert sinners." "No," said my friend, "and if you had read the preface to 'Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portion,' you would see that it was never meant to convert sinners, but to feed God's people, and if it answers its end the man has been wise, though he has not aimed at some other end." Every class of person is to have his due. He who preaches solely to saints at all times does not preach the gospel; he who preaches solely and only to the sinner; and never to the saint, does not preach the whole of the gospel. We have amalgamation here. We have the saint who is full of assurance and strong; we have the saint who is weak and low in faith; we have the young convert; we have the man halting between two opinions; we have the moral man; we have the sinner; we have the reprobate; we have the outcast. Let each have a word. Let each have a portion of meat in due season; not at every season, but in *due* season. He who omits one class of character does not know how to preach the entire gospel. What! Am I to be put into the pulpit and to be told that I am to confine myself to certain truths only, to comfort God's saints? I will not have it so. God gives men hearts to love their fellow-creatures, and are they to have no development for that heart? If I love the ungodly am I to have no means of speaking to them? May I not tell them of judgment to come, of righteousness, and of their sin? God forbid I should so stultify my nature and so brutalize myself, as to have a tearless eye when I consider the loss of my fellow creatures, and to stand and say "Ye are dead, I have nothing to say to you!" and to preach in effect if not in words that most damnable heresy, that if men are to be bayed they will be saved - that if they are not to be saved they will not be saved; that necessarily, they must sit still and do nothing whatever; and that it matters not whether they live in sin or in righteousness - some strong fate has bound them down with adamant chains; and their destiny is so certain that they may live on in sin. I

believe their destiny is certain - that as elect, they will be saved, and if not elect they are damned for ever. But I do not believe the heresy that follows as an inference that therefore men are irresponsible and may sit still. That is a heresy against which I have ever protested, as being a doctrine of the devil and not of God at all. We believe in destiny; we believe in predestination; we believe in election and non-election: but, notwithstanding that, we believe that we must preach to men, "He Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved," but believe not on him and ye are damned.

4. I had thought of giving one more answer to this question, but time fails me. The answer would have been somewhat like this - that to preach the gospel is not to preach certain truths *about* the gospel, not to preach *about* the people, but to preach *to* the people. To preach the gospel is not to talk about what the gospel is, but to preach it into the heart, not by your own might, but by the influence of the Holy Ghost - not to stand and talk as if we were speaking to the angel Gabriel, and telling him certain things, but to speak as man to man and pour our heart in to our fellow's heart. This I take it, is to preach the gospel, and not to mumble some dry manuscript over on Sunday morning or Sunday evening. To preach the gospel is not to send a curate to do your duty for you; it is not to put on your fine gown and then stand and give out some lofty speculation. To preach the gospel is not, with the hands of a bishop, to turn over some beautiful specimen of prayer, and then to go down again and leave it to some humbler person to speak. Nay; to preach the gospel is to proclaim with trumpet tongue and flaming zeal the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, so that men may hear, and understanding, may turn to God with full purpose of heart. This is to preach the gospel.

II. The second question is - How IS IT THAT MINISTERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GLORY? "For though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glorify it." There are some weeds that will grow anywhere; and one of them is Pride. Pride will grow on a rock as well as in a garden. Pride will grow in the heart of a shoe-black as well as in the heart of an alderman. Pride will grow in the heart of a servant girl and equally as well in the heart of her mistress. And pride will grow in the pulpit. It is a weed that is dreadfully rampant. It wants cutting down every week, or else we should

stand up to our knees in it. This pulpit is a shocking bad soil for pride. It grows terribly; and I scarcely know whether you ever find a preacher of the gospel who will not confess that he has the greatest temptation to pride. I suppose that even those ministers of whom nothing is said, but that they are very good people, and who have a City church, with some six people attending it, have a temptation to pride. But whether that is so or not, I am quite sure wherever there is a large assembly, and wherever a great deal of noise and stir is made concerning any man there is a great danger of pride. And, mark you, the more proud a man is the greater will be his fall at last. If people will hold a minister up in their hands and do not keep hold of him, but let him go, what a fall he will have, poor fellow, when it is all over. It has been so with many. Many men have been held up by the arms of men, they have been held up by the arms of *praise*, and not of *prayer*; these arms have become weak, and down they have fallen. I say there is temptation to pride in the pulpit; but there is no ground for it in the pulpit; there is no soil for pride to grow on; but it will grow without any. "I have nothing to glorify of." But, notwithstanding, there often comes in some reason why we should glory, not real, but apparent to our own selves.

1. Now, how is it that a true minister feels he has "nothing to glorify of." First, *because he is very conscious of his own imperfections*. I think no man will ever form a more just opinion of himself than he who is called constantly and incessantly to preach. Some man once thought he could preach, and on being allowed to enter the pulpit, he found his words did not come quite so freely as he expected, and in the utmost trepidation and fear, he leaned over the front of the pulpit and said "My friends, if you would come up here, it would take the conceit out of you all, I verily believe it *would* out of a great many, could they once try themselves whether they could preach. It would take their critical conceit out of them, and make them think that after all it was not such easy work. He who preaches best feels that he preaches worst. He who has set up some lofty model in his own mind of what eloquence should be, and what earnest appeal ought to be, will know how much he falls below it. He, best of all, can reprove himself when he knows his own deficiency. I do not believe when a man does a thing well, that therefore he will glory in it. On the other hand, I think that he will be the best judge of his own

imperfections, and will see them most clearly. *He* knows what he ought to be: other men do not. They stare, and gaze, and think it is wonderful, when he thinks it is wonderfully absurd and retires wondering that he has not done better. Every true minister will feel that he is deficient. He will compare himself with such men as Whitfield, with such preachers as those of puritanical times, and he will say, "What am I? Like a dwarf beside a giant, an ant-hill by the side of the mountain." When he retires to rest on Sabbath-night, he will toss from side to side on his bed, because he feels that he has missed the mark, that he has not had that earnestness, that solemnity, that death-like intensesness of purpose which became his position. He will accuse himself of not having dwelt enough on this point, or for having shunned the other, or not having been explicit enough on some certain subject, or expanded another too much. He will see his own faults, for God always chastises his own children at night-time when they have done something wrong. We need not others to reprove us; God himself takes us in hand, The most highly honored before God will often feel himself dishonored in his own esteem.

2. Again, another means of causing us to cease from all glory is the fact that God reminds us that all our gifts are borrowed. And strikingly have I this morning been reminded of that great truth - that *all our gifts are borrowed*, by reading in a newspaper to the following effect: -

"Last week, the quiet neighborhood of New Town was much disturbed by an occurrence which has thrown a gloom over the entire neighborhood. A gentleman of considerable attainment, who has won an honorable degree at the university has for some months been deranged. He had kept an academy for young gentlemen, but his insanity had obliged him to desist from his occupation, and he has for some time lived alone in a house in the neighborhood. The landlord obtained a warrant of ejection; and it being found necessary to handcuff him, he was, by sad mismanagement, compelled to remain on the steps, exposed to the gaze of a great crowd, until at last a vehicle arrived, which conveyed him to the asylum. One of his pupils (says the paper) is Mr. Spurgeon."

The man from whom I learned whatever of human learning I have, has now become a raving lunatic in the Asylum! When I saw that, I felt I

could bend my knee with humble gratitude and thank my God that not yet had my reason reeled, not yet had those powers departed. Oh! how thankful we ought to be that our talents are preserved to us, and that our mind is not gone! Nothing came nearer and closer to me than that. There was one who had taken all pains with me - a man of genius and of ability; and yet there he is! how fallen! how fallen! How speedily does human nature come from its high estate and sink below the level of the brutes? Bless God my friends, for your talents! thank him for your reason! thank him for your intellect! Simple as it may be, it is enough for you, and if you lost it you would soon mark the difference. Take heed to yourself lest in aught you say. "This is Babylon that I have builded;" for, remember, both trowel and mortar must come from him. The life, the voice, the talent, the imagination, the eloquence - all are the gift of God; and he who has the greatest gifts must feel that unto God belong the shield of the mighty, for he has given might to his people, and strength unto his servants.

3. One more answer to this question. Another means whereby God preserves his ministers from glorying is this: *He makes them feel their constant dependance upon the Holy Ghost*. Some do not feel it, I confess. Some will venture to preach without the Spirit of God, or without entreating it. But I think that no man, who is really commissioned from on high, will ever venture to do so, but he will feel that he needs the Spirit. Once, while preaching in Scotland, the Spirit of God was pleased to desert me, I could not speak as usually I have done. I was obliged to tell the people that the chariot wheels were taken off; and that the chariot dragged very heavily along. I have felt the benefit of that ever since. It humbled me bitterly, for I could have crept into a nut-shell, and I would have hidden myself in any obscure corner of the earth. I felt as if I should speak no more in the name of the Lord, and then the thought came "Oh! thou art an ungrateful creature: hath not God spoken by thee hundreds of times? And this once, when he would not do so wilt thou upbraid him for it? Nay, rather thank him, that a hundred times he hath stood by thee; and, if once he hath forsaken thee, admire his goodness, that thus he would keep thee humble." Some may imagine that want of study brought me into that condition, but I can honestly affirm, that it was not so. I think that I am bound to give myself unto reading, and not tempt the Spirit by unthought-of effusions. Usually, I deem it a duty to seek a

sermon of my Master and implore him to impress it on my mind, but on that occasion, I think I had even prepared more carefully than I ordinarily do, so that unpreparedness was not the reason. The simple fact was this - "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" and winds do not always blow hurricanes. Sometimes the winds themselves are still. And, therefore, if I rest on the Spirit, I cannot expect I should always feel its power alike. What could I do without the celestial influence, for to that I owe everything. By this thought God humbles his servants. God will teach us how much we want it. He will not let us think we are doing anything ourselves. "Nay, says he, "thou shalt have none of the glory. I will take thee down. Art thou thinking 'I am doing this?' I will show thee what thou art without me "Out goes Samson. He attacks the Philistines. He fancies he can slay them; but they are on him. His eyes are out. His glory is gone, because he trusted not in his God, but rested in himself. Every minister will be made to feel his dependence upon the Spirit; and then will he, with emphasis, say, as Paul did, "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glorify of."

III. Now comes the third question, with which we are to finish WHAT IS THAT NECESSITY WHICH IS LAID UPON US TO PREACH THY GOSPEL?

1. First, *a very great part of that necessity springs from the call itself*: If a man be truly called of God to the ministry, I will defy him to withhold himself from it. A man who has really within him the inspiration of the Holy Ghost calling him to preach cannot help it. He must preach. As fire within the bones, so will that influence be until it blazes forth. Friends may check him, foes criticise him, despisers sneer at him, the man is indomitable; he must preach if he has the call of heaven. All earth might forsake him; but he would preach to the barren mountain-tops. If he has the call of heaven, if he has no congregation, he would preach to the rippling waterfalls, and let the brooks hear his voice. He could not be silent. He would become a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." I no more believe it possible to stop ministers, than to stop the stars of heaven. I think it no more possible to make a man cease from preaching, if he is really called, than to stop some mighty cataract, by seeking, with an infant's cup, to drink its waters. The man has been

moved of heaven, who shall stop him? He has been touched of God, who shall impede him? With an eagle's wing he must fly; who shall chain him to the earth? With seraph's voice he must speak, who shall stop his lips? Is not his word like a fire within me? Must I not speak if God has placed it there? And when a man does speak as the Spirit gives him utterance, he will feel a holy joy akin to heaven; and when it is over he wishes to be at his work again, and longs to be once more preaching. I do not think young men are called of God to any great work who preach once a week, and think they have done their duty. I think if God has called a man, he will impel him to be more or less constantly at it, and he will feel that he must preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. But another thing will make us preach: we shall feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel; and that is *the sad destitution of this poor fallen world*. Oh, minister of the gospel! stand for one moment and bethink thyself of thy poor fellow creatures! See them like a stream, rushing to eternity - ten thousand to their endless home each solemn moment fly! See the termination of that stream, that tremendous cataract which dashes streams of souls into the pit! Oh, minister, bethink thyself that men are being damned each hour by thousands, and that each time thy pulse beats another soul lifts up its eyes in hell, being in torments; bethink thyself how men are speeding on their way to destruction, how "the love of many waxeth cold" and "iniquity doth abound." I say, is there not a necessity laid upon thee? Is it not woe unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel? Take thy walk one evening through the streets of London when the dusk has gathered, and darkness veils the people. Mark you not yon profligate hurrying on to her accursed work? See you not thousands and tens of thousands annually ruined? Up from the hospital and the asylum there comes a voice, "Woe is unto you if ye preach not the gospel." Go to that huge place built around with massive walls, enter the dungeons, and see the thieves who have for years spent their lives in sin. Wend your way sometimes to that sad square of Newgate, and see the murderer hanged. A voice shall come from each house of correction, from each prison, from each gallows, saying, "Woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." Go thou to the thousand death-beds, and mark how men are perishing in ignorance, not knowing the ways of God. See their terror as they approach their Judge, never having known what it

was to be saved, not even knowing the way; and as you see them quivering before their Maker, hear a voice, "Minister, woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." Or take another course. Travel round this great metropolis, and stop at the door of some place where there is heard the tinkling of bells, chanting and music, but where the whore of Babylon hath her sway, and lies are preached for truth; and when thou comest home and thinkest of Popery and Puseyism, let a voice come to thee, "Minister woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." Or step into the hall of the infidel where he blasphemes thy Maker's name; or sit in the theater where plays, libidinous and loose are acted, and from all these haunts of vice there comes the voice, "Minister, woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." And take thy last solemn walk down to the chambers of the lost; let the abyss of hell be visited, and stand thou and hear

"The sullen groans, the hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts."

Put thine ear at hell's gate, and for a little while list to the commingled screams and shrieks of agony and fell despair that shall lend thine ear; and as thou comest from that sad place with that doleful music still affrighting thee, thou wilt hear the voice, "Minister! minister! woe is unto thee if thou preaches not the gospel." Only let us have these things before our eyes, and we must preach. *Stop preaching! Stop preaching!* Let the sun stop shining, and we will preach in darkness. Let the waves stop their ebb and flow, and still our voice shall preach the gospel, let the world stop its revolutions, let the planets stay their motion; we will still preach the gospel. Until the fiery center of this earth shall burst through the thick ribs of her brazen mountains, we shall still preach the gospel; till the universal conflagration shall dissolve the earth, and matter shall be swept away, these lips, or the lips of some others called of God, shall still thunder forth the voice of Jehovah. We cannot help it. "Necessity is laid upon us, yea woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel.

Now, my dear hearers, one word with you. There are some persons in this audience who are verily guilty in the sight of God because *they* do not preach the gospel. I cannot think out of the fifteen hundred or two

thousand persons now present, within the reach of my voice, there are none who are qualified to preach the gospel besides myself. I have not so bad an opinion of you as to conceive myself to be superior in intellect to one half of you, or even in the power of preaching God's Word: and even supposing I should be, I cannot believe that I have such a congregation that there are not among you many who have gifts and talents that qualify you to preach the Word. Among the Scotch Baptists it is the custom to call upon all the brethren to exhort on the Sabbath morning; they have no regular minister to preach on that occasion, but every man preaches who likes to get up and speak. That is all very well, only, I fear, many unqualified brethren would be the greatest speakers, since it is a known fact, that men who have little to say will often keep on the longest; and if I were chairman, I should say, "Brother, it is written, 'Speak to edification.' I am sure you would not edify yourself and your wife, you had better go and try that first, and if you cannot succeed, don't waste our precious time."

But still I say, I cannot conceive but what there are some here this morning who are flowers "wasting their sweetness in the desert air, "gems of purest ray serene," lying in the dark caverns of ocean's oblivion. This is a very serious question. If there be any talent in the Church at Park Street, let it be developed. If there be any preachers in my congregation let them preach. Many ministers make it a point to check young men in this respect. There is my hand, such as it is, to help any one of you if you think you can tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour you have found. I would like to find scores of preachers among you; would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets. There are some here who ought to be prophets, only they are half afraid - well, we must devise some scheme of getting rid of their bashfulness. I cannot bear to think that while the devil sets all his servants to work there should be one servant of Jesus Christ asleep. Young man, go home and examine thyself, see what thy abilities are, and if thou findest that thou hast ability, then try in some poor humble room to tell to a dozen poor people what they must do to be saved. You need not aspire to become absolutely and solely dependent upon the ministry, but if it should please God, even desire it. He that desireth a bishopric desireth a good thing. At any rate seek in some way to be preaching the gospel of God. I have preached this sermon especially,

because I want to commence a movement from this place which shall reach others. I want to find some in my church, if it be possible, who will preach the gospel. And mark you, if you have talent and power, woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel.

But oh! my friends, if it is woe unto us if we preach not the gospel, what is the woe unto you if ye hear and receive not the gospel? May God give us both to escape from that woe! May the gospel of God be unto us the savor of life unto life, and not of death unto death.

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A Preacher From The Dead

And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. - Luke 16:31

Man is very loath to think ill of himself. The most of mankind are very prone to indulge in apologies for sin. They say, "If we had lived in better times we had been better men; if we had been born into this world under happier auspices we should have been holier; and if we had been placed in more excellent circumstances we should have been more inclined to the right." The mass of men, when they seek the cause of their sin, seek it anywhere but in the right place. They will not blame their own nature for it; they will not find fault with their own corrupt heart, but they will lay the blame anywhere else. Some of them find fault with their peculiar position. "If," says one, "I had been born rich, instead of being poor, I should not have been dishonest." "Or if," says another, "I had been born in middle life, instead of being rich, I should not have been exposed to such temptations to lust and pride as I am now; but my very condition is so adverse to piety, that I am compelled by the place I hold in society, to be anything but what I ought to be." Others turn round and find fault with the whole of society; they say that the whole organism of society is

wrong; they tell us that everything in government, everything that concerns the state, everything which melts men into commonwealths, is all so bad that they cannot be good while things are what they are. They must have a revolution, they must upset everything; and then they think they could be holy! Many on the other hand throw the blame on their training. If they had not been so brought up by their parents, if they had not been so exposed in their youth, they would not have been what they are. It is their parent's fault; the sin lay at their father's or their mother's door. Or it is their constitution. Hear them speak for themselves, "If I had such a temper as so-and-so, what a good man I would be! But with my headstrong disposition it is impossible. It is all very well for you to talk to me but men have different turns of mind, and my turn of mind is such that I could not by any means be a serious character;" and so he throws the blame on his constitution. Others go a deal farther, and throw the blame on the ministry. "If," say they, "at one time the minister had been more earnest in preaching, I should have been a better man; if it had been my privilege to sit under sounder doctrine and hear the Word more faithfully preached, I should have been better." Or else they lay it at the door of professors of religion, and say, "If the church were more consistent, if there were no hypocrites and no formalists: then we should reform!" Ah! sirs, you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse, you are laying the burden on the wrong back; the blame is in your hearts, nowhere else. If your hearts were renewed you would be better; but until that is done, if society were remodelled to perfection, if ministers were angels, and professors of religion were seraphs, you would be none the better; but having less excuse for your sin, you would be doubly guilty, and perish with a more terrible destruction. But yet men will always be having it, that if things were different they would be different too, whereas, the difference must be made in themselves, if they begin in the right place.

Amongst other whims which have occurred to the human mind, such an one as that of my text may sometimes have arisen. "If," said the rich man in hell, "if one should arise from the dead, if Lazarus should go from heaven to preach, my hardened brethren would repent." And some have been apt to say, "If my aged father, or some venerable patriarch could rise from the dead and preach, we should all of us turn to God." That is

another way of casting the blame in the wrong quarter: we shall endeavor, if we can, to refute such a supposition as that this morning, and affirm most strenuously the doctrine of the text, that "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Let us proceed with this subject.

Suppose a preacher should come from another world to preach to us, we must naturally suppose that he came from heaven. Even the rich man did not ask that he or any of his compeers in torment might go out of hell to preach. Spirits that are lost and given up to unutterable wickedness, could not visit this earth; and if they did they could not preach the truth, nor lead us on the road to heaven which they had not trodden themselves. The advent of a damned spirit upon earth would be a curse, a blight, a withering blast, we need not suppose that such a thing ever did or could occur. The preacher from another world, if such could come, must come from heaven. He must be a Lazarus who had lain in Abraham's bosom, a pure, perfect, and holy being. Now, imagine for a moment that such an one had descended upon earth; suppose that we heard to-morrow a sudden piece of news - that a venerable spirit, who had been a long time buried, had on a sudden burst his cerements, lifted up his coffin-lid, and was now preaching the word of life. Oh! what a rush there would be to hear him preach! What place in this wide world would be large enough to hold his massive congregations! How would you rush to listen to him! How many thousands of portraits would be published of him, representing him in the dread winding-sheet of death, or as an angel fresh from heaven. Oh! how would this city be stirred: and not this city only, but this whole land! Nations far remote would soon hear the news; and every ship would be freighted with passengers, bringing men and women to hear this wondrous preacher and traveler who had returned from the bourne unknown. And how would you listen? And how solemnly would you gaze at that unearthly spectre! And how would your ears be attent to his every word! His faintest syllable would be caught and published everywhere throughout the world - the utterances of a man who had been dead and was alive again. And we are very apt to suppose, that if such a thing should happen, there would be numberless conversions, for surely the congregations thus attracted would be immensely blest. Many hardened sinners would be led to repent;

hundreds of halts would be made to decide, and great good would be done. Ah! stop, though the first part of the fairy dream should occur, yet would not the last. If some one should rise from the dead, yet would sinners no more repent through his preaching than through the preaching of any other. God might bless such preaching to salvation, if he pleased; but in itself there would be no more power in the preaching of the sheeted dead, or of the glorified spirit, than there is in the preaching of feeble man to-day. "Though one should rise from the dead, they would not repent."

But yet, many men would suppose that advantages would arise from the resurrection of a saint, who could testify to what he had seen and heard. Now, the advantages, I suppose, could only be three. Some would say there would be advantage *in the strength of evidence which such a man could give to the truth of Scripture*; for you would say, "If a man did actually come from the pearly-gated city of Jerusalem, the home of the blest, then there would be no more dispute about the truth of revelation. That would be settled." Some would suppose that he could tell us more than Moses and the prophets had told us, and that there would be *an advantage in the instruction which he could confer*, as well as in the evidence which he would bear. And, thirdly, there may be some who suppose that it would be an advantage gained *in the manner in which such an one would speak*, "For surely," say they, "he would speak with great eloquence, with a far mightier power, and with a deeper feeling than any common preacher who had never beheld the solemnities of another world." Now, these three points one after another, and we think we will settle them.

I. First, it is thought that if one did come from the dead to preach, there would be A CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, and a testimony borne at which jeering infidelity would stand aghast in silence. Stop, we will see about that. We do not think so. We believe that the resurrection of one dead man to-day, to come into this hall and preach, would be no confirmation of the gospel to any person here present who does not believe it already.

If, my friends, the testimony of one man who had been raised from the

dead were of any value for the confirming of the gospel; *would not God have used it before now?* This shall be my first argument. It is undoubtedly true that some have risen from the dead. We find accounts in Holy Scripture of some men who by the power of Christ Jesus, or through the instrumentality of prophets, were raised from the dead; but ye will note this memorable fact, that they never any of them spoke one word which is recorded, by way of telling us what they saw while they were dead. I shall not enter into any discussion as to whether their souls slept during the time of their death, or whether they were in heaven or not. That would be a discussion without profit, only generating disputes, which could yield no fruit. I only say, it is memorable that there is not a record of any one of them having given any description of what they saw while they were dead. Oh, what secrets might he have told out, who had laid in his grave four days! Do ye not suppose that his sisters questioned him? Do ye not think that they asked him what he saw - whether he had stood before the burning throne of God, and been judged for the things done in his body, and whether he had entered into rest? But, however they may have asked, it is certain he gave no answer, for had he given an answer we should have known it now; tradition would have cherished the record. And do ye remember, when Paul once preached a long sermon, even until midnight, there was a young man in the third loft named Eutychus, who fell asleep, and fell down, and was taken up dead? Paul came down and prayed, and Eutychus was restored to life. But did Eutychus get up and preach after he had come from the dead? No; the thought never seems to have struck a single person in the assembly. Paul went on with his sermon, and they sat and listened to him, and did not care one fig about what Eutychus had seen; for Eutychus had nothing more to tell them than Paul had. Of all the number of those who by divine might have been brought again from the shades of death, I repeat the assertion, we have not one secret told; we have not one mystery unravelled by them all. Now, God knoweth best; we will not compare our surmises to divine decision. If God decided that resurrection men should be silent, it was best it should be; their testimony would have been of little worth or help to us, or else it would have been borne.

But again, I think it will strike our minds at once, that if this very day a man should rise from his tomb, and come here to affirm the truth of the

gospel, the infidel world would be no more near believing than it is now. Here comes Mr. Infidel Critic. He denies the evidences of the Bible; evidences which so clearly prove its authenticity, that we are obliged to believe him to be either blasphemous or senseless, in that he does so, and we leave him his choice between the two. But he dares to deny the truth of Holy Scripture, and will have it that all the miracles whereby it is attested are untrue and false. Do you think that one who had risen from the dead would persuade such a man as that to believe? What? when God's whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science, has only testified to the truth of revelation - when the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has but preached out the truth that the Bible was true - when every strip of land in the far-off East has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture; if men are yet unconvinced, do ye suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them? No; I see the critical blasphemer already armed for his prey. Hark to him; "I am not quite sure that you ever were dead, sir, you profess to be risen from the dead; I do not believe you. You say you have been dead, and have gone to heaven; my dear man you were in a trance. You must bring proof from the parish register that you were dead." The proof is brought that he was dead. "Well, now you must prove that you were buried." It is proved that he was buried, and it is proved that some sexton in old times, did take up his dry bones and cast his dust in the air." That is very good now I walls you to prove that you are the identical man that was buried." "Well I am, I know I am; I tell you as an honest man I have been to heaven, and I have come back again." "Well then," says the infidel, "it is not consistent with reason; it is ridiculous to suppose that a man who was dead and buried could ever come to life again, and so I don't believe you, I tell you so straight to your face." That is how men would answer him; and instead of having only the sin of denying many miracles men would have to add to it the guilt of denying another but they would not be so much as a tithe of an inch nearer to conviction; and certainly, if the wonder were done in some far-off land, and only reported to the rest of the world, I can suppose that the whole infidel world would exclaim, "Simple childish tales and such traditions have been current elsewhere; but we are sensible men, we do not believe them." Although a churchyard should start into life, and stand up before the infidel who denies the truth of Christianity; I declare I do not believe

there would be enough evidence in all the churchyards in the world to convince him. Infidelity would still cry for something more. It is like the horse-leech; it crieth, "Give, give!" Prove a point to an infidel, and he wants it proved again; let it be as clear as noon day to him from the testimony of many witnesses, yet doth he not believe it. In fact, he doth believe it; but he pretendeth not to do so, and is an infidel in spite of himself. But certainly the dead man's rising would be little worth for the conviction of such men.

But remember, my dear friends, that the most numerous class of unbelievers are a set of people who never think at all. There are a great number of people in this land that eat and drink, and everything else except think at least, they think enough to take their shop shutters down of a morning, and put them up at night; they think enough to know a little about the rising of the funds, or the rate per cent. of interest, or something like how articles are selling or the price of bread; but their brains seem to be given them for nothing at all, except to meditate upon bread and cheese. To them religion is a matter of very small concern. They dare say the Bible is very true, they dare say religion is all right; but it does not often trouble them much. They suppose they are Christians; for were they not christened when they were babies? They must be Christians - at least they suppose so, but they never sit down to enquire what religion is. They sometimes go to church and chapel and elsewhere; but it does not signify much to them. One minister may contradict another, but they do not know; they dare say they are both right. One minister may fall foul of another in almost every doctrine; it does not signify, and they pass over religion with the queer idea - "God Almighty will not ask us where we went to, I dare say." They do not exercise their judgments at all. Thinking is such hard work for them that they never trouble themselves at all about it. Now, if a man were to rise from the dead to-morrow these people would never be startled. Yes; yes, they would go and see him once, just as they go and see any other curiosity, the living skeleton, or Tom Thumb; they would talk about him a good deal, and say, "There's a man risen from the dead," and possibly some winter's evening they might read one of his sermons; but they would never give themselves trouble to think whether his testimony was worth anything or not. No, they are such blocks they never could be stirred; and

if the ghost were to come to any of their houses the most they would feel would be, they were in a fearful fright; but as to what he said, that would never exercise their leaden brains, and never stir their stony senses. Though one should rise from the dead, the great mass of these people never would be affected.

And, besides my friends, *if men will not believe the witness of God, it is impossible that they should believe the witness of man.* If the voice of God from the top of Sinai and his voice by Moses in the book of the Law, if his voice by the divers prophets in the Old Testament, and especially his own word by his own Son, who hath brought immortality to light by the gospel, cannot convince men, then there is nothing in the world that can of itself accomplish the work. No, if God speak once, but man regardeth him not, we need not wonder that we have to preach many a time without being regarded; and we should not harbour the thought that some men who had risen from the dead would have a greater power to convince than the words of God. If this Bible be not enough to convert you, apart from the Spirit? (and certainly it is not) then there is nothing in the world that can, apart from his influence; and if the revelation which God has given of his Son Jesus Christ in this blessed book, If the Holy Scripture be not in the hands of God enough to bring you to the faith of Christ, then, though an angel from heaven, then, though the saints from glory, then, though God himself should descend on earth to preach to you, you would go on unwed and unblest. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." That is the first point.

II. It is imagined, however, that if one of "the spirits of the just made perfect" would come to earth, even if he did not produce a most satisfactory testimony to the minds of sceptics, he would yet be able to give abundant information concerning the kingdom of heaven. "Surely," some would say, "if Lazarus had come from the bosom of Abraham, he could have unfolded a tale that would have made our hair stand upright, while he talked of the torments of the rich man; surely, if he had looked from the gates of bliss, he might have told us about the worm that dieth not and the fire that never can be quenched: some horrible details, some thrilling words of horror and of terror he might have uttered, which

would have unfolded to us more of the future state of the lost than we know now." "And," says the bright-eyed believer, "if he had come on earth he might have told us of the saints' everlasting rest: he might have pictured to us that glorious city which hath the Lord God for its eternal light, the streets whereof are of gold, and its gates of pearl. Oh! how sweetly would he have descanted upon the bosom of Christ, and the felicity of the blest. He had been

'Up where eternal ages roll;
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul.'

Surely he would have brought down with him some handfuls of the clusters of Eshcol; he would have been able to tell us some celestial secrets, which would have cheered our hearts, and nerved us to run the heavenly race, and put a cheerful courage on." Stop, that is a dream too. A spirit of the just descending from heaven could tell us no more that would be of any use to us than we know already. What more could that spirit from heaven tell us of the pains of hell than we do already know? Is not the Bible explicit enough? Did not the lips of Christ dreadfully portray the lake of fire? Did he not, even he who went over men, did he not in awful language tell us that God would say at last, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Do you need more thrilling words than these? "The worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." Do you need more terrible warnings than these, - "The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God?" Do you want more awful warnings than this - "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" What! do you want a fuller declaration than the words of God. "Tophet is prepared of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it?" You cannot want more than Scripture gives of that. Even that you try to run away and escape from; you say the book is too horrible, and tells you too much of damnation and hell. Sirs, if you think there is too much there, and therefore reject it, would you stand for an instant to listen to one who should tell you more? No; ye do not wish to know more, nor would it be of any use to you if you did. Do you need more details concerning the judgment, that day of wrath to which each of us is

drawing nigh? Are we not told that the king "shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all people; and he shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats." Suppose there were one here who had seen the solemn preparation for the great assize - one who had stood where the throne is to be planted, and had marked the future with a more piercing eye than ours. Yet of what avail would it be to us? Could he tell us more than Holy Writ hath told us now - at least, any which would be more profitable? Perhaps he knows no more than we. And one thing I am sure of, he would not tell us more about the rule of judgment than we know now. Spirit that hath returned from another world, tell me, how are men judged? Why are they condemned? Why are they saved? I hear him say, "Men are condemned because of sin. Read the ten commandments of Moses, and you will find the ten great condemnations whereby men are for ever cut off." I knew that before, bright Spirit; thou hast told me nothing! "No," says he, "and nothing can I tell." "Because I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was sick, and ye visited me not; I was in prison, and ye came not unto me; therefore, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me. Depart, ye cursed!" "Why, Spirit, was that the word of the King?" "It was," says he, "I have read that, too, thou hast told me no more." If you do not know the difference between right and wrong from reading the Scripture, you would not know it if a spirit should tell you; if you do not know the road to hell and the road to heaven from the Bible itself, you would never know it at all. No book could be more clear, no revelation more distinct, no testimony more plain. And since without the agency of the Spirit, these testimonies are insufficient for salvation, it follows that no further declaration would avail. Salvation is ascribed wholly to God, and man's ruin only to man. What more could a spirit tell us, than - a distinct declaration of the two great truths. - "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help found!"

Beloved, we do solemnly say again, that Holy Scripture is so perfect, so complete, that it cannot want the supplement of any declaration concerning a future state. All that you ought to know concerning the future you may know from Holy Scripture. It is not right to say with Young -

"My hopes and fears start up alarmed,
And o'er life's narrow verge look down,
On what? A bottomless abyss,
A dread eternity."

It is not right to say that, as if it were all we know. Blessed be God, the saint does not look down upon a bottomless abyss; he looks up to the celestial "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Nor do even the wicked look down upon an unknown abyss; for to them it is clearly revealed. Though "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," the tortures of the lost yet hath Holy Scripture sufficiently told us of them to make it a well-mapped road; so that when they meet with death, and hell, and terror, it shall be no new thing; for they heard of it before, and it was distinctly revealed to them. Nothing more could we know that would be of any use. Tattlers, idle curiosity people, and such like, would be mightily delighted with such a man. Ah! what a precious preacher he would be to them, if they could get him all the way from heaven, and get him to tell all its secrets out! Oh! how would they love him - how would they delight in him! "For," say they "he knows a great deal more than anybody else; he knows a great deal more than the Bible tells us; he knows a great many little details, and it is wonderful to hear him explain them!" But there the matter would end. It would be merely the gratification of curiosity; there would be no conferring of blessing; for if to know more of the future state would be a blessing for us, God would not withhold it; there can be no more told us.-If what you know would not persuade you, "Neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

III. Yet some say, SURELY, IF THERE WERE NO GAIN IN MATTER, YET THERE WOULD BE A GAIN IN MANNER. Oh, if such a spirit had descended from the spheres, how would he preach! What eloquence celestial would flow from his lips! How majestically would he word his speech! How mightily would he move his hearers! What marvellous words would he utter! What sentences that might start us from our feet, and make us quiver with their thrilling influence. There would be no dulness in such a preacher; it would be no fatigue to hear him; there would be no want of affection in him, and surely no want of earnestness;

we might well be pleased to hear him every day, and never weary with his wondrous speech. Such a preacher earth hath never heard. Oh, if he would but come! How would we listen!" - Stay! that too is a dream. I do believe that Lazarus from Abraham's bosom would not be so good a preacher as a man who has not died, but whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. Instead of his being better, I cannot see that he would be quite so good. Could a spirit from the other world speak to you more solemnly than Moses and the prophets have spoken? Or could they speak more solemnly than you have heard the word spoken to you at divers times already? O sirs, some of you have heard sermons that have been as solemn as death and as serious as the grave. I can recall to some of your memories seasons when you have sat beneath the sound of the word, wondering and trembling all the while. It seemed as if the minister had taken to himself bow and arrows, and were making your conscience the butt at which his shafts were levelled. You have not known where you were, you have been so grievously frightened and smitten with terror that your knees did knock together, and your eyes ran with tears. What more do you want than that? If that solemn preaching of some mighty preacher whom God had inspired for the time - if that did not save you, what can save you, apart from the influence of the Spirit? And oh! you have heard more solemn preaching than that. You had a little daughter once; that child of yours had been to the Sabbath-school; it came home, and was sick unto death you watched it by night and day, and the fever grew upon it; and you saw that it must die. You have not forgotten yet how your little daughter Mary preached you a sermon that was solemn indeed: just before she departed she took your hand in her little hand, and she said, "Father, I am going to heaven; will you follow me?" That was a solemn sermon to you. What more could sheeted dead have said? Ye have not forgotten yet, how when your father lay a dying - (a holy man of God he had been in his day, and served his Master well) - you with your brothers and sisters stood around the bed, and he addressed you one by one. Woman! you have not forgotten yet, despite all your sin and wickedness since then, how he looked you in the face and said, "My daughter, 'twere better for thee that thou hadst never been born than that thou shouldst be a despiser of Christ and a neglecter of his salvation." And you have not forgotten how he looked when with solemn tears in his eyes he addressed you and said, "My children, I charge you by

death and by eternity, I charge you, if you love your own souls, despise not the gospel of Christ; forsake your follies, and turn unto God and live." What preacher do you want better than that? What voice more solemn than the voice of that of your own parent upon the confines of eternity? And you have not yet quite clean escaped from the influence of another solemn scene. You had a friend, a so-called friend; he was a traitor, one who lived in sin and rebelled against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm. You remember his death-bed, when he lay near to death terrors got hold of him; the flames of hell began to get their grip of him, before he had clean departed. You have not yet forgotten his shrieks, his screams, you have not yet quite got from your vision in your dreams that hand through which the finger nails were almost pierced in agony, and that face, contorted with direful twitchings of dismay. You have not clear escaped yet from that horrid yell with which the spirit entered the realm of darkness and forsook the land of the living. What more of a preacher do you want? Have you heard this preaching, and yet have you not repented? Then verily, if after all this you are hardened, neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Ah! but you say, you want some one to preach to you more feelingly. Then, Sir, you cannot have him in the preacher you desire. A spirit from heaven could not be a feeling preacher.-It would be impossible for Lazarus, who had been in Abraham's bosom, to preach to you with emotion. As a perfect being of course he must be supremely happy. Imagine this morning a supremely happy being preaching to you, about repentance and the wrath of God. Do you not see him? there is a placid smile ever upon his brow; the light of heaven gilds his face, he is talking about the torments of hell, it was the place for sighs and groans; but he cannot sigh, his face is just as placid as ever. He is speaking of the torments of the wicked, it was the time for tears; he cannot weep; that were incompatible with blessedness. The man is preaching of dreadful things with a smile upon his face; there is summer on his brow, and winter on his lips - heaven in his eyes, and hell in his mouth. You could not bear such a preacher; he would seem to mock you. Ay, it needs a man to preach a man like yourselves, who is capable of feeling. There wants one who, when he preaches of Christ, smiles on his hearers with love - who, when he tells of terror, quails in his own spirit whilst he utters the

wrath of God. The great power of preaching, next to the power of God's Spirit, lies in the preacher's feeling it. We shall never do much good in preaching unless we feel what we utter. "*Knowing* the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." Now a glorified spirit from heaven could not feel these things; he could show but little emotion. True, he could speak of the glories of heaven; and how would his face grow brighter, and brighter, and brighter, as he told the wonders of that upper world! But when he came to cry "Flee from the wrath to come," the voice would sound as sweet when he spoke of death and judgment, as when he spoke of glory; and that would make sad discord, the sound not answering to the sense - the modulations of his voice being unfit to express the idea upon the mind. Such a preacher could not be a powerful preacher, even though he came again from the dead.

And one thing we may say, he could not preach more closely home to you than you have had the truth preached to you. I shall not say that you have had preaching put very close to you from the pulpit. I have striven to be very personal sometimes: I have not shunned to point some of you out in the congregation, and given you a word of rebuke, such as you could not mistake nor if I knew that any of you were indulging in sin would I spare you. I bless God that I am not afraid to be a personal preacher, and to shoot the arrow at each separate man when he needs it. But, nevertheless, I cannot preach home to you as I would. Ye are all thinking your neighbor is intended, when it is yourself. But you have had a personal preacher once. There was a great preacher called at your house one day; his name was Cholera and Death. A terrible preacher he! With grim words and hard accent he came and laid his hand upon your wife; and then he put his other hand on you, and you grew cold and well-nigh stiff: You remember how he preached to you then. He made your conscience ring again and again; he would not let you lie still; he cried aloud concerning your sin and your iniquity; he brought all your past life to light, and set all your evil conduct in review. From your childhood even up till then he led you through all your wanderings: and then he took the whip of the law, and began to plough your back with furrows. He affrighted you with "the wrath to come." You sent for the minister; you bade him pray; you thought you prayed yourself; and after all that, that preacher went away, and he had come on a fruitless errand; no good had been done to you;

you had been a little startled and a little stirred, but you are to-day what you were then, unsaved and unconverted. Then, sir, you would not be converted, though one rose from the dead. You have been wrecked at sea; you have been cast into the jaws of the grave by fever; you have been nearly smitten to death by accident; and yet, with all this personal preaching, and with Mr. Conscience thundering in your ears, you are to-day unconverted. Then learn this truth, that no outward means in the world can ever bring you to the footstool of divine grace and make you a Christian, if Moses and the prophets have failed. All that can be done now is this: God the Spirit must bless the word to you otherwise conscience cannot awaken you, reason cannot awaken you, powerful appeals cannot awaken you persuasion cannot bring you to Christ. Nothing will ever do it except God the Holy Spirit. Oh! do you feel that you are drawn this morning? Does some sweet hand draw you to Christ, and does some blessed voice say, "Come to Jesus, sinner; there is hope for thee." Then that IS God's Spirit. Bless him for it! He is drawing thee by the bands of love and the cords of a man. But oh, if thou be undrawn and left to thyself, thou wilt surely die. Brethren and sisters in the faith, let us lift up our prayers to God for sinners, that they may be drawn to Christ - that they may be led to come, all guilty and burdened, and look to Jesus to be lightened, and that they may be persuaded, by the coming power of the Spirit, to take Christ to be their "all-in-all," knowing that they themselves are 'nothing at all.' O God the Holy Spirit bless these words, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen and Amen.

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Preaching - Man's Privilege And God's Power

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. - Mark 6:20

The preaching of the Word hath exceeding power. John commenced his ministry as an obscure individual, a man who led an almost hermit life. He begins to preach in the wilderness of Judea, but his cry is so powerful, that ere he has spoken many days, multitudes wait upon his words. He continues, clothed in that shaggy garment, and living on the simplest of food, still to utter the same cry of preparation for the kingdom of heaven—Repent! repent! repent! And now, not only the multitude, but the teachers, the respectable part of the community, come to listen to him. The Scribes and Pharisees sit down by Jordan's banks to listen to the Baptist's word. So powerful is his preaching that many of all ranks—publicans, sinners, and soldiers,—come unto him and are baptized by him in Jordan confessing their sins. Nay, the Scribes and Pharisees themselves seek baptism at his hands. Boldly, however, he repulses them; tells them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and warns them that their descent from Abraham does not entitle them to the blessings of the coming kingdom of the great Messiah. His word rings from one end of Judea to the other. All men wonder what this can mean, and already there begins to be a feeling in the hearts of men that Messiah is at hand. Herod himself hears of John, and now you behold the spectacle of a cruel and unrighteous king sitting humbly to listen to this stern reformer. The Baptist changes not his preaching. The same boldness which had made him rebuke the common people and their teachers, now leads him to defy the wrath of Herod himself. He touches him in his most tender place, strikes his favourite sin, dashes down his idle lust to the ground, counts it his business not to speak of truth in generals but in particulars. Yea, he tells him to his very face, "It is not lawful for thee to take to thyself thy brother's wife."

Oh, what a power there is in the Word of God! I do not find that the Pharynx with all their learning had moved Herod. I discover not that the most mighty of the Grecian philosophers, or of the Gnostics who were then in existence, had any power to reach the heart of Herod. But the simple, plain preaching of John, his declaration of the Word with all honesty and simplicity, had power to pin Herod by the ear, to vibrate in his heart and to awaken his conscience, for sure we are it was awakened; if the awakening did not end in his conversion, at any rate it made him troubled in his sins so that he could not go on peaceably in iniquity. Ah, my dear friends, we want nothing in these times for revival in the world but the simple preaching of the gospel. This is the great battering ram that shall dash down the bulwarks of iniquity. This is the great light that shall scatter the darkness. We need not that men should be adopting new schemes and new plans. We are glad of the agencies and assistances which are continually arising; but after all, the true Jerusalem blade, the sword that can cut to the piercing asunder of the joints and marrow, is preaching the Word of God. We must never neglect it, never despise it. The age in which the pulpit it despised, will be an age in which gospel truth will cease to be honored. Once put away God's ministers, and you have to a great extent taken the candle out of the candlestick; quenched the lamps that God hath appointed in the sanctuary. Our missionary societies need continually to be reminded of this; they get so busy with translations, so diligently employed with the different operations of civilization, with the founding of stores, with the encouragement of commerce among a people, that they seem to neglect—at least in some degree—that which is the great and master weapon of the minister, the foolishness of preaching by which it pleases God to save them that believe. Preaching the gospel will effectually civilize, while introducing the arts of civilization will sometimes fail. Preaching the gospel will lift up the barbarian, while attempts to do it by philosophy will be found ineffectual. We must go among them, and tell them of Christ; we must point them to heaven; we must lead them to the cross; shall they be elevated in their character, and raised in their condition. But by no other means. God forbid that we should begin to depreciate preaching. Let us still honor it; let us look to it as God's ordained instrumentality, and we shall yet see in the world a repetition of great wonders wrought by the

preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.

To-day, I shall want your attention to a subject which concerns us all, but more especially those, who being hearers of the Word, are hearers only, and not doers of the same. I shall first attempt to show the blessedness of hearing the Word of God; secondly, the responsibilities of the hearer; and then, thirdly, those accompaniments which are necessary to go with the hearing of the Word of God, to make it effectual to save the soul.

I. First of all, my dear friends, let us speak a little about THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING THE WORD.

The prophet constantly asserts, "Blessed are the ears which hear the things that we hear; and blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see." Prophets and kings desired it long, but died without the sight. Often do the seers of old use language similar to this, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." Godly men accept it as an omen of happy times when their eyes should see their teachers. The angels sang the blessedness of it when they descended from on high, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto you and to all people." The angels' song is in harmony with the seers' testimony. Both conjoin to prove what I assert, that we are blessed in having the privilege of listening to God's Word.

Let us enlarge upon this point. If we reflect upon what the preaching of the Word is, we shall soon see that we are highly privileged in enjoying it. The preaching of the Word is the scattering of the seed. The hearers are the ground on which the good seed falls. Those who hear not the Word are as the arid desert, which has never seen a handful of the good corn; or as the unploughed waves of the sea which have never been gladdened with the prospect of a harvest. But when the sower goes forth to sow seed, he scatters it broadcast upon you that hear, and there is to you the hope that in you the good seed shall take root and bring forth fruit a hundred fold. True, some of you may be but wayside hearers, and evil birds may soon devour the seed. At least, it does fall upon you, nor is it the fault of

the seed, but of the ground, if that seed does not grow. True, you may be as stony-ground hearers, who for awhile receive the Word and rejoice therein, but having no root in yourselves, the seed may wither away. That again, I say, does not diminish your privilege, though it increases your guilt, inasmuch as it is no fault of the seed nor of the sun, but the fault of the stony ground, if the fruit is not nourished unto perfection. And you, inasmuch as you are the field, the broad acres upon which the gospel husbandman scatters the precious grain, you enjoy the privilege which is denied to heathens and idolaters.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a net which is cast into the sea, and which gathers of divers kinds. Now you represent the fish of the sea, and it is happy indeed for you that you are where the net is thrown, for there is at least the hope that you may be entangled in its meshes, and may be drawn out of the sea of sin, and gathered into the vessels of salvation. If you were far, far away, where the net is never cast, there would be no hope of your being caught therein. But here you are gathered round the fisherman's humble boat, and as he casts his net into the sea, he hopes that some of you may be caught therein,—and assuredly gracious is your privilege! But if you be not caught, it shall not be the fault of the net, but the fault of your own wilfulness, which shall make you fly from it, lest you be graciously taken therein.

Moreover, the preaching of the gospel is very much in this day like the mission of Christ upon earth. When Christ was on earth he went about walking through the midst of sick folk, and they laid them in their beds by the wayside, so that as Jesus passed by, they might touch the hem of his garment and be made whole. You, to-day, when you hear the Word, are like the sick in their beds where Jesus passes by. You are like blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside begging, in the very road along which the Son of David journeys. Lo, a multitude have come to listen to him. He is present wherever his truth is preached: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the world." You are not like sick men in their chambers, or sick men far away in Tyre and Sidon, but you are like the men who lay at Bethesda's pool under the five porches, waiting for the moving of the water. Angel of God, move the waters this day! or rather, O Jesus, give thou grace to the impotent man that he may now step in.

Yet further, we may illustrate the privilege of those who hear the Word by the fact that the Word of God is the bread of heaven. I can only compare this great number of people gathered here to-day to the sight which was seen upon the mountain in the days of Jesus. They were hungry, and the disciples would have sent them away. But Jesus bade them sit down in ranks upon the grass, as you are sitting down in rows here, and there were but a few barley loaves and five small fishes (fit type and representation of the minister's own poverty of words and thoughts!) But Jesus blessed the bread, and blessed the fishes, and brake them; and they were multiplied, and they did all eat and were filled. So you are as these men. God give you grace to eat. There is not given to you a stone instead of bread, nor a scorpion instead of an egg; but Christ Jesus shall be fully and freely preached to you. May you have appetites to long for the Word, faith to partake of the Word, and may it be to you the bread of life sent down from heaven.

Yet often in Scripture we find the Word of God compared to a light. "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light." "Unto them that dwell in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death, has a great light arisen." Those who hear not the Word are men that grope their way not only in a fog, but in a thick Egyptian darkness that may be felt. Before your eyes to-day is held up the flaming torch of God's Word, to shew you your path through the thick darkness. Nay, to-day there is not only a torch, but in the preaching of the Word the Sun of Righteousness himself arises with healing beneath his wings. You are not they that grope for the wall like blind men; you are not as they who are obliged to say, "We see not the path to heaven; we know not the way to God; we fear we shall never be reconciled to Christ." Behold, the light of heaven shineth upon your eyeballs, and, if ye perish, ye must perish wilfully; if ye sink into hell, it will be with the path to heaven shining before you, if damned, it will be not because you do not know the way of salvation, but because you wilfully and wickedly put it from you, and choose for yourselves the path of death. It must even be then a privilege to listen to the Word, if the Word be as a light, and as bread, and as healing, as a gospel net, and as divine seed.

Once more let me remind you, there is yet a greater privilege connected with the Word of God than this—for all this were nothing without the last. As I look upon a multitude of unconverted men and women, I am reminded of Ezekiel's vision. He saw lying in the valley of Hinnom multitudes of bones, the flesh of which had been consumed by fire, and the bones themselves were dried as in a furnace, scattered hither and thither. There with other bones in other charnel-houses, lying scattered at the mouths of other graves; but Ezekiel was not sent to them; to the valley of Hinnom was he sent, and there alone. And he stood by faith, and began to practice the foolishness of preaching, "Ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord, ye dry bones live." And as he spoke there was a rustling, each bone sought its fellow; and as he spake again, these bones united and stood erect, as he continued his discourse the flesh clothed the skeleton; when he concluded by crying, "Come from the winds, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," they stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. The preached Word is like Ezekiel's prophecy; life goes forth with the word of the faithful minister, when we say, "Repent!" We know that sinners cannot repent of themselves, but God's grace sweetly constrains them to repent. When we bid them believe, it is not because of any natural capacity for faith that lies within them, but because the command "Believe and live," when given by the faithful minister of God, hath in it a quickening power; as much as when Peter and John said to the man with the withered hand, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, stretch out thy hand," and it was done. So do we say to the dead in sin—"Sinner, live; repent and be converted; repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus." Owned of God the Spirit, it becomes a quickening cry, and you are made to live. Blessed are the dry bones that lay in a valley where Ezekiel prophesied; and blessed are ye that are found where Jesus Christ's name is preached, where his power is invoked by a heart which believes in its energy; where his truth is preached to you by one, who despite of many mistakes knows this one thing—that Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God unto every one that believeth. This consideration alone then—the peculiar power of the Word of God, might compel us to say, "That indeed there is a blessedness in hearing it."

But, my dear friends, let us look at it in another light. Let us appeal to

those who have heard the Word and have received good in their own souls by it. Men and brethren, I speak to hundreds of you, who know in your own soul what the Word of God is. Let me ask you—you who have been converted from a thousand crimes—you who have been picked from the dunghill and made to sit among the princely children of God—let me ask you what you think of the preaching of the Word. Why, there are hundreds of you men and women, who if this were the proper time and occasion, would rise from your seat and say, "I bless God that ever I listened to the preached Word. I was a stranger to all truth, but I was enticed to come and listen, and God met with me." Some of you can look back to the first Sunday on which you ever entered a place of worship for twenty years, and that place was this very hall. Here you came an unaccustomed worshipper to tread God's hallowed floor. You stood and knew not what you were at. You wondered what the service of God's house could be. But you have reason to remember that Sabbath-day, and you will have reason to remember it to all eternity. Oh that day! it broke your bonds and set you free; that day aroused your conscience and made you feel your need of Christ. That day was a blessed turning point in your history, in which you were led to escape from hell, turn your back on sin, and fly for refuge to Christ Jesus. Since that day let me ask you, what has the Word of God been to you? Has it not been constantly a quickening word? You have grown dull and careless during the week; has not the Sabbath sermon stirred you up afresh? You have sometimes all but lost your hope, and has not the hearing of the Word revived you? Why I know that some of you have come up to the house of God as hungry men would come to a place where bread was distributed, you come to the house of God with a light and happy step, as thirsty men would come to a flowing well, and you rejoice when the day comes round: you only wish there were seven Sabbath days a week, that you might always be listening to God's Word. You can say with Dr. Watts,

"Father, my soul would still abide within thy temple, near thy side.
And if my feet must hence depart, still keep thy dwelling in my heart."

Personally I have to bless God for many good books. I thank God for Dr. Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*; I thank God for Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*; for Alleyne's *Alarm to Sinners*; I bless God for

James's Anxious Enquirer; but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the living Word—and that too addressed to me by a poor uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt of a menial kind during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth. "The books were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me, it was the living Word saved me, and I must ever attach peculiar value to the hearing of the truth, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights.

But further, my dear hearers, the value of the Word preached and heard may be estimated by the opinions which the lost have of it now. Harken to one man, it is not a dream nor a picture of my imagination which I now present to you, it is one of Jesus Christ's own graphic descriptions. There lies a man in hell who has heard Moses and the prophets. His time is passed, he can hear them no more. But so great is the value he attaches to the preached Word, that he says, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, for I have five brethren, let him testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." He felt that if Lazarus could speak—speak personally his own personal testimony to the truth, that peradventure they might be saved. Oh! what would the damned in hell give for a sermon could they but listen once more to the church-going bell and go up to the sanctuary! Ah, my brethren, they would consent, if it were possible, to bear ten thousand years of hell's torments, if they might but once more have the Word preached to them! Ah! if I had a congregation such as that would be, of men who have tasted the wrath of God, of men who know what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of an angry God, oh, how would they lean forward to catch every word, with what deep attention would they all regard the preacher, each one saying, "Is there a hope for me? May I not escape from the place of doom? Good God! may this fire not be quenched and I be plucked as a brand from the burning?" Value then, I pray you, the privilege while you have it now. We are always foolish, and we never value mercy till we lose it. But I do adjure you cast not aside this folly, value it while it is called to-day, value that which once lost will seem to us to be priceless beyond all conception,—estimated then at its true worth, invaluable, and precious beyond a miser's dream.

Let me again ask you to value it in a brighter light—by the estimation of the saints before the throne. Ye glorified ones, what think ye of the preaching of the Word? Hark to them! Will they not sing it forth—"Faith came to us by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It was by it that we were led to confess our sins; by it we were led to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb?" I am sure they before the throne think not lightly of God's ministers. They would not speak with cold language of the truth of the Gospel which is preached in your ears. No, in their eternal hallelujahs they bless the Lord who sent the Gospel to them, as they sing—"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Value, then, the preaching of the Word, and count yourselves happy that you are allowed to listen to it.

II. My second head deals more closely with the text, and I hope it will likewise appeal more closely to our consciences—**THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEARER OF THE WORD.**

Herod, you will perceive, went as far as very many of us, perhaps farther than some, and yet was lost. Our responsibilities concerning the Word do not end with hearing it. Herod heard it, but hearing is not enough. Ye may sit for fifty years in the sanctuary of God hearing the gospel, and be rather the worse than the better for all you have heard, if it end in hearing. It is not the Word entering into one ear, and coming forth out of the other ear which converts the soul but it is the echoing of the Word down in the very heart, and the abiding of the truth in the conscience. I know there are very many who think they have fulfilled all their religion when they go to their church or chapel. Let us not deceive you in this thing. Your church-going, and your chapel-going, though they give you great privileges, yet involve the most solemn responsibilities. Instead of being in themselves saving, they may be damning to you unless you avail yourselves of the privileges presented to you by them. I doubt not that hell is crammed with church and chapel-goers, and that there are whole wards in that infernal prison house that are filled with men who heard the Word, but who stopped there, who sat in their pews, but never fled to Christ; who listened to the call, but did not obey it. "Yes," saith one, "but I

do more than simply hear the Word, for I make choice of the most earnest preacher I can find." So did Herod, and yet he perished. He was not a hearer of a man with a soft tongue, for John did not speak as one clothed in fine raiment, John was not a reed shaken with the wind; he was a prophet, "Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;" faithful in all his house, as a good servant of his God. There was never a more honest and faithful preacher than John. And you too, may with care have selected the most excellent minister, not for his eloquence, but for his earnestness; not for his talent, but for his power of faith, and you may listen to him, and that too with attention, and after all may be a cast-away. The responsibilities involved in listening to such a man may be so weighty, that like a millstone about your neck, they may help to sink you lower than the lowest hell. Take heed to yourselves, that you rest not in the outward Word, however fitly spoken, or however attentively heard; but reach forward to something deeper and better. "Yes," saith a third, "but I do not only hear the most earnest preacher, but I go out of my way to hear him. I have left my parish church, for instance, and I come walking five or six miles—I am willing to walk ten, or even twenty, if I can but hear a sermon—and I am not ashamed to mingle with the poor. I may have rank and position in life, but I am not ashamed to listen to the earnest preacher, though he should belong to the most despised of sects" Yea, and Herod did the like, Herod was a king, and yet listened to the peasant-prophet. Herod is clothed in purple, and yet listens to the Baptist in his shaggy garment. While Herod fared sumptuously every day, he who ate locusts and wild honey reproves him boldly to his face; and with all this, Herod was not saved. So, also, you may walk many a mile to listen to the truth, and that year after year, but unless ye go further than that, unless ye obey the Word, unless it sinks deep into your inmost soul, ye shall perish still—perish under the sound of the Word—the very Word of God becoming a death-knell to your soul, dreadfully tolling you down to deep destruction. But I hear another object. "I, sir, not only take the trouble to hear, but I hear very gladly. I am delighted when I listen. I am not a captious, critical hearer, but I feel a pleasure in listening to God's Word. Is not that a blessed sign? Do you not think that I must be saved, if I rejoice to hear that good sound?" No, my friend, no; it is a hopeful sign, but it is a very uncertain one, for is it not written in our text, that Herod heard the Word gladly? The smile might be on his face, or the tear in his

eye while the Baptist denounced sin; there was a something in his conscience which made him feel glad that there was one honest man alive; that in a time of enormous corruption, there was one fearless soul that dare with unblanched cheek, to correct sin in high places. He was like Henry the Eighth, who when Hugh Latimer presented him on New Year's day with a napkin, on which was embroidered the words, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" instead of casting the preacher into prison, he said, "He was glad there was one man who dared to tell him and he stands up for you and defends you, but he is as bad a man as there is living." Oh sirs! I am glad you listen to me; I do hope that the hammer may yet break your hearts but I do conjure you, give up your sins. Oh! for your own soul's sake, do not abide in your transgressions, for I warn you, if I have spoken faithfully to you, you cannot sin so cheaply as other men. I have never prosed away to you; I have never been too polite to warn you of perdition, I speak to you in rough and earnest terms—I may claim that credit without egotism. If you perish, sirs, it will little boot you that ye stood up in my defense; it will little serve you that ye tried to screen the minister from slander and from calumny. I would have you think of yourselves, even though ye thought less of me and my reputation. I would have you love yourselves, and so escape from hell, and fly to heaven while yet the gate of mercy stands on the jar, and the hour of mercy is not passed for ever. Think not, I say, that hearing the Word gladly is enough; you may do so and yet be lost.

But more than that. "Ah," says one, "you have just anticipated what I was about to say. I not only listen gladly, but I respect the preacher. I would not hear a man say a word against him." It was so with Herod. "He observed John," it is said, "and he accounted him a just man and a holy," and yet though he honored the preacher, he was lost himself. Ah! what multitudes go to our fashionable places of worship, and as they come out they say to one another, "What a noble sermon!" and then they go to their houses, and sit down and say, "What a fine turn he gave to that period! what a rich thought that was! what a sparkling metaphor!" And is it for this that we preach to you? Is your applause the breath of our nostrils? Do you think that God's ministers are sent into the world to tickle your ears and be unto you as one that plays a merry tune on a goodly instrument? God knows I would sooner break stones on the road than be

a preacher for oratory's sake. I would never stand here to play the hypocrite. No, it is your hearts we want, not your admiration. It is your espousal to Christ, and not your love to us. Oh that we could break your hearts, and awake your consciences, we would not mind what other results should follow. We should feel that we were accepted of God, if we were but felt with power to be God's servants in the hearts and thoughts of men. No, think not that to honor the preacher is enough. Ye may perish praising the minister in your dying moments.

Yet further. Some one may say, "I feel I am a better man through hearing the minister, and is not that a good sign?" Yes, it is a good sign, but it is not a sure one for all that. For Herod they said did many things. Look at the text. It is expressly said there, "He observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things." I should not wonder after that, that Herod became somewhat more merciful in his government, somewhat less exacting, a little more outwardly moral, and though he continued in his lasciviousness, yet he tried to cover it up with respectable excuses. "He did many things." That was doing a very long way, but Herod was Herod still. And you sirs, it may be, have been led to give up drunkenness, through the preaching of the Word: to shut up the shop that used to be opened on a Sunday. You cannot now swear; you would not now cheat. It is good, it is very good; but it is not enough. All this there may be, but yet the root of the matter may not be in you. To honor the Sabbath outwardly will not save you, unless you enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Merely to close the shop is not enough. The heart itself must be shut up against the love of sin. To cease blasphemy is not sufficient, though it is good, for there may be blasphemy in the heart, when there is none upon the tongue. "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven." For "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord grant that you may not rest with outward cleansing, with moral purification, but strike deeper into the root, and soul, and marrow of these blessings, the change of your heart, the bringing of your soul into union with Christ. One thing I must also remark about Herod, with the Greek text in view "He did many things," will allow me to infer that he felt many doubts. As a good old commentator says, "John smote him so hard, that he could not help feeling it. He gave him such home blows that he

could not but be bruised every now and then, and yet though his conscience was smitten, his heart was never renewed." It is a pleasant sight to see men weep under the Word—to mark them tremble; but then we remember Felix. Felix trembled. But he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee. Happy the minister who hears the people say, "Almost thou persuadest us to be Christians." But then, we remember Agrippa—we remember how he returns to his sins, and seeks not the Savior. We are glad if your consciences are awakened, we rejoice if you are made to doubt and question yourselves, but we mourn because your doubts are so transient, because your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.

I have tracked some of you to your houses. I have known of some who after a solemn sermon, when they got home could scarcely eat their meal. They sit down, leaning their head on their hand. The wife is glad to think that her husband is in a hopeful state. He rises from his seat; he goes up stairs; he walks about the house he says he is miserable. At last he comes down and sets his teeth together, and says "Well, if I am to be damned I shall be damned; if I am to be saved I shall be saved, and there's an end of it." Then he rouses himself, saying, "I cannot go to hear that man again: he is too hard with me. I must either give up my sins, or give up listening to the Word; the two things will not exist together." Happy, I say, are we to see that man troubled; but our unhappiness is so much the greater when we see him shaking it off—the dog returning to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. O God, save us from this, let us never be men who spring up fairly, but wither away suddenly and disappoint all hope. O God, let us not be as Balaam, who prayed that his last end might be with the righteous, but returned to defy Israel, to provoke the Lord God, and to perish in the midst of his iniquity.

And now I hear many of you say, "Well if all these things are not enough, what is it that is expected of the hearer of the Word?" Spirit of God! help us so to speak that the Word may come home to all! Believer in Christ, if you would hear the Word to profit, you must hear it obediently. You must hear it as James and John did, when the Master said "Follow me," and they left their nets and their boats and then followed him. You must do the Word as well as hear it, yielding up your hearts to its sway, being

willing to walk in the road which it maps, to follow the path which it lays before you. Hearing it obediently, you must also hear it personally for yourselves, not for others, but for yourselves alone. You must be as Zacchaeus, who was in the sycamore tree, and the Master said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, to-day I must abide in thy house." The Word will never bless you till it comes home directly to yourself. You must be as Mary, who when the Master spoke to her she did not know his voice, till he said unto her, "Mary!" and she said, "Rabboni." There must be an individual hearing of the truth, and a reception of it for yourself in your own heart. Then, too, you must hear the truth penitently. You must be as that Mary, who when she listened to the Word, must needs go and wash the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. There must be tears for your many sins, a true confession of your guilt before God. But above all you must hear it believingly. The Word must not be unto you as mere sound, but as matter of fact. You must be as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened; or as the trembling jailer, who believed on the Lord Jesus with all his house and was baptized forthwith. You must be as the thief, who could pray, "Lord, remember me," and who could believe the precious promise given, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." God give us grace so to listen, and then shall our responsibilities under the Word be cleared up receiving the power of the Word into our conscience, with demonstration of the Holy Spirit, and fruits agreeable to our profession.

III. Now to conclude. I want your serious attention to THE NEEDFUL ACCOMPANIMENTS OF HEARING THE WORD.

There are many men who get blessed by the Word through God's sovereign grace without any of the accompaniments of which I am now about to speak. We have, connected with us, as a Church, a brother in Christ, who came into this place of worship with his gin bottle in his pocket one night. A chance hit of mine—as some would have thought it, when I pointed to the man and told him of it, not knowing aught but that the feeling that I was moved thereunto—was the man's first awakening. That man came without any preparation, and God blessed the word. Numerous have been the instances, which those who have not proved them deem utterly incredible, in which persons have absolutely come to

me after a sermon, and begged me not to tell anybody about them, being firmly persuaded from what I said that I knew their private history, whereas I knew no more about them than a stranger in the market. But the Word of God will find men out. Preach the gospel and it will always find the man out and tell him all his secrets, carrying the lamp of the Lord into the hidden recesses of the heart.

But to you as a mass I speak this. If you will be blessed under the Word, would that you would pray before you come here. You sometimes hear of preparation for the Lord's Supper—I am sure if the Word is to be blessed, there ought to be a preparation for hearing it. Do you, when you come up to this house, pray to God before you come, "Lord, give the minister words; help him to speak to me to-day; Lord, save me to-day; may the Word to-day be a quickening word to my poor soul?" Ah! my friends, ye would never go without the blessing, if ye come up prayerfully looking for it, having asked it of God. Then after prayer, if you would be blessed under the Word, there should be an expectation of being blessed. It is wonderful the differences between the same sermon preached in different places, and I do not doubt that the same words uttered by different men would have different effects. With some men the hearers expect they will say something worth hearing; they listen, and the man does say something worth hearing; another man might say just the same; nobody receives it as other than common-place. Now if you can come up to the house of God expecting that there will be something for you, you will have it. We always get what we angle for. If we come up to find fault, there always will be faults to find. If we come up to get good, good will be gotten. God will send no man empty away; he shall have what he came for. If he came merely for curiosity, he shall have his curiosity gratified; if he came for good, he shall not be disappointed. We may be disappointed at man's door; we never were at God's. Man may send us away empty, but God never will. Then while listening to the Word with expectation, it will naturally come to pass that you will listen with deep attention. A young boy who had been awakened to a sense of sin, was remarked to be exceedingly attentive to sermons, and when asked why it was, he said, "Because I do not know which part of the sermon may be blessed to me, but I know that whichever it is, the devil will do his utmost to take my attention off then for fear I should be blessed;" so he would listen to the

whole of it, lest by any means the Word of life should be let slip. So do you, and you will certainly be in the way of being blessed by the Word. Next to that, all through the sermon be appropriating it, saying to yourselves, "Does that belong to me?" If it be a promise, say, "Is that mine?" If it be a threatening, do not cover yourselves with the shield of hard-heartedness, but say, "If that threatening belongs to me, let it have its full force on me." Sit under the sermon with your breasts open to the Word; be ready to let the arrow come in.

Above all, this will be of no avail unless you hear with faith, Now faith cometh by hearing There must be faith mingled with the hearing. But you say, "What is faith? Is faith to believe that Christ died for me?" "No, it is not. The Arminian says that faith is to believe that Christ died for you. He teaches in the first place that Christ died for everybody, therefore, he says, he died for you; of course he died for everybody, and if he died for everybody he must have died for you. That is not faith at all. I hold, on the other hand, that Christ died for believers, that he died for no man that will be lost, that all he died for will be saved, that his intention cannot be frustrated in any man; that if he died to save any man, that man will be saved. Your question to-day is not whether Christ died for you or not, but it is this;—the Scripture says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And what is it to believe? To believe is to trust it is the same word, though believe is not so plain a word as trust. To trust Christ is to believe. I feel I cannot save myself, that all my doings and feelings cannot save me; I trust Christ to save me. That is faith; and the moment I trust Christ, I then know that Christ died for me, for they who trust him, he has surely died to save, so surely he died to save them that he will save them, so finished his work that he will never lose them, according to his own Word—"give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" "But may I trust it!" says one. May! You are commanded to do it. "But I dare not." What! dare not do what God bids you! Rather say—"I dare not live without Christ, I dare not disobey. God has said—"This is the commandment, that ye believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." This is the great commandment which is sent to you. To-day trust Christ and you are saved; disobey that command, and do what you will you are damned.

Go home to your chamber, and say unto God, "I desire to believe what I have heard; I desire to trust my immortal soul in Jesus' hands. Give me genuine faith; give me a real trust. Save me now, and save me hereafter." I dare avow it—I never can believe that any man so hearing the Word can by any possibility perish. Hear it, receive it, pray over it, and trust Christ through it, and if you are lost, there can be none saved. If this foundation give way, another can never be laid. If you fall, we all fall together. If trusting in Christ you can perish, all God's prophets, and martyrs, and confessors, and ministers, perish too. You cannot. He will never fail you; trust him now.

Spirit of God! incline the hearts of men to trust Christ. Enable them now to overcome their pride and their timidity, and may they trust the Savior now, and they are saved for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Preaching For The Poor

The poor have the gospel preached to them. - Matthew 11:5

John, the forerunner of Christ, had some followers who continued with him after Christ had come in the flesh, and openly manifested himself among the people. These disciples were in doubt as to whether Jesus was the Messiah or no. I believe that John himself had no doubt whatever upon the matter, for he had received positive revelations, and had given substantial testimonies on the subject. But in order to relieve their doubts, John said to his disciples, in some such words, "Go and ask him yourselves;" and, therefore, he dispatched them with this message, "Tell us whether thou art he that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus Christ continuing his preaching for a while, said, "Stay and receive

your answer;" and instead of giving them an affirmative reply, "I am that Messiah," he said, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." As much as to say, "That is my answer; these things are my testimonies—on the one hand, that I come from God, and, on the other hand, that I am the Messiah." You will see the truth and force of this reply, if you will observe that it was prophesied of the Messiah, that he should do the very things which Jesus at that moment was doing. It is said of Messias, in the 35th chap. of Isaiah, at the 5th and 6th verses, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." The Jews had forgotten this too much; they only looked for a Messiah who should be clothed with temporal grandeur and dignity, and they overlooked the teaching of Isaiah, that he should be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And besides that, you observe, they overlooked the miracles which it was prophesied should attend the coming of the glorious one, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus gave this as his answer—a practical demonstration of John's problem, proving to an absolute certainty. But he not only referred to the miracles, he gave them a further proof—"The poor have the gospel preached to them." This, also, was one evidence that he was Messias. For Isaiah, the great Messianic prophet, had said, "He shall preach the gospel unto the meek;" that is, the poor. And in that Jesus did so, it was proved that he was the man intended by Isaiah. Besides, Zechariah mentions the congregation of the poor who attend on him, and therein evidently foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, the preacher to the poor.

I shall not, however, dwell upon these circumstances this morning; it must be apparent to every hearer, that here is sufficient proof that Jesus Christ is the person who had been foretold under the name of Shiloh, or Messiah. We all believe that, and, therefore, there is little need that I should try to prove what you have already received. I rather select my text this morning as one of the constant marks of the gospel in all ages and in every land. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." This is to be its *semper idem* its constant stamp. And we believe, where the poor have not

the gospel preached unto them, there is a departure from the dispensation of the gospel, the forsaking of this which was to be a fundamental trait and characteristic of the gospel dispensation: "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

I find that these words will bear three translations; I shall, therefore, have three heads, which shall be composed of three translations of the text. The first is that of the authorised version: "The poor have the gospel preached to them;" it is also Tyndal's version. The second is the version of Crammer, and the version of Geneva, which is the best, "The poor are evangelized," that is to say, they not only hear the gospel, but they are influenced by it;—the poor receive it. The last is a translation of some eminent writers, and above all, of Wyckliffe, which amused me when I read it, although I believe it to be as correct as any of the others. Wyckliffe translates it—"pore men ben taken to prechyng of the gospel." The verb may be equally well translated in the active as in the passive sense: "The poor have taken to the preaching of the gospel." That is to be one of the marks of the gospel dispensation in all times.

I. First, then, THE AUTHORISED VERSION, "The poor have the gospel preached to them." It was so in Christ's day; it is to be so with Christ's gospel to the end of time. Almost every impostor who has come into the world has aimed principally at the rich, and the mighty, and the respectable; very few impostors have found it to be worth their while to make it prominent in their preaching that they preach to the poor. They went before princes to promulgate their doctrines; they sought the halls of nobles where they might expatiate upon their pretended revelations. Few of them thought it worth their while to address themselves to those who have been most wickedly called "the swinish multitude," and to speak to them the glorious things of the gospel of Christ. But it is one delightful mark of Christ's dispensation, that he aims first at the poor. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." It was wise in him to do so. If we would fire a building, it is best to light it at the basement; so our Saviour, when he would save a world, and convert men of all classes, and all ranks, begins at the lowest rank, that the fire may burn upwards, knowing right well that what was received by the poor, will ultimately by his grace be received by the rich also. Nevertheless, he chose this to be

given to his disciples, and to be the mark of his gospel—"The poor have the gospel preached to them." Now, I have some things to say this morning, which I think are absolutely necessary, if the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them.

In the first place, let me say then, that the gospel must be preached where the poor can come and hear it. How can the poor have the gospel preached to them, if they cannot come and listen to it? And yet how many of our places of worship are there into which they cannot come, and into which, if they could come, they would only come as inferior creatures. They may sit in the back seats, but are not to be known and recognised as anything like other people. Hence the absolute necessity of having places of worship large enough to accommodate the multitude; and hence, moreover, the obligation to go out into the highways and hedges. If the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them, then we must take it where they can get it. If I wanted to preach to English people, it would be of no use for me to go and stand on one of the peaks of the Himalayas, and begin preaching; they could not hear me there. And it is of little avail to build a gorgeous structure for a fashionable congregation, and then to think of preaching to the poor; they cannot come any more than the Hottentots can make their journey from Africa and listen to me here. I should not expect them to come to such a place, nor will they willingly enter it. The gospel should be preached, then, where the poor will come; and if they will not come after it, then let it be taken to them. We should have places where there is accommodation for them, and where they are regarded and respected as much as any other rank and condition of men. It is with this view alone that I have laboured earnestly to be the means of building a large place of worship, because I feel that although the bulk of my congregation in New Park-street Chapel are poor, yet there are many poor who can by no possibility enter the doors, because we cannot find room for the multitudes to be received. You ask me why I do not preach in the street. I reply, I would do so, and am constantly doing so in every place except London, but here I cannot do it, since it would amount to an absolute breach of the peace, it being impossible to conceive what a multitude of people must necessarily be assembled. I trembled when I saw twelve thousand on the last occasion I preached in the open air; therefore I have thought it best, for the present at least, to desist, until

happily there shall be fewer to follow me. Otherwise my heart is in the open air movement; I practise it everywhere else, and I pray God to give to our ministers zeal and earnestness, that they may take the gospel into the streets, highways and byeways, and compel the people to come in, that the house may be filled. Oh that God would give us this characteristic mark of his precious grace, that the poor might have the gospel preached unto them!

"But," you reply, "there are plenty of churches and chapels to which they might come." I answer, yes, but that is only one half of the matter. The gospel must be preached attractively before the poor will have the gospel preached unto them. Why, there is no attraction in the gospel to the great mass of our race, as it is currently preached. I confess that when I have a violent headache, and cannot sleep, I could almost wish for some droning minister to preach to me; I feel certain I could go to sleep then, for I have heard some under the soporific influence of whose eloquence I could most comfortably snore. But it is not at all likely that the poor will ever go to hear such preachers as these. If they are preached to in fine terms—in grandiloquent language which they cannot lay hold of—the poor will not have the gospel preached to them, for they will not go to hear it. They must have something attractive to them; we must preach as Christ did; we must tell anecdotes, and stories, and parables, as he did; we must come down and make the gospel attractive. The reason why the old puritan preachers could get congregations was this—they did not give their hearers dry theology; they illustrated it; they had an anecdote from this and a quaint passage from that classic author; here a verse of poetry; here and there even a quip or pun—a thing which now-a-days is a sin above all sins, but which was constantly committed by these preachers, whom I have ever esteemed as the patterns of pulpit eloquence. Christ Jesus was an attractive preacher; he sought above all means to set the pearl in a frame of gold, that it might attract the attention of the people. He was not willing to place himself in a parish church, and preach to a large congregation of thirteen and a-half, like our good brethren in the city, but would preach in such a style that people felt they must go to hear him. Some of them gnashed their teeth in rage and left his presence in wrath, but the multitudes still thronged to him to hear and to be healed. It was no dull work to hear this King of preachers, he was too much in

earnest to be dull, and too humane to be incomprehensible. I believe that until this is imitated, the poor will not have the gospel preached to them. There must be an interesting style adopted, to bring the people to hear. But if we adopt such a style they will call us clownish, vulgar, and so on. Blessed be God, we have long learnt that vulgarity is a very different thing from what some men suppose. We have been so taught, that we are willing to be even clowns for Christ's sake, and so long as we are seeing souls saved we are not likely to alter our course. During this last week I have seen, I believe, a score of persons who have been in the lowest ranks, the very meanest of sinners, the greatest of transgressors, who have, through preaching in this place, been restored and reclaimed. Do you think then I shall shear my locks to please the Philistine? Oh, no; by the grace of God, Samson knoweth where his strength lieth, and is not likely to do that to please any man or any set of men. Preaching must reach the popular ear; and to get at the people it must be interesting to them, and by the grace of God we hope it shall be.

But, in the next place, if the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them, it must be preached simply. It is a waste of time to preach Latin to you, is it not? To the multitude of people it is of no use delivering a discourse in Greek. Possibly five or six of the assembly might be mightily edified, and go away delighted; but what of that? The mass would retire unedified and uninstructed. You talk about the education of the people, don't you, and about the vast extent of English refinement? For the most part it is a dream. Ignorance is not buried yet. The language of one class of Englishmen is a dead language to another class; and many a word which is very plain to many of us, is as hard and difficult a word to the multitude as if it had been culled out of Hindostani or Bengali. There are multitudes who cannot understand words composed of Latin, but must have the truth told them in round homely Saxon, if it is to reach their hearts. There is my friend the Rev. So-and-so, Doctor of Divinity; he is a great student, and whenever he finds a hard word in his books he tells it next Sunday to his congregation. He has a little intellectual circle, who think his preaching must be good, because they cannot understand it, and who think it proven that he must be an intelligent man because all the pews are empty. They believe he must be a very useful member of society; in fact, they compare him to Luther, and think he is a second Paul,

because nobody will listen to him, seeing it is impossible to understand him. Well, we conceive of that good man that he may have a work to do, but we do not know what it is. There is another friend of ours, Mr. Cloudyton, who always preaches in such a style that if you should try to dissect the sermon for a week afterwards, you could by no possibility tell what he meant. If you could look at things from his point of view you might possibly discover something; but it does appear by his preaching as if he himself had lost his way in a fog, and were scattering a whole mass of mist about him everywhere. I suppose he goes so deep down into the subject that he stirs the mud at the bottom, and he cannot find his way up again. There are some such preachers, whom you cannot possibly understand. Now, we say, and say very boldly too, that while such preaching may be esteemed by some people to be good, we have no faith in it all. If ever the world is to be reclaimed, and if sinners are to be saved, we can see no likelihood in the world of its being done by such means. We think the word must be understood before it can really penetrate the conscience and the heart; and we would always be preaching such as men can understand, otherwise the poor will not "have the gospel preached to them." Why did John Bunyan become the apostle of Bedfordshire, and Huntingdonshire, and round about? It was because John Bunyan, while he had a surpassing genius, would not condescend to cull his language from the garden of flowers, but he went into the hayfield and the meadow, and plucked up his language by the roots, and spoke out in words that the people used in their cottages. Why is it that God has blessed other men to the stirring of the people, to the bringing about of spiritual revivals, to the renewal of the power of godliness? We believe it has always been owing to this—under God's Spirit—that they have adopted the phraseology of the people, and have not been ashamed to be despised because they talked as common people did.

But now we have something to say more important than this. We may preach, very simply too, and very attractively, and yet it may not be true that "the poor have the gospel preached to them," for the poor may have something else preached to them beside the gospel. It is, then, highly important that we should each of us ask what the gospel is, and that when we think we know it we should not be ashamed to say, "This is the gospel, and I will preach it boldly, though all men should deny it." Oh! I fear that

there is such a thing as preaching another gospel, "which is not another, but there be some that trouble us." There is such a thing as preaching science and philosophy attractively, but not preaching the gospel. Mark, it is not preaching, but it is preaching the gospel that is the mark of Christ's dispensation and of his truth. Let us take care to preach fully the depravity of man, let us dwell thoroughly upon his lost and ruined estate under the law, and his restoration under the gospel; let us preach of these three things, for, as a good brother said, "The gospel lies in three things, the Word of God only, the blood of Christ only, and the Holy Spirit only." These three things make up the gospel. "The Bible; the Bible alone the religion of Protestants; the blood of Christ the only salvation from sin, the only means of the pardon of our guilt; and the Holy Spirit the only regenerator, the only converting power that will alone work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." Without these three things there is no gospel. Let us take heed, then, for it is a serious matter, that when the people listen to us, it is the gospel that we preach, or else we may be as guilty as was Nero, the tyrant, who, when Rome was starving, sent his ships to Alexandria, where there was corn in plenty, not for wheat, for sand to scatter in the arena for his gladiators. Ah! there be some who seem to do so—scattering the floor of their sanctuary, not with the good corn of the kingdom, upon which the souls of God's people may feed and grow thereby, but with sand of controversy, and of logic, which no child of God can ever receive to his soul's profit. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." Let us take heed that it is the gospel. Hear then, ye chief of sinners, the voice of Jesus. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost."

And just one more hint on this point, namely, this,—it must be said of us, if we would keep true to Christ's rule and apostolic practice, that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." In these days there is a growing hatred of the pulpit. The pulpit has maintained its ground full many a year, but partially by its becoming inefficient, it is losing its high position. Through a timid abuse of it, instead of a strong stiff use of the pulpit, the world has come to despise it; and now most certainly we are not a priest-

ridden people one-half so much as we are press-ridden people. By the press we are ridden indeed. Mercuries, Despatches, Journals, Gazettes and Magazines, are now the judges of pulpit eloquence and style. They thrust themselves into the censor's seat, and censure those whose office it should rather be to censure them. For my own part, I cheerfully accord to all men the liberty of abusing me; but I must protest against the lying conduct of at least one editor, who has misquoted in order to pervert my meaning, and has done more; he has, to his eternal disgrace, manufactured a quotation from his own head, which never did occur in my works or words. The pulpit has become dishonoured; it is esteemed as being of very little worth and of no esteem. Ah! we must always maintain the dignity of the pulpit. I hold that it is the Thermopylae of Christendom; it is here the battle must be fought between right and wrong—not so much with the pen, valuable as that is as an assistant, as with the living voice of earnest men, "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." In some churches the pulpit is put away; there is a prominent altar, but the pulpit is omitted. Now, the most prominent thing under the gospel dispensation is not the altar which belonged to the Jewish dispensation, but the pulpit. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle;" that altar is Christ; but Christ has been pleased to exalt "the foolishness of preaching" to the most prominent position in his house of prayer. We must take heed that we always maintain preaching. It is this that God will bless; it is this that he has promised to crown with success. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We must not expect to see great changes nor any great progress of the gospel until there is greater esteem for the pulpit—more said of it and thought of it. "Well," some may reply, "you speak of the dignity of the pulpit; I take it, you lower it yourself, sir, by speaking in such a style to your hearers." Ah! no doubt you think so. Some pulpits die of dignity. I take it, the greatest dignity in the world is the dignity of converts—that the glory of the pulpit is, if I may use such a metaphor, to have captives at its chariot-wheels, to see converts following it, and where there are such, and those from the very worst of men; there is a dignity in the pulpit beyond any dignity which a fine mouthing of words and a grand selection of fantastic language could ever give to it. "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

II. now, the next translation is, THE TRANSLATION OF GENEVA, principally used by Calvin in his commentary; and it is also the translation of Thomas Crammer, whose translation, I believe, was at least in some degree moulded by the Genevan translation. He translates it thus:—"The poor receive the gospel." The Genevan translation has it, "The poor receive the glad tidings of the gospel," which is a tautology, since glad tidings mean the same thing as gospel. The Greek has it, "The poor are evangelised." Now, what is the meaning of this word "evangelised?" They talk with a sneer in these days of evangelical drawing-rooms and evangelicals, and so on. It is one of the most singular sneers in the world; for to call a man an evangelical by way of joke, is the same as calling a man a gentleman by way of scoffing at him. To say a man is one of the gossellers by way of scorn, is like calling a man a king by way of contempt. It is an honourable, a great, a glorious title, and nothing is more honourable than to be ranked among the evangelicals. What is meant, then, by the people being evangelised? Old Master Burkitt, thinking that we should not easily understand the word, says, that as a man is said to be Italianised by living among the Italians, getting their manners and customs, and becoming a citizen of the state, so a man is evangelised when he lives where the gospel is preached and gets the manners and customs of those who profess it. Now, that is one meaning of the text. One of the proofs of our Saviour's mission is not only that the poor hear the Word, but are influenced by it and are gosselized. Oh! how great a work it is to gosselize any man, and to gosselize a poor man. What does it mean? It means, to make him like the gospel. Now, the gospel is holy, just, and true, and loving, and honest, and benevolent, and kind, and gracious. So, then, to gosselize a man is to make a rogue honest, to make a harlot modest, to make a profane man serious, to make a grasping man liberal, to make a covetous man benevolent, to make the drunken man sober, to make the untruthful man truthful, to make the unkind man loving, to make the hater the lover of his species, and, in a word, to gosselize a man is, in his outward character, to bring him into such a condition that he labours to carry out the command of Christ, "Love thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Gosselizing, furthermore, has something to do with an inner principle; gosselizing a man means saving him from hell and making him a heavenly character; it means blotting out his sins, writing a new name

upon his heart—the new name of God. It means bringing him to know his election, to put his trust in Christ, to renounce his sins, and his good works too, and to trust solely and wholly upon Jesus Christ as his Redeemer. Oh! what a blessed thing it is to be gospelized! How many of you have been so gospelized? The Lord grant that the whole of us may feel the influence of the gospel. I contend for this, that to gospelize a man is the greatest miracle in the world. All the other miracles are wrapped up in this one. To gospelize a man, or, in other words, to convert him, is a greater work than to open the eyes of the blind; for is it not opening the eyes of the blind soul that he may see spiritual matters, and understand the things of heavenly wisdom, and is not a surgical operation easier than operation on the soul? Souls we cannot touch, although science and skill have been able to remove films and cataracts from the eyes. "The lame walk." Gospelizing a man is more than this. It is not only making a lame man walk, but it is making a dead man who could not walk in the right way walk in the right way ever afterwards. "The lepers are cleansed." Ah! but to cleanse a sinner is greater work than cleansing a leper. "The deaf hear." Yes, and to make a man who never listened to the voice of God hear the voice of his Maker, is a miracle greater than to make the deaf hear, or even to raise the dead. Great though that be, it is not a more stupendous effort of divine power than to save a soul, since men are naturally dead in sins, and must be quickened by divine grace if they are saved. To gospelize a man is the highest instance of divine might, and remains an unparalleled miracle, a miracle of miracles. "The poor are evangelized."

Beloved, there have been some very precious specimens of poor people who have come under the influence of the gospel. I think I appeal to the hearts of all of you who are now present, when I say there is nothing we more reverence and respect than the piety of the poor and needy. I had an engraving sent to me the other day which pleased me beyond measure. It was an engraving simply but exquisitely executed. It represented a poor girl in an upper room, with a lean-to roof. There was a post driven in the ground, on which was a piece of wood, standing on which were a candle and a Bible. She was on her knees at a chair, praying, wrestling with God. Everything in the room had on it the stamp of poverty. There was the mean coverlet to the old stump bedstead; there were the walls that had

never been papered, and perhaps scarcely whitewashed. It was an upper story to which she had climbed with aching knees, and where perhaps she had worked away till her fingers were worn to the bone to earn her bread at needlework. There it was that she was wrestling with God. Some would turn away and laugh at it; but it appeals to the best feelings of man, and moves the heart far more than does the fine engraving of the monarch on his knees in the grand assembly. We have had lately a most excellent volume, the *Life of Captain Hedley Vicars*; it is calculated to do great good, and I pray God to bless it; but I question whether the history of Captain Hedley Vicars will last as long in the public mind as the history of the *Dairyman's Daughter*, or the *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*. The histories of those who have come from the ranks of the poor always lay hold of the Christian mind. Oh! we love piety anywhere; we bless God where coronets and grace go together; but if piety in any place do shine more brightly than anywhere else, it is in rags and poverty. When the poor woman in the almshouse takes her bread and her water, and blessed God for both—when the poor creature who has not where to lay his head, yet lifts his eye and says, "My Father will provide," it is then like the glow-worm in the damp leaves, a spark the more conspicuous for the blackness around it. Then religion gleams in its true brightness, and is seen in all its lustre. It is a mark of Christ's gospel that the poor are gospelized—that they can receive the gospel. True it is, the gospel affects all ranks, and is equally adapted to them all; but yet we say, "If one class be more prominent than another, we believe that in Holy Scripture the poor are most of all appealed to." "Oh!" say some very often, "the converts whom God has given to such a man are all from the lower ranks; they are all people with no sense; they are all uneducated people that hear such-and-such a person." Very well, if you say so; we might deny it if we pleased, but we do not know that we shall take the trouble, because we think it no disgrace whatever; we think it rather to be an honour that the poor are evangelized, and that they listen to the gospel from our lips. I have never thought it a disgrace at any time. When any have said, "Look, what a mass of uneducated people they are." Yes, I have thought, and blessed be God they are, for those are the very people that want the gospel most. If you saw a physician's door surrounded by a number of ladies of the sentimental school, who are sick about three times a week, and never were ill at all—if it were said he cured them, you would say, "No great

wonder too, for there never was anything the matter with them." But if you heard of another man, that people with the worst diseases have come to him, and that God has made use of him, and his medicine has been the means of healing their diseases, you would then say, "There is something in it, for the people that want it most have received it." If, then, it be true that the poor will come to hear the gospel more than others, it is no disgrace to the gospel, it is an honour to it, that those who most want it do freely receive it.

III. And now I must close up by briefly dwelling on the last point. It was the third translation, WYCKLIFFE'S TRANSLATION. To give it you in old English—"Poor men are taking to the preaching of the gospel." "Ah!" say some, "they had better remain at home, minding their ploughs or their blacksmith's hammer; they had better have kept on which their tinkering and tailoring, and not have turned preachers." But it is one of the honours of the gospel that poor men have taken to the preaching of it. There was a tinker once, and let the worldly-wise blush when they hear of it—there was a tinker once, a tinker of whom a great divine said he would give all his learning if he could preach like him. There was a tinker once, who never so much as brushed his back against the walls of a college, who wrote a "Pilgrim's Progress. Did ever a doctor in divinity write such a book. There was a pot-boy once—a boy who carried on his back the pewter pots for his mother, who kept the Old Bell. That man drove men mad, as the world had it, but led them to Christ, as we have it, all his life long, until, loaded with honours, he sank into his grave, with the good will of a multitude round about him, with an imperishable name written in the world's records, as well as in the records of the church. Did you ever hear of any mighty man, whose name stood in more esteem among God's people than the name of George Whitfield? And yet these were poor men, who, as Wyckliffe said, were taking to the preaching of the gospel. If you will read the life of Wyckliffe, you will find him saying there, that he believed that the Reformation in England was more promoted by the labours of the poor men whom he sent out from Lutterworth than by his own. He gathered round him a number of the poor people whom he instructed in the faith, and then he sent them two and two into every village, as Jesus did. They went into the market-place, and they gathered the people around; they opened the book and read a chapter, and then

they left them a manuscript of it which for months and years after the people would assemble to read, and would remember the gospellers that had come to tell them the gospel of Christ. These men went from market-place to market-place, from town to town, and from village to village, and though their names are unknown to fame, they were the real reformers. You may talk of Cranmer, and Latimer, and Ridley; they did much, but the real reformers of the English nation were people whose names have perished from the annals of time, but are written in the records of eternity. God has blessed the poor man in preaching the truth. Far be it from me to depreciate learning and wisdom. We should not have had the Bible translated without learning and the more learning a man can have, if he be a sanctified man, the better; he has so many more talents to lay out in his Master's service; but it is not absolutely necessary for preaching of the Word. Rough, untamed, untaught energy, has done much in the church. A Boanerges has stood up in a village; he could not put three words together in grammatical English; but where the drowsy parson had for many a year lulled all his people into an unhallowed rest, this man started up, like the herdsman Amos, and brought about a great awakening. He began to preach in some cottage; people thronged around him, then a house was built, and his name is handed down to use as the Rev. So-and-so, but then he was known as Tom the ploughman, or John the tinker. God has made use of men whose origin was the most obscure, who seemed to have little, except the gifts of nature, which could be made use of in God's service; and we hold that this is no disgrace, but on the contrary an honour, that poor men are taking to preaching the gospel.

I have to ask you this morning to help some poor men in preaching the gospel. We are constantly receiving letters from our poor brethren, and it is very seldom that we say "No," to their appeals for assistance, but we must do so, unless our friends, more especially those who love the gospel, really will do something towards the maintenance of God's faithful servants. I have, during the past year, preached many times for ministers on this ground, that they could not live unless some preached a sermon and made a collection for them. In some places the population was so small that they could not maintain their minister, and in others it was a new movement, and therefore they were unable to support him. Some of you subscribe to the Church Pastoral Aid Society. That is a very excellent

society, but I never could see any good in it. There are many poor clergy in the Church of England who want assistance bad enough; but if you want to know the right way of keeping poor curates, I will tell you. Split a bishop up into fifty, and that will do it. If that could be done at once and speedily, there would be no need of Pastoral Aid Societies. You will say, perhaps, "Let such a thing be done in our denomination." I answer that we have no bishops with whom such a thing could be done. I believe there is not to be found one minister in the whole Baptist denomination whose salary has ever exceeded £600, and there are only three, I believe, who receive as much as that, of which I am not one, and these three men are in such a position that their demands are great, and they have not one penny too much, while the great mass of our denomination receive £20, £30, £40, £50, £60, and so on, but below £100. The sum collected to-day will be given to those whose incomes are below £80, and whose needs are great.

And now, beloved, I have opened my mouth for the dumb, and pleaded the cause of the poor, let me end by entreating the poor of the flock to consider the poor man's Christ; let me urge them to give Him their thoughts, and may the Lord enable them to yield him their hearts. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

May God bless the high and low, the rich and poor; yea, all of you, for his name's sake.

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Precious Deaths

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. - Psalm 116:15

David sought deliverance from imminent peril, and he felt sure of obtaining it; for being a servant of the Lord he knew that his life was too precious in the sight of God for it to be lightly brought to an end. It should be a source of consolation to all tried saints that God will not deliver them over to the hands of their enemies; it is not the will of their Father who is in heaven that one of his little ones should perish. A shepherd who did not care for his sheep might suffer the wolf to devour it, but he who prizes it highly will put his own life in jeopardy to pluck the defenseless one from between the monster's jaws.

The text informs us that the deaths of God's saints are precious to him. How different, then, is the estimate of human life which God forms from that which has ruled the minds of great warriors and mighty conquerors. Had Napoleon spoken forth his mind about the lives of men in the day of battle, he would have likened them to so much water spilt upon the ground. To win a victory, or subdue a province, it mattered not though he strewed the ground with corpses thick as autumn leaves, nor did it signify though in every village orphans and widows wailed the loss of sires and husbands. What were the deaths of conscript peasants when compared with the fame of the Emperor? So long as Austria was humbled, or Russia invaded, little cared the imperial Corsican though half the race had perished. Not thus is it with the King of kings; he spares the poor and needy, and saves the souls of the needy, and precious shall their blood be in his sight. Our glorious Leader never squanders the lives of his soldiers; he values the church militant beyond all price; and though he permits his saints to lay down their lives for his sake, yet is not one life spent in vain, or unnecessarily expended.

How different also is the Lord's estimate from that of persecutors! They have hounded the saints to death, considering that they did God service. They have thought no more of burning martyrs than destroying noxious insects, and massacres of believers have been to them as the slaying of wild beasts. Did they not strike a medal to celebrate the massacre of the Huguenots in France? and did not the infallible Pope himself consider it

to be a business for which to offer Te Deums to God? What if murder made the streets of Paris run with blood, the slaughtered ones were only Protestants, and the world thought itself well rid of them. Foxes and wolves, and Protestants were best exterminated. As for so-called Anabaptists they were counted worse than vipers, and to crush them utterly was reckoned to be salutary Christian discipline. The enemies of the church of God have hunted the saints as if they were beasts of the chase. They have let loose upon them the dogs of war, and the hell-hounds of the Inquisition, as if they were not fit to live. "Away with such a fellow from the earth" has been the general cry of persecutors against the men of whom the world was not worthy. But, precious is their blood in his sight. Though they have been cast to the beasts in the amphitheatre, or dragged to death by wild horses, or murdered in dungeons, or slaughtered amongst the snows of the Alps, or made to fatten Smithfield with their gore, precious has their blood been, and still is it in his sight, who will avenge his own elect when the day shall come for his patience to have had her perfect work, and for his justice to begin her dread assize.

The text, also, corrects another estimate, namely, our own. We love the people of God, they are exceedingly precious to us, and, therefore, we are too apt to look upon their deaths as a very grievous loss. We would never let them die at all if we could help it. If it were in our power to confer immortality upon our beloved Christian brethren and sisters, we should surely do it, and to their injury we should detain them here, in this wilderness, depriving them of a speedy entrance into their inheritance on the other side the river. It would be cruel to them, but I fear we should often be guilty of it. We should hold them here a little longer, and a little longer yet, finding it hard to relinquish our grasp. The departures of the saints cause us many a pang. We fret, alas! also, we even repine and murmur. We count that we are the poorer because of the eternal enriching of those beloved ones who have gone over to the majority, and entered into their rest. Be it known that while we are sorrowing Christ is rejoicing. His prayer is, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am," and in the advent of every one of his own people to the skies he sees an answer to that prayer, and is, therefore, glad. He beholds in every perfected one another portion of the reward for the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied in it. We are grieving

here, but he is rejoicing there. Dolorous are their deaths in our sight, but precious are their deaths in his sight. We hang up the mournful escutcheon, and sit us down to mourn our full, and yet, meanwhile, the bells of heaven are ringing for "the bridal feast above," the streamers are floating joyously in every heavenly street, and the celestial world keeps holiday because another heir of heaven has entered upon his heritage. May this correct our grief. Tears are permitted to us, but they must glisten in the light of faith and hope. Jesus wept, but Jesus never repined. We, too, may weep, but not as those who are without hope, nor yet as though forgetful that there is greater cause for joy than for sorrow in the departure of our brethren.

I. Coming now to the instructive text before us, we shall remark, in the first place, that THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IMPLIES A VIEW OF DEATH OF A PECULIAR KIND. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Death in itself cannot be precious; it is terrible. It cannot be a precious thing to God to see the noblest works of his hand torn in pieces, his skillful embroidery in the human body rent, defiled, and given over to decay. Death in itself cannot be a theme for rejoicing with God. But death in the case of believers is another matter. To them, it is not death to die; it is a departure out of this world unto the Father, a being unclothed that we may be clothed upon, a falling asleep, an entrance into the Kingdom. To the saint death is by no means such a thing as happeneth unto the unregenerate.

And, observe wherein this change lies. It lies mainly in the fact that death is no more the indiction of a penalty for sin upon the believer. One great cardinal truth of the gospel is that the sins of believers were laid upon Christ, and were punished upon Christ, and that, consequently, no sin is imputed to the believer, neither can any be penally visited upon him. His sin was punished in his substitute. The righteous wrath of God has altogether ceased towards those for whom Christ died. It could not be consistent with justice that the death penalty should be executed upon Christ, and then should be again visited upon those for whom Christ was a substitute. Death, then, does not come to me as a believer because I

deserve it and must be punished by it: it comes so to the ungodly, it is upon them a fit visitation for their iniquities, the beginning of an unending death, which shall be their perpetual portion. To the saints the sting of death is gone, and the victory of the grave is removed; it is no more a penalty but a privilege to die. What if I say it is a covenant blessing: so Paul esteemed it, for when he said "All things are yours, things present or things to come," he added, "or life, or death, all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's:" as if the believer's death came to him amongst other good and precious things by the way of his being Christ's; and Christ's being God's. To fall asleep in Jesus is a blessing of the covenant; it is a grace to be asked for, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." I would not miss it; if I might make my choice between living till Christ comes, so as to be changed only, and not to die, or of actually sleeping in the dust, I would prefer to die, for in this the believer who shall fall asleep will be the more closely conformed to Christ Jesus. He will have passed into the sepulcher and slept in the tomb as his master did; he will know, as Jesus knows, what death pangs mean, and what it is to gaze upon the invisible, while the visible retreats into the distance. Nay, let us die. The Head has traversed the valley of death-shade, and let the members rejoice to follow.

"As the Lord their Savior rose,
So all his followers must."

And, therefore, as the Lord the Savior slept, so let us sleep. When we think of our Master in the tomb, our hearts say, "Let us go that we may die with him." We would not be divided from him in life or in death. We are so wedded to him that we say, "Where thou goest I will go, where thou diest I will die, and with thee would I be buried, that with thee in the resurrection morning I may be partaker of the resurrection." Death, then, is so far changed in its aspect as it respects the saints, that it is no longer a legal infliction, but it comes to us as a covenant blessing conforming us to Christ.

The statement of the text refutes the gloomy thought that death is a ceasing to be. It is not the annihilation of a man, nor ought it ever to be regarded as such. In all ages there has fingered upon mankind the fear

that to die may involve ceasing to be; and of all thoughts this is one of the most gloomy. But, when God says that the death of a believer is precious to him, it is clear that no tinge of annihilation is in the idea, for where would be the preciousness of a believer ceasing to exist? Oh, no, the thought is gone from us. We know that to die is not to renounce existence; we understand that death is but a passage into a higher and a nobler existence. The soul emancipated from all sinfulness passes the Jordan, and is presented without fault before the throne of God. No purgatorial fires are needed to cleanse her; the self-same day she leaves the body she is with Christ in paradise, because fit to be there. The body in death, it is true, undergoes decay, but even for that meaner part of our manhood there is no destruction. Let us not malign the grave, it is no more a prison, but an inn, a halting place upon the road to resurrection. As Esther bathed herself in spices that she might be fit for the embraces of the king, so is the body purged from its corruption that it may rise immortal.

"Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh."

The body could not rise if it had not first died; it could not spring up like a fair flower unless it had first been sown. If a grain of wheat fall not into the ground and die, how springeth it up again? but the body is sown in dishonor that it may be raised in glory; it is sown in weakness that it may be raised in power; it is laid in the grave as a natural body, that it may arise therefrom by the infinite power of the almighty a spiritual body, full of life, and glory, and majesty. Let this mortal body die, aye, let it moulder into dust! What more fit than earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Let the gold go into the fining pot, it will lose none of its preciousness, it will only be delivered from its dross. Let the gem go to the lapidary's house, for it shall glitter the more brightly in the royal crown, in the day when the Lord shall make up his jewels.

Death, too, we may be sure from this statement cannot be any serious detriment to the believer after all; it cannot be any serious loss to a saint

to die. Looking upon the poor corpse, it does seem to be a catastrophe for death to have passed his cold hand across the brow, but it is not so, for the very death is precious; therefore, it is no calamity. Death if rightly viewed is a blessing from the Lord's hand. A child once found a bird's nest in which were eggs, which it looked upon as a great treasure. It left them, and by-and-by, when a week or so had passed, went back again. It returned to its mother grieving: "Mother," said the child, "I had some beautiful eggs in this nest, and now they are destroyed; nothing is left but a few pieces of broken shell. Pity me, mother, for my treasure is gone." But the mother said, "Child, here is no destruction; there were little birds within those eggs, and they have flown away, and are singing now among the branches of the trees; the eggs are not wasted, child, but have answered their purpose. It is better far as it is." So, when we look at our departed ones, we are apt to say, "And is this all thou hast left us? Ruthless spoiler, are these ashes all?" But, faith whispers "No, the shell is broken, but amongst the birds of paradise, singing amid unwithering bowers, you shall find the spirits of your beloved ones; their true manhood is not here, but has ascended to its Father, God." It is not a loss to die, it is a gain, a lasting, a perpetual, an illimitable gain. The man is at one moment weak, and cannot stir a finger; in an instant he is clothed with power. Call ye not this a gain? That brow is aching; it shall wear a crown within the next few tickings of the clock. Is that no gain? That hand is palsied; it shall at once wave the palm branch. Is that a loss? The man is sick beyond physician's power; but he shall be where the inhabitant is never sick. Is that a loss? When Baxter lay a dying, and his friends came to see him, almost the last word he said was in answer to the question, "Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?" "Almost well," said he, and so it is. Death cures; it is the best medicine, for they who die are not only almost well, but healed for ever. You will see, then, that the statement of our text implies that the aspect of death is altogether altered from that appearance in which men commonly behold it. Death to the saints is not a penalty, it is not destruction, it is not even a loss.

II. But now, secondly, I want your earnest thought to a further consideration of the text. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IS OF A MOST UNLIMITED KIND.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." It is a broad statement, wide and comprehensive, and I want you to observe that there is no limit here as to whom. Provided that the dying one be a saint, his death is precious. He may be the greatest in the church, he may be the least: he may be the boldest confessor, he may be the most timid trembler; but if a saint, his death is precious in God's sight. I can well conceive the truth of this in respect to martyrs; to see a man enduring torments, but refusing to deny his Lord; to behold him offered life and wealth if he will recant, but to hear him say, "I cannot and I will not draw back by the help of God:" to mark every nerve throbbing with anguish, and every single member of his body torn with torment, and yet to see the man faithful to his God even to the close,—why, this is a spectacle which God himself might well count precious. The church embalms the memories of her martyrs wherever they die—precious in God's sight must their deaths be. The deaths too of those who work for Christ, until at last weary nature gives out, when body and brain are both exhausted, and the man can no longer continue in his beloved labor, but lays down his body and his charge together, never putting off harness until he puts off his flesh—methinks the deaths of such men must be precious in God's sight. But, not more so, mark that not more so than the departure of the patient sufferer, scarcely able to say a word, solitary and unknown, only able to serve God by submissively enduring pains which make night weary and day intolerable. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the consumptive girl who gradually melts into heaven; the death of the pauper in the workhouse, without a friend, but uncomplainingly bearing God's will, is as precious (not perhaps under some aspects), but as truly precious in the sight of the Lord as that of the most useful preacher of the word. Precious to Jehovah is the death of the least in the ranks, as the death of those who rush to the front and bear the brunt of the battle well. There are no distinctions in the text; if you be a saint no one may know you, you may be too poor and too illiterate to be of much account in the world, you may die and pass away, and no record may be among the sons of men, no stone set up over your lonely grave, but precious in the sight of the Lord in every case is the death of his saints. There is no limit as to whom.

And, mark you, there is no limit at all as to when. It matters not at what

age the saint dies, his death is precious to God. Very delightful to those who observe them are the deathbed scenes of young children who have early been converted to God. There is a peculiar charm about the pious prattler's departing utterances. He can hardly pronounce his words aright, but he seems illuminated from above, and to talk of Jesus and his angels, and the harps of gold, and the better land, as if he had been there. Some of you have had the privilege to carry in your bosoms some of those nurselings for the skies, unfledged angels sent here but for a little while, and then caught away to heaven, that their mothers' hearts might follow them, and their fathers' aspirations might pursue them. I confess to a great liking for such books as "Janeway's Token for Children," where the deaths of many pious boys and girls are recorded with the holy sayings which they used. The Lord sets a high value on his little ones, and, therefore, frequently gathers them while they are like flowers in the bud. When these favored children die, Jesus stands at their little cots, and, while he calls them away, he whispers, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Equally precious, however, are the deaths of those who depart in middle life. These we usually regret most of all, because of the terrible blanks which they leave behind them. What, shall the hero fall when the battle wants him most? Shall the reaper be sent home and made to lay down his sickle just when the harvest is heaviest, and the day requires every worker? To us it seemeth strange, but to God it is precious. Oh, could we lift the veil, could we understand what now we see not, we should perceive that it was better for the saints to die when they died, than it would have been for them to have lived longer lives. Though the widow mourns, and the orphans are left penniless, it was good that the father fell asleep. Though a loving church gathered round the hearse and mourned that their minister had been taken away in the fullness of his vigor, it was best that God should take him to himself. Let us be persuaded of this, that no believer dies an untimely death. In every consistent Christian's case that promise is true, "With long life also will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation;" for long life is not to be reckoned by years as men count them. He lives longest who lives best. Many a man has crowded half a century into a single year. God gives his people life, not as the clock ticks, but as he helps them to serve him; and he can make them to live much in a short space of time. There are no untimely figs gathered into God's basket; the great Master of the vineyard

plucks the grapes when they are ripe and ready to be taken, and not before. Sainly deaths are precious in his sight.

And, dear brethren, if the Lord's providence permits the saint to live to a good old age, then is his death precious too. The decease which has lately occurred among us* will abide in my memory as one of my choice treasures. I say but little of it to-day, for on another Sabbath morning I may be able to tell you some of those choice things which our dear brother and venerated elder uttered which charmed and gladdened us all as we lingered about his bed. You knew him; you knew what a man he was in life; he was just such a man in death. But a day or so before he died, while he could scarcely draw his breath, he told me with a smile that it was the happiest day of his life. As he was always wont to rejoice in God while he was here among us, so he was kept in the same blessed spirit even to the end. "See," said he, "what a blessed thing it is to be here." "Here!" I said. "What, on a dying bed?" "Yes," said he, "for I am Christ's, and Christ is mine; I am in him, and He is in me; what more would I have? It is the happiest day of my life," and again he smiled serenely. It was all joy with him, all bliss with him. Pain might rack him, or weakness might prostrate him, but ever did his spirit magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God his Savior. Yes, these ripe ones, like the fruits of autumn, fall willingly from off the tree of life when but a gentle breeze stirs the branches. The deaths of these are precious unto God. There is no limitation as to when.

And, again, there is no limitation as to where. Precious shall their deaths be in his sight, let them happen where they may. Up in the lonely garret where there are none of the appliances of comfort, but all the marks of the deepest penury, up there where the dying workgirl or the crossing sweeper dies—there is a sight most precious unto God; or yonder, in the long corridor of the hospital, where many are too engrossed in their own griefs to be able to shed a tear of sympathy, there passes away a triumphant spirit, and precious is that death in God's sight. Alone, utterly alone in the dead of night, surprised, unable to call in a helper, saintly life often has passed away; but in that form also precious is the death in God's sight. Far away from home and kindred, wandering in the backwoods or on the prairie, the believer has died where there was none

to call him brother; but it mattered not, his death was precious in the sight of the Lord. Or, a bullet has brought the missive from the throne which said, "Return and be with God," and falling in the ditch to die amongst the wounded and the dead, with no onlooker but the silent stars and blushing moon, amidst the carnage the death of the believing soldier has been precious in the sight of Jehovah. Ah, and run over in the street, or crushed, and bruised, and mangled in the railway accident, or stifled in the pit by the coal damp, or sinking amidst the gurgling waters of the ocean, or falling beneath the assassin's knife, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. They are everywhere in the sight of God when they die, and he looks upon them with a smile, for their death is precious to his heart.

There is no limit as to where, and, dear brethren, there is no limit as to how. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Their deaths may happen suddenly; they may be alive, and active, and in a moment fall down dead, but their death is precious. I could never understand that prayer which is put into the prayer-book, that God would deliver us from sudden death. Why, methinks, it is the most desirable death that a person could die, not to know you die at all, to have no fears, no shiverings on the brink, but to be busy in your Master's service here, and suddenly to stand in the white robe before his throne in heaven, shutting the eye to the scenes below, and opening it the scenes above. I know, if I might ask such a favor, I would covet to die as a dear brother in Christ died, who gave out this hymn from his pulpit: -

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode
I'd leave thine earthly courts, and flee
Up to thy seat, my God."

Just as he finished that line in the pulpit he bowed his head, and his prayer was answered, he was immediately before the throne of God. Is there anything in that to pray against? It seems to us much to be desired; but at any rate, such a death as that is precious in God's sight. But if we linger long, if the tabernacle be taken down piece by piece, and the curtains be slowly folded up, and the tent pins gently put away, precious

in the sight of the Lord is such a death as that. Should we die by fierce disease, which shakes the strong man, or by gentle decline, which slowly saps and undermines, it matters not. Should a sudden stroke take us, and men call it a judgment, it is no judgment to the believer, for from him all judgments are past, and the true light of love shineth on him. Die how he may, and where he may, and when he may, and let him be in what position he will when he dies, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

III. And now, thirdly, coming to the very soul and marrow of the text, we notice that **THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT MAY BE FULLY SUSTAINED AND ACCOUNTED FOR**, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," is a most sober and truthful declaration.

First, because their persons were, and always will be, precious unto God. His saints! Why, these are his elect; these are they upon whom his love was set before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds; these are they whom he bought with precious blood, cheerfully laying down his life for their sakes; these are they whose names are borne on Jesus' breast, and engraved upon the palms of his hands; these are his children; these are members of his body; these are his bride, his spouse; he is married unto them: therefore, everything that concerns them must be precious. Do I not look with interest upon the history of my child? Do I not carefully observe everything that happens to my beloved spouse? Where there is love the little becometh great, and what would seem a matter of no concern in a stranger is gilded with great importance. The Lord loves his people so intensely that the very hairs of their heads are numbered: his angels bear them up in their hands lest they dash their foot against a stone, and because they are the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold, therefore their deaths are precious unto the Lord.

Precious are the deaths of God's saints next, because precious graces are in death very frequently tested, and as frequently revealed and perfected. How could I know faith to be true faith if it would not stand a trial? The precious faith of God's elect is proved to be such when it can bear the last ordeal of all; when the man can look grim death in the face, and yet not be staggered through unbelief, when he can gaze across the gulf, so often

veiled in cloud, and yet not fear that he shall be able to overleap it, and land in the Savior's arms. Believe me, the faith which only plays with earthly joys, and cannot endure the common trials of life, will soon be dissipated by the solemn trial of death; but that which a man can die with, that is faith indeed. Faith, moreover, brings with it, as its companions, an innumerable company of graces, amongst which chiefly are hope and love. Blessed is the man who can hope in God when heart and flesh are failing him, and can love the Lord even though he smite him with many pains, yea, even though he slay him. The death of the body is a crucible for our graces, and much that we thought to be true grace disappears in the furnace heat; but God counts the trial of our faith much more precious than that of gold, and therefore he counts deathbeds precious in his sight. Besides, how many graces are revealed in dying hours. I have known plants of God's right hand planting that had always been in the shade before, and yet they have enjoyed sunlight at last; silent spirits that have laid their finger on their lips throughout their lives but have taken them down, and have declared their love to Jesus just when they were departing. Like the swan, of whom the fable hath it, that it singeth never till it comes to its end, so many a child of God has begun to sing in his last hours; because he has done with the glooms of earth, he begins to sing here his swan song, intending to sing on for ever and ever. You cannot tell what is in a man to the fullness of him till he is tried to the full, and therefore the last trial, inasmuch as it strippeth off earth-born imperfections and developes in us that which is of God, and brings to the front the real and the true, and throws to the back the superficial and the pretentious, is precious in God's sight.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," for a third reason, because precious attributes are in dying moments gloriously illustrated. I refer now to the divine attributes. In life and in death we prove the attribute of God's righteousness, we find that he does not lie but is faithful to his word. We learn the attribute of mercy, he is gentle and pitiful to us in the time of our weakness. We prove the attribute of his immutability, we find him "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is scarcely a single characteristic of the divine being which is not set out delightfully to the child of God and onlookers when the saint is departing. And the same is true of the promises as well as the attributes.

Precious promises are illustrated upon dying beds. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Who would have known the meaning of that to the full, if he had not found that the Lord did not leave him when all else was gone? "When thou passeth through the river I will be with thee." Who could have known the depth of truth in that word, if saints did not pass through the last cold stream. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." Who could have known to the full that word, if he had not seen the believer triumphant on his dying day? "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me." You may read commentaries upon that psalm, but you will never value it so well as when you are in the valley yourself. My dear departed friend said to me, ere I came away on one of my last visits, "Read me a psalm, dear pastor," and I said, "which one?" "There are many precious ones," said he, "but as I get nearer to the time of my departure, I love the 23rd best, let us have that again." "Why," I said, "you know that by heart." "Yes," said he, "it is in my heart too, it is most true and precious to me." And is it not so? Yet you had not seen the 23rd Psalm to be a diamond of the purest water, if you had not beheld its value to saints in their departing moments.

"Precious," again, "in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," because the precious blood is glorified. It is memorable how saints turn to the cross when they die. Not very often do you hear them speak of Christ in his glory then, it is of Christ the sufferer, Christ the substitute that they then speak. And how they delight to roll under their tongue as a sweet morsel, such texts as that one, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." With what delight do they speak about having trusted in him years ago, and how gladly will they tell you that they have not been confounded. All their hope and all their confidence lie in the crucified one alone, and they are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him. It ought to be the object of our lives to magnify the blood of Jesus, and to speak well of it, and to recommend it to others. But oh, dear soul, if thou hast no faith in Christ's blood, one argument that ought to convince thee of the sin of unbelief above all others, is this,—that blood has afforded comfort when pains have been bitter, and consolation when death has been imminent, not in one case or a thousand, but in countless cases. Saints by myriads have died singing,

for they have overcome the last enemy by the blood of the Lamb. Oh, you that were never washed in Jesus' blood, I dread to think of your dying. What will you do without the Savior? Oh, how will you pass the terrors of that tremendous hour, with no advocate on high pleading for you there, and no blood of Christ upon you pleading for you here. Oh, fly to that cross, rest in that cross, then will you live well and die well; but, without the blood, you shall live uneasily and die wretchedly. God prevent it, for his name's sake!

Again, the deaths of believers are precious to God, because oftentimes precious utterances are given forth in the last moments. There are little volumes extant of the death bed sayings of saints, and if ever I have mistaken the utterances of man for inspiration, it has been when I have read some of these dying speeches. No one ever mistook the brilliant utterances of Shakespeare, or the wise sayings of Bacon, or the profound thoughts of Socrates, for Scripture—everyone could see that they were earthy and of the earth; but have you never caught yourself imagining that the saying of a dying man must have been borrowed from the Scriptures, and if you have searched for it you have not found it in Cruden, nor have you discovered it anywhere in the sacred page; the voice has been so near akin to inspiration, and so true, that if it had been permitted, you would have written it in your Bibles, and made a new chapter there. Oh, what brave things do they tell of the heavenly world! What glorious speeches do they make! To some of them the veil has been thrown back, and they have spoken of things not seen as yet. They have almost declared things which it were not lawful for men to utter, and, therefore, their speech has been broken, and mysterious, like dark sayings upon a harp. We could hardly make out all they said, but we gathered that they were overwhelmed with glory, that they were confounded with unutterable bliss, that they had seen and fain would tell but must not, they had heard and fain would repeat but could not. "Did you not see the glory?" they have said, and you have replied, "The sun shines upon you through yonder window;" they have shaken their heads, for they have seen a brightness not begotten of the sun. Then have they cried, "Do you not hear it?" and we should have supposed that a sound in the street attracted them, but all was the stillness of night; silent all, except to their ear, which was ravished with the voice of harpers, harping

with their harps. I shall never forget hearing a brother, with whom I had often walked to preach the gospel, say, -

"And when ye hear my eyestrings break,
How sweet my minutes roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul."

It must have been a grand thing to hear good Harrington Evans say to his deacons, "Tell my people, tell them I am accepted in the Beloved;" or, to hear John Rees say, "Christ in the glory of his person, Christ in the love of his heart, Christ in the power of his arm, this is the rock I stand on, and now death strike." Departing saints have uttered brave things and rare things, which have made us wish that we had been going away with them, so have they made us long to see what they have seen, and to sit down and feast at their banquet.

The last reason I shall give why the death of a saint is precious is this—because it is a precious sheep folded, a precious sheaf harvested, precious vessel which had been long at sea brought into harbour, a precious child which had been long at school to finish his training brought home to dwell in the Father's house for ever. God the Father sees the fruit of his eternal love at last ingathered: Jesus sees the purchase of his passion at last secured: the Holy Spirit sees the object of his continual workmanship at last perfected: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice that now the bloodbought ones are free from all inbred sin, and delivered from all temptation. The battle's fought, the battle's fought, and the victory is won for ever.

The commander's eagle eye, as he surveys the plain, watches joyously the shock of battle as he sees that his victory is sure; but when at the last the fight culminates in one last assault, when the brave guards advance for the last attack, when the enemy gathers up all the shattered relics of his strength to make a last defense, when the army marches with sure and steady tramp to the last onslaught, then feels the warrior's heart a stern o'erflowing joy, and as his veterans sweep their foes before them like chaff before the winnowing fan, and the adversaries melt away, even as

the altar fat consumes away in smoke, I see the commander exulting with beaming eye, and hear him rejoicing in that last shock of battle, for in another moment there shall be the shout of victory, and the campaign shall be over, and the adversary shall be trampled for ever beneath his feet. King Jesus looks upon the death of his saints as the last struggle of their life-conflict; and when that is over, it shall be said on earth, and sung in heaven, "Thy warfare is accomplished, thy sin is pardoned, thou hast received of the Lord's hand double for all thy sins."

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Sirs, are you his saints? Preacher, thou speakest to others, hast thou been sanctified unto God? Answer this in the silence of thy soul. Officers of this church, are you saints or mere professors? Members of this church, are you truly saints, or are you hypocrites? You who sit in this congregation Sabbath after Sabbath, have you been washed in the blood of Jesus? are you made saints, or are you still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? Casual visitors to this house of prayer, the same question would I press on you, are you saints of God? If not, earth and hell combined, though they are both full of anguish, could not utter a shriek that should be shrill enough to set forth the woe unutterable of the death that shall surely come upon you. Oh I ere that death overtakes you, fly to Jesus. Trust Him, trust Him now! Ere this day's sun goes down cast yourself at the feet of the crucified Redeemer, and live! The Lord grant it, for his name's sake. Amen.

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Predestination And Calling

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called. - Romans 8:30

The great book of God's decrees is fast closed against the curiosity of man. Vain man would be wise; he would break the seven seals thereof, and read the mysteries of eternity. But this cannot be; the time has not yet come when the book shall be opened, and even then the seals shall not be broken by mortal hand, but it shall be said, "The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book and break the seven seals thereof."

Eternal Father, who shall look
Into thy secret will?
None but the Lamb shall take the book,
And open every seal.

None but he shall ever unroll that sacred record and read it to the assembled world. How then am I to know whether I am predestinated by God unto eternal life or not? It is a question in which my eternal interests are involved; am I among that unhappy number who shall be left to live in sin and reap the due reward of their iniquity; or do I belong to that goodly company, who albeit that they have sinned shall nevertheless be washed in the blood of Christ, and shall in white robes walk the golden streets of paradise? Until this question be answered my heart cannot rest, for I am intensely anxious about it. My eternal destiny infinitely more concerns me than all the affairs of time. Tell me, oh, tell me, if ye know, seers and prophets, is my name recorded in that book of life? Am I one of those who are ordained unto eternal life, or am I to be left to follow my own lusts and passions, and to destroy my own soul? Oh! man, there is an answer to thy inquiry; the book cannot be opened, but God himself hath published many a page thereof. He hath not published the page whereon the actual names of the redeemed are written; but that page of the sacred decree whereon their character is recorded is published in his Word, and

shall be proclaimed to thee this day. The sacred record of God's hand is this day published everywhere under heaven, and he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto him. O my hearer, by thy name I know thee not, and by thy name God's Word doth not declare thee, but by thy character thou mayest read thy name; and if thou hast been a partaker of the calling which is mentioned in the text, then mayest thou conclude beyond a doubt that thou art among the predestinated - "For whom he did predestinate, them he also called." And if thou be called, it follows as a natural inference thou art predestinated.

Now, in considering this solemn subject, let me remark that there are two kinds of callings mentioned in the Word of God. The first is the general call, which is in the gospel sincerely given to everyone that heareth the word. The duty of the minister is to call souls to Christ, he is to make no distinction whatever - "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The trumpet of the gospel sounds aloud to every man in our congregations - "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man" (Prov. 8:4). This call is sincere on God's part; but man by nature is so opposed to God, that this call is never effectual, for man disregards it, turns his back upon it, and goes his way, caring for none of these things. But mark, although this call be rejected, man is without excuse in the rejection; the universal call has in it such authority, that the man who will not obey it shall be without excuse in the day of judgment. When thou art commanded to believe and repent, when thou art exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, the sin lies on thy own head if thou dost despise the exhortation, and reject the commandment. And this solemn text drops an awful warning: "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation." But I repeat it, this universal call is rejected by man; it is a call, but it is not attended with divine force and energy of the Holy Spirit in such a degree as to make it an unconquerable call, consequently men perish, even though they have the universal call of the gospel ringing in their ears. The bell of God's house rings every day, sinners hear it, but they put their fingers in their ears, and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and though they are bidden and are called to the wedding (Luke 14:16,17,18), yet they will not

come, and by not coming they incur God's wrath, and he declareth of such, - "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24). The call of our text is of a different kind; it is not a universal call, it is a special, particular, personal, discriminating, efficacious, unconquerable, call. This call is sent to the predestinated, and to them only; they by grace hear the call, obey it, and receive it. These are they who can now say, "Draw us, and we will run after thee."

In preaching of this call this morning, I shall divide my sermon into three brief parts. - First, I shall give illustrations of the call; second, we shall come to examine whether we have been called; and then third, what delightful consequences flow therefrom. Illustration, examination, consolation.

I. First, then, for ILLUSTRATION. In illustrating the effectual call of grace, which is given to the predestinated ones, I must first use the picture of Lazarus. See you that stone rolled at the mouth of the sepulchre? Much need is there for the stone that it should be well secured, for within the sepulchre there is a putrid corpse. The sister of that corrupt body stands at the side of the tomb, and she says, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." This is the voice of reason and of nature. Martha is correct; but by Martha's side there stands a man who, despite all his lowliness, is very God of very God. "Roll ye away the stone," saith he, and it is done; and now, listen to him; he cries, "Lazarus, come forth!" that cry is directed to a mass of putridity, to a body that has been dead four days, and in which the worms have already held carnival; but, strange to say, from that tomb there comes a living man; that mass of corruption has been quickened into life, and out he comes, wrapped about with graveclothes, and having a napkin about his head. "Loose him and let him go," saith the Redeemer; and then he walks in all the liberty of life. The effectual call of grace is precisely similar; the sinner is dead in sin; he is not only in sin but dead in sin, without any power whatever to give to himself the life of grace. Nay, he is not only dead, but he is corrupt; his lusts, like the worms, have crept into him, a foul stench riseth up into the nostrils of justice, God abhorreth him, and justice crieth, "Bury the dead out of my sight, cast it into the fire, let it be consumed." Sovereign Mercy comes, and there lies this

unconscious, lifeless mass of sin; Sovereign Grace cries, either by the minister, or else directly without any agency, by the Spirit of God, "come forth!" and that man lives. Does he contribute anything to his new life? Not he; his life is given solely by God. He was dead, absolutely dead, rotten in his sin; the life is given when the call comes, and, in obedience to the call, the sinner comes forth from the grave of his lust, begins to live a new life, even the life eternal, which Christ gives to his sheep.

"Well," cries one, "but what are the words which Christ uses when he calls a sinner from death?" Why the Lord may use any words. It was not long ago there came unto this hall, a man who was without God and without Christ, and the simple reading of the hymn -

"Jesus lover of my soul,"

was the means of his quickening. He said within himself, "Does Jesus love me? then I must love him," and he was quickened in that selfsame hour. The words which Jesus uses are various in different cases. I trust that even while I am speaking this morning, Christ may speak with me, and some word that may fall from my lips, unpremeditated and almost without design, shall be sent of God as a message of life unto some dead and corrupt heart here, and some man who has lived in sin hitherto, shall now live to righteousness, and live to Christ. That is the first illustration I will give you of what is meant by effectual calling. It finds the sinner dead, it gives him life, and he obeys the call of life and lives.

But let us consider a second phase of it. You will remember while the sinner is dead in sin, he is alive enough so far as any opposition to God may be concerned. He is powerless to obey, but he is mighty enough to resist the call of divine grace. I may illustrate it in the case of Saul of Tarsus: this proud Pharisee abhors the Lord Jesus Christ; he has seized upon every follower of Jesus who comes within his grasp; he has haled men and women to prison; with the avidity of a miser who hunts after gold, he has hunted after the precious life of Christ's disciple, and having exhausted his prey in Jerusalem, he seeks letters and goes off to Damascus upon the same bloody errand. Speak to him on the road, send out the apostle Peter to him, let Peter say, "Saul, why dost thou oppose

Christ? The time shall come when thou shalt yet be his disciple." Paul would turn round and laugh him to scorn - "Get thee gone thou fisherman, get thee gone - I a disciple of that imposter Jesus of Nazareth! Look here, this is my confession of faith; here will I hale thy brothers and thy sisters to prison, and beat them in the synagogue and compel them to blaspheme and even hunt them to death, for my breath is threatening, and my heart is as fire against Christ." Such a scene did not occur, but had there been any remonstrance given by men you may easily conceive that such would have been Saul's answer. But Christ determined that he would call the man. Oh, what an enterprise! Stop HIM? Why he is going fast onward in his mad career. But lo, a light shines round about him and he falls to the ground, and he hears a voice crying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul's eyes are filled with tears, and then again with scales of darkness, and he cries, "Who art thou?" and a voice calls, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It is not many minutes before he begins to feel his sin in having persecuted Jesus, nor many hours ere he receives the assurance of his pardon, and not many days ere he who persecuted Christ stands up to preach with vehemence and eloquence unparalleled, the very cause which he once trod beneath his feet. See what effectual calling can do. If God should choose this morning to call the hardest-hearted wretch within hearing of the gospel, he must obey. Let God call - a man may resist, but he cannot resist effectually. Down thou shalt come, sinner, if God cries down; there is no standing when he would have thee fall. And mark, every man that is saved, is always saved by an overcoming call which he cannot withstand; he may resist it for a time, but he cannot resist so as to overcome it, he must give way, he must yield when God speaks. If he says, "Let there be light," the impenetrable darkness gives way to light; if he says, "Let there be grace," unutterable sin gives way, and the hardest-hearted sinner melts before the fire of effectual calling.

I have thus illustrated the call in two ways, by the state of the sinner in his sin, and by the omnipotence which overwhelms the resistance which he offers. And now another case. The effectual call may be illustrated in its sovereignty by the case of Zaccheus. Christ is entering into Jericho to preach. There is a publican living in it, who is a hard, griping, grasping, miserly extortioner. Jesus Christ is coming in to call some one, for it is

written he must abide in some man's house. Would you believe it, that the man whom Christ intends to call is the worst man in Jericho - the extortioner? He is a little short fellow, and he cannot see Christ, though he has a great curiosity to look at him; so he runs before the crowd and climbs up a sycamore tree, and thinking himself quite safe amid the thick foliage, he waits with eager expectation to see this wonderful man who had turned the world upside down. Little did he think that he was to turn him also. The Saviour walks along preaching and talking with the people until he comes under the sycamore tree, then lifting up his eyes, he cries - "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide in thy house." The shot took effect, the bird fell, down came Zaccheus, invited the Saviour to his house, and proved that he was really called not by the voice merely but by grace itself, for he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give unto the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore unto him fourfold;" and Jesus said, "This day is salvation come unto thy house." Now why call Zaccheus? There were many better men in the city than he. Why call him? Simply because the call of God comes to unworthy sinners. There is nothing in man that can deserve this call; nothing in the best of men that can invite it; but God quickeneth whom he will, and when he sends that call, though it come to the vilest of the vile, down they come speedily and swiftly; they come down from the tree of their sin, and fall prostrate in penitence at the feet of Jesus Christ.

But now to illustrate this call in its effects, we remind you that Abraham is another remarkable instance of effectual calling. "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," and "by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Ah! poor Abraham, as the world would have had it, what a trial his call cost him! He was happy enough in the bosom of his father's household, but idolatry crept into it, and when God called Abraham, he called him alone and blessed him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and said to him, "Go forth, Abraham!" and he went forth, not knowing whither he went. Now, when effectual calling comes into a house and singles out a man, that man will be compelled to go forth without the

camp, bearing Christ's reproach. He must come out from his very dearest friends, from all his old acquaintances, from those friends with whom he used to drink, and swear, and take pleasure; he must go straight away from them all, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. What a trial to Abraham's faith, when he had to leave all that was so dear to him, and go he knew not whither! And yet God had a goodly land for him, and intended greatly to bless him. Man! if thou art called, if thou art called truly, there will be a going out, and a going out alone. Perhaps some of God's professed people will leave you; you will have to go without a solitary friend, - maybe you will even be deserted by Sarah herself, and you may be a stranger in a strange land, a solitary wanderer, as all your fathers were. Ah! but if it be an effectual call, and if salvation shall be the result thereof, what matters it though thou dost go to heaven alone? Better to be a solitary pilgrim to bliss, than one of the thousands who throng the road to hell.

I will have one more illustration. When effectual calling comes to a man, at first he may not know that it is effectual calling. You remember the case of Samuel; the Lord called Samuel, and he arose and went to Eli, and he said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me." Eli said, "I called not, lie down again. And he went and lay down." The second time the Lord called him, and said, "Samuel, Samuel," and he arose again, and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me," and then it was that Eli, not Samuel, first of all perceived that the Lord had called the child. And when Samuel knew it was the Lord, he said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." When the work of grace begins in the heart, the man is not always clear that it is God's work; he is impressed under the minister, and perhaps he is rather more occupied with the impression than with the agent of the impression; he says, "I know not how it is, but I have been called; Eli, the minister, has called me." And perhaps he goes to Eli to ask what he wants with him. "Surely," said he, "the minister knew me, and spoke something personally to me, because he knew my case." And he goes to Eli, and it is not till afterwards, perhaps, that he finds that Eli had nothing to do with the impression, but that the Lord had called him. I know this - I believe God was at work with my heart for years before I knew anything about him. I knew there was a work; I knew I prayed, and cried, and groaned for mercy, but I did not know that was the Lord's work; I half thought it

was my own. I did not know till afterwards, when I was led to know Christ as all my salvation, and all my desire, that the Lord had called the child, for this could not have been the result of nature, it must have been the effect of grace. I think I may say to those who are the beginners in the divine life, so long as your call is real, rest assured it is divine. If it is a call that will suit the remarks which I am about to give you in the second part of the discourse, even though you may have thought that God's hand is not in it, rest assured that it is, for nature could never produce effectual calling. If the call be effectual, and you are brought out and brought in - brought out of sin and brought to Christ, brought out of death into life, and out of slavery into liberty, then, though thou canst not see God's hand in it, yet it is there.

II. I have thus illustrated effectual calling. And now as a matter of EXAMINATION let each man judge himself by certain characteristics of heavenly calling which I am about to mention. If in your Bible you turn to 2 Timothy 1:9, you will read these words - "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." Now here is the first touchstone by which we may try our calling - many are called but few are chosen, because there are many kinds of call, but the true call, and that only, answers to the description of the text. It is "an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." This calling forbids all trust in our own doings and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation, but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. If you are living in sin, you are not called; if you can still continue as you were before your pretended conversion, then it is no conversion at all; that man who is called in his drunkenness, will forsake his drunkenness; men may be called in the midst of sin, but they will not continue in it any longer. Saul was anointed to be king when he was seeking his father's asses; and many a man has been called when he has been seeking his own lust, but he will leave the asses, and leave the lust, when once he is called. Now, by this shall ye know whether ye be called of God or not. If ye continue in sin, if ye walk according to the course of this world, according to the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, then are ye still dead in your trespasses and your sins; but as he that hath called you is holy, so must ye be holy. Can ye say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou

knowest that I desire to keep all thy commandments, and to walk blamelessly in thy sight. I know that my obedience cannot save me, but I long to obey. There is nothing that pains me so much as sin; I desire to be quit and rid of it; Lord help me to be holy"? Is that the panting of thy heart? Is that the tenor of thy life towards God, and towards his law? Then, beloved, I have reason to hope that thou hast been called of God, for it is a holy calling wherewith God doth call his people.

Another text. In Philippians 3:13 and 14 you find these words. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Is then your calling a high calling, has it lifted up your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it lifted up your hopes, to hope no longer for things that are on earth, but for things that are above? Has it lifted up your tastes, so that they are no longer grovelling, but you choose the things that are of God? Has it lifted up the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend your life with God in prayer, in praise, and in thanksgiving, and can no longer be satisfied with the low and mean pursuits which you followed in the days of your ignorance? Recollect, if you are truly called it is a high calling, a calling from on high, and a calling that lifts up your heart, and raises it to the high things of God, eternity, heaven, and holiness. In Hebrews 3:1, you find this sentence. "Holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling." Here is another test. Heavenly calling means a call from heaven. Have you been called, not of man but of God? Can you now detect in your calling, the hand of God, and the voice of God? If man alone call thee, thou art uncalled. Is thy calling of God? and is it a call to heaven as well as from heaven? Can you heartily say that you can never rest satisfied till you -

"behold his face
And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

Man, unless thou art a stranger here, and heaven is thy home, thou hast not been called with a heavenly calling, for those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder

and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

There is another test. Let me remind you, that there is a passage in scripture which may tend very much to your edification, and help you in your examination. Those who are called, are men who before the calling, groaned in sin. What says Christ? - "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Now, if I cannot say the first things because of diffidence, though they be true, yet can I say this, that I feel myself to be a sinner, that I loathe my sinnership, that I detest my iniquity, that I feel I deserve the wrath of God on account of my transgressions? If so, then I have a hope that I may be among the called host whom God has predestinated. He has called not the righteous but sinners to repentance. Self-righteous man, I can tell thee in the tick of a clock, whether thou hast any evidence of election. I tell thee - No; Christ never called the righteous; and if he has not called thee, and if he never does call thee, thou art not elect, and thou and thy self-righteousness must be subject to the wrath of God, and cast away eternally. Only the sinner, the awakened sinner, can be at all assured that he has been called; and even he, as he gets older in grace, must look for those higher marks of the high heavenly and holy calling in Christ Jesus.

As a further test, - keeping close to scripture this morning, for when we are dealing with our own state before God there is nothing like giving the very words of scripture, - we are told in the first epistle of Peter, the second chapter, and the ninth verse, that God hath called us out of darkness into marvelous light. Is that your call? Were you once darkness in regard to Christ; and has marvelous light manifested to you a marvelous Redeemer, marvelously strong to save? Say soul, canst thou honestly declare that thy past life was darkness and that thy present state is light in the Lord? "For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light." That man is not called who cannot look back upon darkness, ignorance, and sin, and who cannot now say, that he knows more than he did know, and enjoys at times the light of knowledge, and the comfortable light of God's countenance.

Yet again. Another test of calling is to be found in Galatians, the fifth

chapter, and the fifteenth verse. "Brethren, ye have been called into liberty." Let me ask myself again this question, Have the fetters of my sin been broken off, and am I God's free man? Have the manacles of justice been snapped, and am I delivered - set free by him who is the great ransom of spirits? The slave is not called. It is the free man that has been brought out of Egypt, who proves that he has been called of God and is precious to the heart of the Most High.

And yet once more, another precious means of test in the first of Corinthians, the first chapter, and the ninth verse. "He is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Do I have fellowship with Christ? do I converse with him, commune with him? Do I suffer with him, suffer for him? Do I sympathize with him in his objects and aims? Do I love what he loves; do I hate what he hates? Can I bear his reproach; can I carry his cross; do I tread in his steps; do I serve his cause, and is it my grandest hope that I shall see his kingdom come, that I shall sit upon his throne, and reign with him? If so, then am I called with the effectual calling, which is the work of God's grace, and is the sure sign of my predestination.

Let me say now, before I turn from this point, that it is possible for a man to know whether God has called him or not, and he may know it too beyond a doubt. He may know it as surely as if he read it with his own eyes; nay, he may know it more surely than that, for if I read a thing with my eyes, even my eyes may deceive me, the testimony of sense may be false, but the testimony of the Spirit must be true. We have the witness of the Spirit within, bearing witness with our spirits that we are born of God. There is such a thing on earth as an infallible assurance of our election. Let a man once get that, and it will anoint his head with fresh oil, it will clothe him with the white garment of praise, and put the song of the angel into his mouth. Happy, happy man! who is fully assured of his interest in the covenant of grace, in the blood of atonement, and in the glories of heaven! Such men there are here this very day. Let them "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

What would some of you give if you could arrive at this assurance? Mark, if you anxiously desire to know, you may know. If your heart pants to

read its title clear it shall do so ere long. No man ever desired Christ in his heart with a living and longing desire, who did not find him sooner or later. If thou hast a desire, God has given it thee. If thou pantest, and criest, and groanest after Christ, even this is his gift; bless him for it. Thank him for little grace, and ask him for great grace. He has given thee hope, ask for faith; and when he gives thee faith, ask for assurance; and when thou gettest assurance, ask for full assurance; and when thou hast obtained full assurance, ask for enjoyment; and when thou hast enjoyment, ask for glory itself; and he shall surely give it thee in his own appointed season.

III. I now come to finish up with CONSOLATION. Is there anything here that can console me? Oh, yes, rivers of consolation flow from my calling. For, first, if I am called then I am predestinated, there is no doubt about it. The great scheme of salvation is like those chains which we sometimes see at horse-ferries. There is a chain on this side of the river fixed into a staple, and the same chain is fixed into a staple at the other side, but the greater part of the chain is for the most part under water, and you cannot see it: you only see it as the boat moves on, and as the chain is drawn out of the water by the force that propels the boat. If today I am enabled to say I am called, then my boat is like the ferry-boat in the middle of the stream. I can see that part of the chain, which is named "calling," but blessed be God, that is joined to the side that is called "election," and I may be also quite clear that it is joined on to the other side, the glorious end of "glorification." If I be called I must have been elected, and I need not doubt that. God never tantalized a man by calling him by grace effectually, unless he had written that man's name in the Lamb's book of life. Oh, what a glorious doctrine is that of election, when a man can see himself to be elect. One of the reasons why many men kick against it is this, they are afraid it hurts them. I never knew a man yet, who had a reason to believe that he himself was chosen of God, who hated the doctrine of election. Men hate election just as thieves hate Chubb's patent locks; because they cannot get at the treasure themselves, they therefore hate the guard which protects it. Now election shuts up the precious treasury of God's covenant blessings for his children - for penitents, for seeking sinners. These men will not repent, will not believe; they will not go God's way, and then they grumble and growl, and fret, and fume,

because God has locked the treasure up against them. Let a man once believe that all the treasure within is his, and then the stouter the bolt, and the surer the lock, the better for him. Oh, how sweet it is to believe our names were on Jehovah's heart, and graven on Jesus' hands before the universe had a being! May not this electrify a man of joy, and make him dance for very mirth?

Chosen of God ere time began.

Come on, slanderers! rail on as pleases you. Come on thou world in arms! Cataracts of trouble descend if you will, and you, ye floods of affliction, roll if so it be ordained, for God has written my name in the book of life. Firm as this rock I stand, though nature reels and all things pass away. What consolation then to be called: for if I am called, then I am predestinated. Come let us at the sovereignty which has called us, and let us remember the words of the apostle, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

A second consolation is drawn from the grand truth, that if a man be called he will certainly be saved at last. To prove that, however, I will refer you to the express words of scripture: Romans 11:29 - "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never repents of what he gives, nor of what he calls. And indeed this is proved by the very chapter out of which we have taken our text. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," everyone of them. Now, believer, thou mayest be very poor, and very sick, and very much unknown and despised, but sit thee down and review thy calling this morning, and the consequences that flow from it. As sure as thou art God's called child

today, thy poverty shall soon be at an end, and thou shalt be rich to all the intents of bliss. Wait awhile; that weary head shall soon be girt with a crown. Stay awhile; that horny hand of labor shall soon grasp the palm branch. Wipe away that tear; God shall soon wipe away thy tears for ever. Take away that sigh - why sigh when the everlasting song is almost on thy lip? The portals of heaven stand wide open for thee. A few winged hours must fly; a few more billows must roll o'er thee, and thou wilt be safely landed on the golden shore. Do not say, "I shall be lost; I shall be cast away." Impossible.

Whom once he loves he never leaves,
But loves them to the end.

If he hath called thee, nothing can divide thee from his love. The wolf of famine cannot gnaw the bond; the fire of persecution cannot burn the link, the hammer of hell cannot break the chain; old time cannot devour it with rust, nor eternity dissolve it, with all its ages. Oh! believe that thou art secure; that voice which called thee, shall call thee yet again from earth to heaven, from death's dark gloom to immortality's unuttered splendours; Rest assured, the heart that called thee, beats with infinite love towards thee, a love undying, that many waters cannot quench, and that floods cannot drown. Sit thee down; rest in peace; lift up thine eye of hope, and sing thy song with fond anticipation. Thou shall soon be with the glorified, where thy portion is; thou art only waiting here to be made meet, for the inheritance, and that done, the wings of angels shall waft thee far away, to the mount of peace, and joy, and blessedness, where

Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,

thou shall rest for ever and ever. Examine yourselves then whether you have been called. - And may the love of Jesus be with you. Amen.

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Preparation For Revival

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? - Amos 3:3

The believer is agreed with God. The war between the most holy God and his offending creatures is over in the case of bloodwashed sinners; not suspended by a truce, but ended for ever by a peace which passeth all understanding. The believer is fully agreed with God concerning the divine law: he confesses that "the law is holy, and just, and good": he would not have it altered if he could. He rejoices in the way of God's testimonies more than in all riches; yea, in his precepts doth he take delight, praying evermore, "O let me not wander from thy commandments." He joyfully acknowledges that the Judge of all the earth rules mankind by a law in which there is no injustice, by statutes which subserve the best interests of the governed, while they secure the glory of the great Governor. The Christian "consents unto the law that it is good." He is agreed with God, moreover, that a breach of the law should be visited with penalty: he would be unwilling that sin should go unpunished. He feels that the sanctions of law, however terrible, are absolutely necessary, and require to be severe. Above all, he is agreed with God in that great atonement for sin which God himself has ordained and provided in the person of Jesus Christ. Gazing upon the matchless sacrifice of Calvary, while the Lord is content, the believer is satisfied; where God finds satisfaction for his injured honour, the believer finds the noblest object of admiration and adoration. Thou lovest Golgotha, O thou Judge of the earth; and thy people are perfectly agreed with thee in this. Henceforth the Christian is at one with God in his love of holiness: he delights in the law of God after the inward man. Sin, which is abhorrent to the Most High, is obnoxious to the Christian in that measure in which he is enlightened and conformed unto the image of Christ. Great God, thou hast unsheathed thy sword, and bathed it in heaven, for the destruction of all evil, and thy redeemed are on thy side, abhorring that which is evil, and resolving to fight under thy command till the last sin shall be cut off. Thou hast uplifted thy banner because of the truth, and

around thy standard the soldiers of the cross are rallying; for thy battle, O Most High, is the battle of the Church; thy foes are our foes, and thy friends are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight.

I trust that most of us who are here met in the name of Jesus, feel a deep, sincere, and constant agreement with God. We have been guilty of murmuring at his will; but yet our newborn nature evermore at its core and center knoweth that the will of the Lord is wise and good; and we therefore bow our heads with reverent agreement, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "The will of the Lord be done." Our soul, when through infirmity she is tempted to rebellion, nevertheless struggles after complete resignation of her wishes and desires to the will of the Most High. We do not covet the life of self-will, but we sigh after the spirit of self-denial; yea, of self-annihilation, that Christ may live in us, and that the old Ego, the carnal I, may be altogether slain. I would be as obedient to my God as are those firstborn sons of light, his messengers of flaming fire. As the mercury feels the mysterious changes of the air, and sensitively moves in accordance with the atmosphere, so would I being surrounded by my God, evermore perceive his wish and will, and move at once in obedience thereto. Our strength shall be perfect when we have no independent will, but move and act only as we are moved and acted on by our gracious God. I hope that at this hour we can truly say, that notwithstanding our many sins, we do love the Lord our God; and if we could have our will this morning, we would follow his commands without the slightest departure from the narrow path. We are in heart agreed with God.

The text reminds us that this agreement gives us power to walk with God. May we be enabled to claim this privilege which divine grace has bestowed on us: power to walk with God in daily, habitual, friendly, intimate, joyous communion. Believer, you can walk with God this very day. He is as near to thee as he was to Abraham beneath the oak at Mamre, or Moses at the back of the desert. He is as willing to show thee his love as he was to reveal himself to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, or to Ezekiel by the streams of Chebar. Thou hast no greater distance this day between thee and thy God, than Jacob had when he laid hold upon the angel and prevailed. He is thy father, as truly as he was the father of the

people whom he covered by day with a cloud, and cheered by night with a pillar of fire; and though no Shekinah lights up a golden mercy-seat, yet the throne of grace is quite as glorious and even more accessible than in the days of old. He shall hide thee in his pavilion, as he did his servant David; yea, in the secret of the tabernacle shall be thy hiding-place. Enoch's privilege was not peculiar to him; it is thy birthright: claim it. Noah's high honour of walking with God was not reserved for him alone; it belongs to thee also, shut in as thou art in the ark of the covenant, and saved from the deluge of divine wrath. It should be the Christian's delight to be always with his God; walking with him in unbroken fellowship. Enoch did not take a turn or two with God, as Matthew Henry observes, but he walked with him four hundred years. O that we might cease to be with our God as wayfaring men who tarry but for a night: may we dwell in God, and may he dwell in us. Walking implies action; and our actions should always be in the Lord. The Christian, whatsoever he eateth, or drinketh, or doeth, should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him. Walking has in it the thought of progress; but all our progress should be with God. As we are rooted and grounded in Christ, so we must ask to grow up in him; ever abiding in our highest moments with God, and never imagining or conceiving any progress which shall remove us from humble confidence in him. Beloved brother in the Lord, it may be that thy heart is agreed with God, and yet thou hast lost for a time thy walking with him; be not at ease in thy soul till thou hast regained it. Search thine own heart by the light of the Word and of the Holy Spirit; and when thou knowest thyself to be agreed with God, through Him who is our peace, hesitate not to draw near with holy confidence to thy Father and thy God, notwithstanding all thy past wanderings; for he welcomes thee to walk with him, seeing that thou art agreed.

At this season we, as a Church, have had our hearts set upon a revival of religion in our midst. Many of us will be greatly and grievously disappointed if such a revival shall not take place. We have felt moved to cry for it; I think I may say we have been almost unanimously thus moved. Already there are signs that God is visiting us in a very remarkable manner, but our souls are set upon a greater work than we have ever seen. Now, dear friends, we need as the first and most essential

thing in this matter, that God should walk with us. In vain we shall struggle after revival unless we have his presence. If, then, we desire to have his presence with us, we must see to it that we are perfectly agreed with him both in the design of the work, and in the method of it; and I desire this morning to stir up your pure minds to heart-searching and vigilant self-examination, that every false way may be purged from us, since God will not walk with us as a Church, unless we be agreed with him.

The first remark, then, of this morning, is simply this,—we desire in this matter to walk together with God; but, in the second place, if we would have him with us we must be agreed with him; and therefore, thirdly, we desire to purge ourselves of everything which would mar our perfect agreement with God, and so prevent his coming to our aid. I do ask the prayers of God's people that he may enable me to speak to profit this morning, for if ever I felt my own unfitness to edify the saints, I do so just now: I will even confess that if I could have had my own choice, I should have left it to some one else to address you this morning. My harp is out of tune, and the strings are all loosened, but the chief musician understands his instruments, and knows how to get music out of us, and in answer to prayer he will doubtless sustain us and give you a blessing.

I. Let us, first, AVOW OUR DESIRE THAT IN OUR PRESENT EFFORT WE MAY WALK WITH GOD; otherwise our strivings after revival will be very wearisome.

I know of nothing more saddening than to attend a prayer-meeting where the devotion is forced, and the fervour laborious; where brethren puff and strain like engines with a load behind them too heavy for them to drag. It is painful to detect an evident design to get up an excitement, and wind up the people to the proper pitch; when the addresses are adapted to foster hotheadedness, and the prayers to beget superstition. God's true saints cannot but feel that to gain the graces of the Spirit by fleshly vehemence is sad work. They retire from such a meeting, and they say, "How different is this from occasions when God's Spirit has been really at work with us!" Then, like a ship with her sails filled with a fair wind, floating majestically along without tugging and straining, the Church,

borne onward with the breath of the divine Spirit, with a full tide of heaven's grace, speeds on her glorious way. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," was the request of Moses; and I think we may rather deprecate than desire a revival if God's presence be not in it. Lord, let us stay as we are, crying and groaning to see better days, rather than permit us to be puffed up with the notion of revival without thine own power in it; let us have no special prayer-meetings merely for the sake of them; but let us, O let us receive special blessings as the result of prayer: if thou dost not intend to help us now let us weep in secret, but let us not rejoice in a mere name if the substance be lacking. During a course of meetings by which we desire to excite the hearts of believers to a deeper interest in spiritual things; if there be not a gracious power in them, you will soon perceive a dulness, a flagging, a heaviness, a weariness stealing over the assembly; the numbers will decline, the prayers will become less fervent, and the whole thing will degenerate into a hollow sham or a mournful monotony. To come up from the wilderness is hard climbing unless we lean on our beloved. O thou who art our beloved and adorable Lord, lest our souls grow weary in well-doing, and faint for heaviness, be pleased to let us enjoy communion with thyself.

Not only is there weariness in our own attempts, but they always end in disappointment, unless God walketh with us. Ye may pray, and pray, and pray, but there shall be no conversions, no sense of quickening, until the Spirit's working be distinctly recognized. The minister shall be just as much a preacher of the mere letter as ever he was; the Church officers shall be as formal and official as ever they were; the Church members shall be as inconsistent and as indifferent as they were wont to be; the congregation shall be as uninterested and as unmoved as they were in the worst times, except the Spirit of God work with us. In this thing we may quote the words of the psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." O friends, it is well to have a holy industry and a devout perseverance; it is well to strain every nerve, and put forth every effort; but all this must end in the most sorry, heart-sickening failure, unless the Lord rend the heavens and come down. I am telling you what you all do know, and what I trust you feel,

but it is what we are constantly forgetting; for many are they that go a warfare at their own charges, and so become both bankrupt and defeated; and many be they who would build God's house simply by stress of human effort, but they fail, because God is not there to give them success.

Yet more; supposing that in this our attempt at revival, we should not be favoured with the presence of God; then prayer will be greatly dishonoured. I take it, that when a Church draws near to God in special prayer, asking any mercy, if she does not receive that mercy on account of some disagreement with God, then her belief in prayer is, for the future, greatly weakened; and this is a most serious evil, for it loosens the girdle of the loins of God's saints. Anything which makes men doubt the efficacy of prayer, is an injury to their spirituality; and thus upon the largest scale God's Church will suffer loss if her prayers shall remain unanswered. We must go on; it would be ruin to forbear or to turn our backs. As a Church, we must now conquer or die. How can I again stir you up to supplication, if on this occasion your prayers should be in vain? I shall come into this pulpit with but a faint heart to speak of my Master's faithfulness if he does not give you evidences of it. Ah! my brethren, when you are lifting up your voices in intercession, I cannot expect to mark your earnestness nor to behold your faith, unless that faith shall be confirmed just now by a shower divine mercy. To the world at large the non-hearing of prayer would be a ready argument, either against the existence of God, or else against the reality of his promise. I hope such a thing as this will not occur. "Aha! aha!" saith the enemy, "see what has come of it all! The people cried, but they cried in vain. They met in large numbers; they approached the mercy-seat with tears and groans, but no result has come of it; there have been no more conversions than before, and God's strength has not been put forth." Would you desire that such a calamity as this should occur. The true soldiers of the cross in our Israel would almost as soon lay down their necks, as that God's honour should thus be attainted in the presence of his foes.

Moreover, every attempt at revival of religion which proves a failure,—and fail it must without the presence of God,—leaves the Church in a worse condition than it was before; because, if it should prove a failure, from the want of any stir at all; then God's people fall back into their

former lethargy, with an excuse for continuing in it; or if a false stir be made, a reaction follows of a most injurious character. I suppose the worst time in the Christian Church is generally that which follows the excitement of a revival; and if that revival has had no reality in it, the mischief which is done is awful and incalculable. If no excitement shall come at all, the mischief is still as great; God's people, being disappointed, have little heart to listen to further exhortations to future zealous action, become contented with their Laodicean lukewarmness, and it becomes impossible to bestir them again. If a revival should apparently have success and yet God be not in it, perhaps this is even worse. The wild-fire and madness of some revivals have been a perfect disgrace to the common sense of the age, let alone the spirituality of the Church. I know, and speak not without book, when I declare that some churches have been seriously deteriorated and permanently injured by large admissions of excited but unconverted persons; so that the only thing a fresh pastor could do was to begin afresh, and purge the church book throughout, sweeping off scores of carnal persons; the beginning anew being almost hopeless, because, after the paroxysm of passion about religion has passed, there follows a season in which religion is treated with indifference, if not with disdain. I had rather see a Church asleep, than see it awake into the fever of fanaticism: better that she should lie still than do mischief. O dear friends, we have felt in our souls, not that we may have revival, but that we must have it; and when we think of the incalculable damage that shall be done to us all if the Lord does not visit us, I am sure we must again draw near to the angel and wrestle afresh, with this determination, that we will not let him go unless he bless us.

We may be confirmed in our anxious desire to have the Lord walking with us in this thing, when we consider the blessings which are sure to flow from his presence. Ah! what holy quickening shall come upon every one of us. The preacher will not have to lament that he has so little power in prayer; both alone and in your presence he shall be strengthened to intercede as an angel of God. You shall not have to mourn that the service lacks its former sweetness. You will feel the blessedness you knew when first you saw the Lord. You will not have to mourn that you are cold and dead, that your songs languish, and that your prayers expire; instead

thereof, every action shall be fraught with vigour, every thought shall glow with earnestness, every word shall be clothed with divine power. Let God arise; and doubts and fears shall betake themselves to their hiding-places, as the bats conceal themselves at the rising of the dawn. Let the Lord visit you; and difficulties which frown like Alps, will sink to plains. Let him arise; and all your enemies shall flee before you, as the smoke before the wind; the heavens shall drop with showers of mercy; and even your sins and all the guilt thereof, shall shake as Sinai shook at the presence of the God of Israel. A Church with God's presence in it is holy, happy, united, earnest, laborious, successful; fair as the moon before the Lord, and clear as the sun in the eyes of men, she is terrible as an army with banners to her enemies.

If God shall be pleased to be with his Church, then direct good shall visit our congregation. We used to say at Park Street, that there were not many seat-holders unconverted. The like is to a great extent true here. The immense increase of our Church gives us the hope that the day will come when there will not be a single seat unoccupied by a believer: but it is not the case yet. I suppose the Church is about half the congregation now. There are some, however, that from the very first have listened; but so far as salvation is concerned, they have listened in vain: they have been moved to tears, they have made good resolutions; but after ten or eleven years of ministry, they are just where they were, except that they have accumulated fresh guilt. Some desire to be Christians, but they harbour some darling lust. We know some who used to feel under the Word, but do not feel now. The voice which once was like a trumpet, now lulls them to sleep. Some have made a compromise; and one day they will serve God and another day they will serve their sins; like the Samaritans who feared the Lord and served other gods. Now let our cries be heard for the Master's presence, and we shall soon see these brought in; hearts of stone shall be turned to flesh; the iron of the Word shall break the northern iron and steel; Jehovah Jesus shall ride victoriously through those gates which have been barred against him, and there shall be shouting in heaven because the Lord hath gotten him the victory.

Wider blessings will follow. A Church is never blessed alone. If any one Church shall stand in the vigour of piety, other Churches shall take

example therefrom, and make an advance towards a better state. Here we have around us many Churches, hills which God has blessed; but they, like ourselves, have a tendency to slumber. Let God pour out his Spirit here, and the shower will not be confined to these fields, but will drop upon other pastures, and they shall rejoice on every side. Our testimony for God rings through this land; from one end of it to the other. Our ministry is not hidden under a bushel nor confined to a few. Tens of thousands listen every week to our word; and if the Lord shall be pleased to bless it, then shall it be as ointment poured forth, to load the moral atmosphere with a savour of Christ crucified. One nation cannot feel the power of God without communicating some of its blessing to another. The Atlantic cannot divide: no tongue or language can separate us. If God bless France or Switzerland, the influence shall be felt upon the Continent; if he should bless our island, all the whole earth must feel the power thereof. Therefore do we feel encouraged mightily to pray. O, my brethren, the world grows old; man's faith is getting weary of long waiting; the false prophets begin again to appear, and cry lo here, and lo there; but the Lord must come; of this are we confident: in such an hour as we think not, he may appear. How would we have him find us at his coming? Would we have him find his servants sleeping? his stewards wasting his goods? his vinedressers with neglected vines? his soldiers with swords rusted into their scabbards? No, we would have him find us watching, standing upon the watch-tower, feeding his sheep, tending his lambs, succouring the needy, comforting the weary, helping the oppressed. Gird up your loins then, I pray you, as men that watch for their Lord. If my words could have the power in them which I feel they lack, I would stir you up, dear brethren and sisters, to seek unto the mighty God of Jacob, that when the Son of Man cometh, if he find no faith upon the earth elsewhere, at least he may find it in you: if zeal shall be extinct in every other place, at least may he find one live coal yet glowing in your bosom. For this we want his presence, for without it we can do nothing.

II. This brings me, in the second place, to observe, that IF WE WOULD HAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD BE AGREED WITH HIM.

We must be agreed with God as to the end of our Christian existence. God hath formed us for himself, that we may show forth his praise. The main end of a Christian man is, that having been bought with precious blood, he may live unto Christ, and not unto himself. O brethren! I am afraid we are not agreed with God in this. I must say it, painful though it be, there are many professors, and there are some in this Church, who at least appear to believe that the main end of their Christian existence is to get to heaven, to get as much money as they can on earth, and to leave as much as they can to their children when they die; I say, "to get to heaven," for they selfishly include that as one of the designs of divine grace; but I question, if it were not for their happiness to go to heaven, whether they would care much about going, if it were only for God's glory; for their way of living upon earth is always thus: "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Religion never calls out their thoughtfulness. They can judge, and weigh, and plot, and plan to get money, but they have no plans as to how they can serve God. The cause of God is scarcely in their thoughts. They will pinch and screw to see how little they can contribute in any way to the maintenance of the cause of truth, or to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom; they will so far condescend to consider religion, as to think how they can profess it in the most economical manner, but nothing more. You will not hear me speak so foolishly and madly, as if I thought that it were not just and laudable in a man to seek to make money to supply the wants of his family, or even to provide for them on his own decease; such a thing is just and right: but whenever this gets to be the main thought; and I am persuaded it is the leading thought of too many professors, such men forget whose they are, and whom they serve; they are living to themselves; they have forgotten who it is that has said, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold." Oh! I pray God that I may feel that I am God's man, that I have not a hair on my head which is not consecrated, nor a drop of my blood which is not dedicated to his cause; and I pray, brethren and sisters, that you may feel the same; that selfishness may clean die out of you; that you may be able to say without any straining of the truth, "I have nothing to care for, nor to live for in this world, but that I may glorify God, and spread forth the savour of my Saviour's name." We cannot expect the Master's blessing till we are agreed about this. This is God's will: is it our will to-day? I know I have around me many faithful

hearts, who will say, "My desire is, that whether I live or die, Christ may be glorified in me": if we be all of that mind, God will walk with us; but every one who is of another mind, and of a divided heart, is a hindrance and an injury to us in our progress. It would be no loss to lose such persons, but a spiritual benefit to the entire cause, if this dead lumber were cast out. When the body gets a piece of rotten bone into it, it never rests, till, with pain, it casts out the dead thing: and so with the Church; the Church may be increased by dead members, but when she begins to get vigorous and full of life, her first effort is with much pain, perhaps with much marring of her present beauty, to cause the dead substance to come forth; and if this should be the case, though we shall pity those who are cast forth, yet for our own health's sake, we may thank God and take courage.

If we would have God with us we must be agreed as to the real desirableness and necessity of the conversion of souls. God thinks souls to be very precious, and his own words are, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Are we agreed with God in that? Our God thinks souls to be so precious, that if a man could gain the whole world and lose his soul, he would be a loser. Are we agreed with him there? In the person of Christ, our God wept over Jerusalem; watered with tears that city which must be given up to the flames. Have we tears, too? have we compassion, too? When God thinks of sinners it is in this wise: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" Can we bemoan sinners in that way? Do we stir our souls to an agony of grief because men will turn from God and will wilfully perish in their sin? If, on the contrary, you and I selfishly say, "We are safe, it does not matter to us whether others are brought to know Christ," we are not agreed, God will not work with us; and such of you as feel this indifferentism, this cursed lethargy, are our bane, our burden, our hindrance. God forgive you, and stir you up to feel that your heart will not rest unless poor sinners are plucked as brands from the burning. Are we agreed here?

If we would have the Lord with us, in the next place, we must be agreed as to the means to be used in revival. We are agreed that the first means is

the preaching of Christ. We do not want any other doctrine than that we have received— Christ lifted up upon his cross, as the serpent was lifted up upon the pole. This is the remedy which we, in this house of prayer, believe in. Let others choose sweet music, or pictures, or vestments, or baptismal water, or confirmation, or human rites; we abhor them, and pour contempt upon them; as for us, our only hope lies in the doctrine of a substitute for sinners, the great fact of the atonement, the glorious truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners. I think we are agreed with God in this, that the preaching of Christ is the way by which believers shall be saved. God's great agency is the Holy Spirit. We are agreed, brethren, that we do not want sinners to be converted by our persuasion, we do not want them brought into the Church by excitement; we want the Spirit's work, and the Spirit's work alone. I would not bend my knee once in prayer, much less day by day, to win a mere excitement; we have done without it, and we shall do without it by the grace of God; but I would give mine eyes, if I might but know that the Holy Spirit himself would come forth, and show what divinity can do in turning hearts of stone to flesh. In this thing, I think, that we are agreed with God. But God's way of blessing the Church is by the instrumentality of all her members. The multitude must be fed, but it must not be by Christ's hand alone, "He gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples, to the multitude." Are you all agreed here? I am afraid not. Many of you are engaged in works of usefulness, and I will make this my boast this day, that I had never thought that I should meet with a people so apostolic in their zeal as the most of you have been. I have marvelled, and my heart has rejoiced when I have seen what self-sacrifice some of the poorest among you have made for Christ; what zeal, what enthusiasm you have manifested in the spreading abroad of the Saviour's name. But still there are some of you who are doing nothing whatever, you have a name to live, but I fear that you are dead; you are very seldom at a prayer-meeting— even some Church members and persons whom I know are not kept at home by business, but by sheer indifference to the cause of God. Some of you are never provoked to zeal and to good works. That you come and listen to us, is something; and for what you do we are grateful; but for what you do not do, over this we mourn, because we fear that we are restrained in our efforts for the spread of the Saviour's kingdom, because as a Church we are not agreed in God's plan; and we shall be restrained

until every man in the Church can say, "I will consecrate myself this day unto the Lord of hosts; if there is anything to be done, be it to be a door-keeper in the house of God, here am I.

"There's not a lamb among his flock,
I would disdain to feed;
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear his cause to plead."

Yet again, dear friends, are we agreed this day as to our utter helplessness in this work? I caught a good sentence the other day. Speaking with a Wesleyan minister, I said to him, "Your denomination during the past year did not increase: you have usually had a large increase to your numbers. You were never so rich as now; your ministers were never so well educated; you never had such good chapels as now, and yet you never had so little success. What are you doing?—knowing this to be the fact, what are you doing? How are the minds of your brethren exercised with regard to this?" He comforted me much by the reply. He said, "It has driven us to our knees: we thank God that we know our state and are not content with it. We have had a day of humiliation, and I hope," he said, "some of us have gone low enough to be blessed." There is a great truth in that last sentence, "low enough to be blessed," I do fear me that some of us never do go low enough to be blessed. When a man says, "Oh! yes, we are getting on very well, we do not want any revival that I know of," I fear me he is not low enough to be blessed; and when you and I pray to God with pride in us, with self-exaltation, with a confidence in our own zeal, or even in the prevalence of our own prayers of themselves, we have not come low enough to be blessed. An humble Church will be a blessed Church; a Church that is willing to confess its own errors and failures, and to lie at the foot of Christ's cross, is in a position to be favoured of the Lord. I hope we are agreed, then, with God, as to our utter unworthiness and helplessness, so that we look to him alone.

I charge you all to be agreed with God in this thing, that if any good shall be done, any conversions shall occur, all the glory must be given to him. Revivals have often been spoiled, either by persons boasting that such-and-such a minister was the means of them, or else, as in the case of the

North of Ireland, by boasting that the work was done without ministers. That revival, mark you, was stopped in its very midst and seriously damaged by being made a kind of curiosity, and a thing to be gazed at and to be wondered at by persons both at home and abroad. God does not care to work for the honour of men, either of ministers or of laymen, or of Churches either; and if we should say, "Ah! well, I should like to see the presence of God with us that we may have many conversions, and put it in the Magazine, and say, that is how things are done at the Tabernacle," why we should not have a blessing that way. Crowns! crowns! crowns! but all for thy head Jesu! laurels and wreaths! but none for man, all for him whose own right hand and whose holy arm hath gotten him the victory. We must all be agreed on this point, and I hope we are.

3. And now to conclude. LET US PUT AWAY ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH OFFEND OUR GOD.

Before God appeared upon Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had to cleanse themselves for three days. Before Israel could take possession of the promised rest of Canaan, Joshua had to see to it that they were purified by the rite of circumcision. Whenever God would visit his people, he always demands of them some preparatory purging, that they may be fit to behold his presence; for two cannot walk together, unless that which would make them disagree be purged out. A few suggestions then, as to whether there is anything in us with which God cannot agree. Here I cannot preach to you indiscriminately, but put the task into the hand of each man to preach to himself. In the days of the great weeping, we read that every man wept apart and his wife apart, the son apart, and the daughter apart, all the families apart. So it must be here. Is there pride in me? Am I puffed up with my talent, my substance, my character, my success? Lord purge this out of me, or else thou canst not walk with me, for none shall ever say that God and the proud soul are friends: he giveth grace to the humble; as for the proud, he knoweth them afar off, and will not let them come near to him. Am I slothful? do I waste hours which I might usefully employ? Have I the levity of the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but drinks no honey from any of them? or have I the industry of the bee, which, wherever it lights, would find some sweet store for the hive? Lord, thou knowest my soul, thou understandest me.

Am I doing little where I might do much? Hast thou had but little reaping for much sowing? Have I hid my talent in a napkin? Have I spent that talent for myself, instead of spending it for thee? Slothful souls cannot walk with God. "My Father worketh," saith Jesus, "and I work"; and you who stand in the market-place idle, may stand there with the devil, but you cannot stand there with God. Let every brother who is guilty of this, purge away his sloth.

Or am I guilty of worldliness. This is the crying sin of many in the Christian Church. Do I put myself into association with men who cannot by any possibility profit me? Am I seen where my Master would not go? Do I love amusements which cannot afford me comfort when I reflect upon them; and which I would never indulge in, if I thought that Christ would come while I was at them? Am I worldly in spirit as to fashion? Am I as showy, as volatile, as frivolous as men and women of the world? If so, if I love the world, the love of the Father is not in me; consequently he cannot walk with me, for we are not agreed.

Again, am I covetous? do I scrape and grind? is my first thought, not how I can honour God, but how I can accumulate wealth? When I gain wealth, do I forget to make use of it as a steward? If so, then God is not agreed with me; I am a thief with his substance; I have set myself up for a master instead of being a servant, and God will not walk with me till I begin to feel that this is not my own, but his; and that I must use it in his fear.

Again, am I of an angry spirit? Am I harsh towards my brethren? Do I cherish envy towards those who are better than myself, or contempt towards those who are worse off? If so, God cannot walk with me, for he hates envy, and all contempt of the poor is abhorrent to him. Is there any lust in me? Do I indulge the flesh? Am I fond of carnal indulgences by which my soul suffers? If so, God will not walk with me; for chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and drunkenness, separate between a believer and his God: these things are not convenient to a Christian. Before the great feast of unleavened bread, a Jewish parent would sweep out every piece of leaven from his house; and so anxious would he be, and so anxious is the Jew at the present day, that he take a candle and sweeps out every cupboard, no matter though there may have been no food put in

there at any time, he is afraid lest by accident a crumb may be somewhere concealed in the house; and so, from the garret to the cellar, he clears the whole house through, to purge out the old leaven. Let us do so. I cannot think you will do so as the effect of such poor words as mine; but if my soul could speak to you, and God blessed the utterance, you would. For my own part, I cry unto my Master, that if there be anything that can make me more fit to be the messenger of God to you and to the sons of men, however painful might be the preparatory process, he would graciously be pleased not to spare me of it. If by sickness, if by serious calamities, if by slander and rebuke, more honour can be brought to him, then hail! and welcome! all these things; they shall be my joy; and to receive them shall be delight. I pray you, utter the same desire: "Lord, make me fit to be the means of glorifying thee."

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

What! do you demur? Do you want for ever to go on in the old dead-and-alive way in which the Churches are just now? Do you feel no sacred passion stirring your breast to anguish for the present, and to hope for the future? O ye cravens, who dread the battle, slink to your beds; but ye who have your Master's spirit in you, and would long to see brighter and better days, lift up your heads with confidence in him who will walk with us if we be agreed.

My text has a main bearing upon the unconverted: I think of preaching from it this evening to those who are not agreed with God, and who cannot walk with him. I pray that they may be reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; and the most likely means to accomplish this, will be by your earnest and fervent prayers. O Lord, hear and answer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Preparing To Depart

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. - 2 Kings 2:11

It seems to me that the departure of Elijah from the world, though of course he did not "die" at all, may furnish us with a very good type of the decease of those saints who, although taken away on a sudden, are not without some previous intimation that in such a manner they will be removed. There may be some such here. They may know that they have about them a disease which, in all probability, will terminate fatally and suddenly. Others of us may have no idea at present, that there is prepared for us a sudden death and sudden glory. We would not shrink from such a death if it were the Lord's will that it should be ours. Nay, some of us would gladly reach out our hands, and grasp so happy a mode of departure. It has always seemed to us to be the preferable way of leaving this world, not to be long sick and disabled, a weariness to those who nurse us, and a torment to ourselves, but on a sudden to shut our eyes on earth, and open them on the splendors of heaven. So to die would be, we think, a blessed mode of resting from our labors and entering into the presence of our Lord.

I. Taking Elijah's case as a guide, we propose to-night to say a few words—and may God make them to edification!—about PREPARING FOR OUR DEPARTURE, which really is so near that it is time we began to talk about it.

It is much nearer to us than we think. To those of you who have passed fifty, sixty, or seventy years of age, it must, of necessity, be very near. To others of us who are in the prime of life, it is not far off, for I suppose we are all conscious that time flies more swiftly with us now than ever it did. The years of our youth seem to have been twice as long as the years are now that we are men. It was but yesterday that the buds began to swell and burst, and now the leaves are beginning to fall, and soon we shall be expecting to see old winter taking up his accustomed place. The years whirl along so fast that we cannot see the months which, as it were, make the spokes of the wheel. The whole thing travels so swiftly that the axle

thereof grows hot with speed. We are flying, as on some mighty eagle's wing, swiftly on towards eternity. Let us, then, talk about preparing to die. It is the greatest thing we have to do, and we have soon to do it so let us talk and think something about it.

And what should we do when we are preparing to die? Well, *we may spend some little time in leave-taking*. We have some friends who have been very dear to us, and we may almost begin to bid them "good-bye." When we feel that death is really coming, we may spare a little season to say to a friend, "I beseech thee now to leave me." There will be some who, like Elisha with Elijah, have been with us during life, and who will not leave us in the very last moment of death. Yet, in the prospect of our departure, we must learn to hold all things with a loose hand. Why should I grip so fast that which death must and will tear from me? Why should I set my affections so ardently upon a dying thing that will melt before my eyes? I cannot carry it with me when I am called to go. There are, it is true, dear ones who will not leave us, but who will live in our hearts and permit us to live in their hearts till the last hour shall come, and longer still. But we must begin even now to prepare for our departure by reminding them, and reminding ourselves likewise, that these friendships must be broken, that these unions must be snapped, at least for a season, hopeful though we may be that we shall enjoy them again on the other side the Jordan.

The next thing we ought to do, and as it seems to me even more important, is *to go and see about our work*. If we have a feeling at all that we are going home, let us set our house in order. What did Elijah do? He went to the two colleges he had founded at Bethel and at Jericho, and of which he was their principal instructor, and he addressed the young men once more before he was taken from them. I should like to have been a student there to have listened to the Professor's last lecture. I warrant you that it was not an ordinary one. There was nothing in it dry, dusty, dead, and dreary. O friends, I think I hear the prophet charging them as before God, and before his holy angels, to rebuke the sin of the age in which they lived. "I went to the top of Carmel," said he, "and the priests of Baal were gathered about me, and I laughed them to scorn; I poured sarcasms upon their heads; I said to them concerning Baal, 'Cry aloud, for he is a God;

and while they cut themselves with knives and with lancets I mockingly said to them, 'Peradventure he hunteth, or he stepeth, and needeth to be awaked by louder cries;' I laughed to scorn their reappings upon the altar; and then, when I bowed my knees, and cried for fire to come from heaven, those same skies, which my faith had shut up so that no rain fell upon the sinful Israelites' land, now cast forth fire at my word; and then I took the prophets of Baal, I let not one of them escape; I slew them by the brook Kishon, and made the brook run blood-red with their gore, because they had led astray the people of God, and had defied the name of the Most High. Now, young, men," said he, "be ye faithful even unto death; go ye and teach the people, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; pull down their idols, and exalt Jehovah, and speak ye as men who are sent by him."

You, dear friends, are not called to teach students as I am, so I speak with earnest sympathy when I say that, next to dying in the pulpit, the thing I would choose would be to die amongst those brethren whom I often seek to stir up to fidelity in the Master's cause. But you may well desire that, before you depart, all your various works should come under review. Sunday-school teachers, call your children together; let your addresses to them be those of dying men and women. You who can and do conduct our Bible-classes, dear and honored brothers and sisters, there are many souls committed constantly to your care; clear yourselves of their blood so that you may go to your beds to-night, and every night, as though you were going to your tomb, and feel that you fell asleep on that bed as you would wish to fall asleep when your last sleeping hour must come. Let us each see to the various works we have in hand, so that we leave nothing out of place. Is there one soul we ought to have spoken to that we have not yet pleaded with for the Master? Let us do it now. Is there any field of usefulness which we ought to have ploughed, and does the ploughshare still lie rusting in the furrow? Let us go and begin to plough this very night, or, at least, when to-morrow's sun has risen. We have so little time to live, let us live like dying men. A certain lady, staying in their parish of that devoted minister, Mr. Cecil, was asked by him to undertake some particular work. She answered him "My dear sir, I should be very glad to do it but I am not certain of being in the parish more than three months" "Ah!" said he, "I am not certain of being in the parish three hours, and yet

I go on with my duty, and I pray you, madam, to go on with you." Let us look at our time, not as having a great deal of it, but as having so little. Beza said to his scribe, as he was translating the Gospel of John, "Write fast; write fast, for I am dying." Then when he had got to the last verse, he said, "Now shut up the book, and leave me alone a minute," and he fell back, and entered into glory. Work hard; the candle is nearly burned out, and you have not finished that garment yet! Work hard, for you have not another candle to light when that one is gone!

When Elijah had taken leave of Elisha, and had addressed the students, *the next thing was to cross the Jordan*. With his mantle he smote the waters, and passed through them, and then, as it were, they shut him out from all the world except Elisha. I think I would like, if I might have notice of the day of my dying, to get away from the world alone. What does a dying man want with business? A man who has to die had need shut up the ledger, and keep open that blessed book which shall be as God's rod and shaft to comfort him in the valley of the shadow of death. It is a happy circumstance for some of my friends, whom I look upon almost with envy, that they have ended the activities of life before death, and have now a little season in which, as it were, they have got on the verge of Jordan, and are resting, except that they are doing the Lord's work diligently,—resting from the world, and preparing to enter into glory. John Bunyan very graphically describes this state, when he tells us of what he calls "the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet, and pleasant, and the way lying directly through it, the pilgrims solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair, neither could they from, this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the city they were going to, also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven." They heard the melody of the upper spheres while they were still here below. This is a blessed terminus of our earthly life. Did not the prophet indicate it, when he said, "At evening time, it shall be light." When you have got home from business

lately, how you have enjoyed those splendid evenings that we have been having, so fair, so calm, so bright! You know that the day must die, and that the dew would weep its fall; but, oh! its dying hours were so pleasant! There was no sun-heat to broil you, no dust nor whirl of care to vex you, but the evening seemed a beautiful preparation for your going to your beds. Well, if one might choose, one would like to have just such a season as that; and though there are but few grey hairs on the heads of some of us, I am not quite sure that we might not begin this happy time sooner than most people do. I do not mean by laying aside work, but by laying aside unbelief; not by giving up toil, but by giving up carking care. Why should I fret and worry myself when I am young any more than when I am old? My father's God is my God, and he who will make the land as Beulah to me when I come to die, can make it so even now if I have but that childlike confidence which can sing, -

All my times are in thy hand,
All events at thy command."

Imitate Luther's little bird, that used to sit on the tree, and sing so him. Nobody else could interpret its notes, or tell what it said, but to Luther it sang, -

"Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow."

Elijah teaches us another thing by which we may prepare for our departure. He said to his friend Elisha, "*Ask what I shall do for thee.*" Quick, then, brother, quick; if you have anything you can do for your friends, do it *now*. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." If you do not ask your friends what you *shall* do, think what you *can* do for them. Mother, you would like to pray with that dear child of yours; then do it soon, for the hour of your departure is at hand. Friend, you would like to do a kind action to that struggling brother, then do it soon for you may be gone tomorrow. You have thought of something that you would like to do for Christ's cause. Perhaps there is a destitute village where you would like to have the gospel preached, and you want to make some provision for it; then do it soon, do it soon, or the resolve may never

be able to ripen into action. How many infants that might have grown up to be spiritual giants, have been strangled by our procrastination! You nurse the little child of resolve, but seldom does it grow into the man of practical action. Get about it, get about, it *now!* You cannot help your friend when you have once gone up in your chariots of fire, so help him now, and let him tell you what you shall do for him.

Then notice that Elijah and Elisha were *talking as they went on, and holding communion with each other*. Old Bishop Hall says they must have been talking of some very solemn and heavenly subjects, or else one would have thought that they would have been on their knees praying instead of talking; but he very properly adds, that "sometimes mediation is best and sometimes conversation." So was it in their case. Elijah had a great deal to say to Elisha; he was about to leave the State and the Church in very perilous times, so he talked fast to the man who was to bear the burden and heat of the day, and poured the whole case into his ear; and no doubt Elisha asked him many questions, and was informed by him upon many knotty points, and so "they still went on, and talked." Let our talk always be like their talk, and then it will be well to die talking. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard." Brethren, I say, and I am afraid I may well say it with tears, that much of our conversation would not do for God to hear, and though he does hear it, yet it would not do for him to write a book of remembrance concerning it, for it would be better far that it should be blotted out. Oh! when the last solemn hour shall come, may we be found -

"Wrapt in meditation high,
Hymning our great Creator's praise;"—

or else conversing with our brethren here below, so that we may go from the communion of the Church militant to that of the Church triumphant, and take away our lip from the human ear to begin to speak to ears immortal before the starry throne.

These are the different methods by which we may prepare to die. Some people, when they fancy they are going to die, think the only thing they can do to prepare for death is to send for the parson, "take the

sacrament," as they call it, get upstairs, not see anybody, and draw the curtain. The best way for a Christian to die is in harness. If I were a soldier, methinks I would sooner die in battle in the hour of victory than I would die in the trenches doing nothing, rotting in idleness for want of work to do. Let us just push on, and may it be said of us when we are gone, he did -

His body with his charge lay down,
And ceased at once to work and live."

So was it with Elijah; so may it be with us!

II. THIS DEPARTURE OF ELIJAH appears to me in some measure SYMBOLIC OF THE DEATHS OF BELIEVERS.

It was sudden, though expected. They were talking, and just in the middle of a sentence, perhaps, they were parted. There was no noises, for the wheels of that chariot moved not on earth, but its brightness shone around them. They looked back, and they saw strange steeds, whose eyeballs flashed with flame, and whose necks were clothed with thunder; and behind them was a chariot brighter than the golden car in which the Caesars rode, for it was a car of fire, and Elijah knew it was one of the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, that he had sent to take his favourite servant up to the ivory palaces, where the King himself dwells. It was sudden; the parting came in a moment; and I suppose that death is usually sudden. Even though persons may be, as we say, long dying, yet the actual moment of departure comes suddenly. The bowl is broken with a crash, and the silver cord is loosed; the chain is snapped, and the eagle mounts to dwell in the sun.

How terrible!—a chariot of *fire*, and horses of *fire*. Even to a Christian, death is not a soft, dainty being. To die is no child's play. We speak of it, as a sleep; but it is no such sleep as yon youngster's, when he lies down upon the sunny bank to wake again. There are solemnities about it. There are, horses and there are chariots, and so far there is comfort; but they are all of fire, and he that sees them need have Elijah's eyes, or perhaps his own will blink. Elijah had seen fire before; he had called it from

heaven upon his enemies; he had brought it down from heaven upon his sacrifice; he had seen fire flashing on him at Horeb, then the whole sky was blight, with sheets of forked flame, but the Lord was not in that fire as he was in this. He who had looked at that former fire, and feared not, could bear to look upon the horses and chariots of fire which God had sent.

Though terrible, *how triumphant!* Oh, what splendor, to ride to heaven in a chariot! No foot-passenger wading through Jordan's stream, and going up dripping on the other bank to be met by the shining ones. *That* is bright and glorious. The good dreamer of Bedford Gaol dreamed well when he dreamed that; but this is more triumphant still,—to mount the car, and stand erect, and ride up to the throne of God, drawn thither by horses of fire! It is given to but few to have this experience; and yet, what am I saying? Have we not all the like experience? Shall we not all have it when, in the image of Christ Jesus, we shall mount with him to our eternal rest? Yes, he will come again, and all his people with him; and if Jesus shall ride on the white horse of victory, his saints shall ride on white horses too, and shall enter through the gates into the city amidst resounding acclamations. Yes, to die is triumph to the Christian. It seems to me that it was an act of faith, on the part of Elijah, to mount that fiery chariot; and we may say of him as it was said of Enoch, "By faith he was translated that he should not see death; and he was not, for God took him."

Yes, horses of fire and chariots of fire are no bad image of the departure of the blessed when they are called to enter into the joy of their Lord. As for us, we have not got to heaven yet; our turn has not come, though we are ready to say, -

"Oh that we now might grasp our Guide!"
Oh that the worst were given!
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven!"

III. But while we remain behind, let us ask, WHAT OUGHT WE TO DO WHO HAVE SEEN ANY DIE LIKE THIS?

If we have lost wife, or husband, or child, or friend, in this sudden way, what ought we to do? You see what Elisha did. First of all, *he rent his clothes, which was the Eastern mode of showing his grief*. Well, you may weep, for "Jesus wept." Do not think there is any sin in sorrowing over departed friends, for the Lord never denies to us those human feelings which are rather kindly than vicious. Had there been death before the Fall, I could imagine even perfect, Adam weeping at the loss of Eve; nay, he would have been no perfect man if he could have lost his spouse, and not have wept. "Jesus wept;" we regard him all the more as Jesus because he wept; and you could not be like Jesus unless you wept too. The gospel does not make us Stoics; it makes us Christians. Still, you must remember that there is a moderation in grief. The Quaker was right who, when he saw a lady fretting on the sofa some year or so after her husband was dead, still harboring grief without a token of resignation, said to her, "Madam, I see you have not forgiven God yet." Sometimes grief is not a sacred feeling, but only a murmur of rebellion against the Most High.

Yes, you may rend your garments; and if you like, you may do a little more. Elisha not only rent his garments, but he cried "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," and in doing this *he eulogized his departed friend*. He seemed to say, "He has been a father to me; I have lost one who was very tender to me, one who trained me, and watched over me, and fostered me as a father." Oh, speak well of the departed! You need not 'bate your kind words about your dead friends. We speak little enough that is good of one another while we are living; I wish we sometimes said a little more, not by way of flattery, but by way of commendation, which might cheer depressed and burdened spirits; but you need not be afraid of speaking flatteringly, so as to hurt the dead who have gone to glory, for they will not be injured by what you say. If those who have departed were of value to the Church of God, you may say of them, "The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" You may wonder who will lead the Church now; you may question how things will go on; who will be the horses to drag the car, or where will now be the Chariot in which weary spirits may be made to ride.

Yes, you may both grieve and eulogize. Weep well and speak well, but

then, what next? Do not stand there, and waste your time; do not stop there, and let your eyes see nothing. See, there is something falling. What is it that is dropping from the sky. It is no meteor. Elisiha's eyes are fixed on it; he finds that it is the old mantle that the prophet used to throw about his shoulders, and he picks it up joyfully; and *our friends, who have gone from us, have left their mantles too*. What are these mantles? Sometimes good men leave their books and sermons¹ behind them, but all Christian people leave their good examples. Now, do not stand and weep then you forget the goodness of the departed, but go and take their mantles up. Were they earnest? Be you earnest. Were they humble? Be you humble. Were they prayerful? Be you prayerful; and so, in each case, shall you wear their mantle. They have left their example for you to follow; they are not gone that you may superstitiously reverence them, but they have departed that you may earnestly imitate them. As far as they followed Christ, do you follow them, and so wear their mantle.

And when you have got their mantle, do not waste precious time in lamentations about them any more; *get to your business*. There is a river in your way; what then? Well, go to the Jordan as the prophet Elisha did, and try to pass it. Say not, "Where is Elijah?" but "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Elijah is gone, but his God is not; Elijah has gone away, but Jehovah is present, still. Now then, Christians, you have to take up the work of the departed; take it up in the strength of the same God who made them mighty, and strive to do the same works that they did. If they divided Jordan, do you divide Jordan. You have their example to show you how to do it, and their God is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Ask ye now, "Where did Elisha go after he had divided Jordan?" Did he go to seek out Elijah—
"In some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade;
Where rumor of—"

bereavements and of death might never reach him more? Not he! He went straight away to the place where Elijah used to be the head of the college, and there took up Elijah's work. Were I a soldier, with courage for

the armor of any mind, and valor for the enterprise of my life, a soldier of that class which Baxter describes as carrying their lives in their hands, and the grace of God in their hearts, then surely, when I saw a man just in front of me fall, I should step forward, and take his place. That is what you should do. If there is a good man dead, fill up the gap. If there is a saint departed, be you, as it were, "baptized for the dead." Seek to have the blessing of God upon you, so that you may have a double portion of his spirit, and may be able to take the place in the ranks, or the council, which he who is gone has vacated. Your business is not in the closet of mourning, but in the field of service. There is work to be done yet; there is work to so done yet; up, and do it! That was a brave thing in Richard Cobden's life, at the time when his whole soul was taken up with the subject of free trade, and the breaking of the chains of commerce, the young wife of his friend, John Blight, died, and God went to him, and said, "Now, Bright, you have lost your wife, and we will heal your sorrow by fighting the nation's battle;" and the thing was indeed well and bravely done. So, if you have lost a dear friend, heal your sorrow by giving yourself more earnestly than ever to God's cause, and to the propagation of "the truth as it is in Jesus." There is nothing like activity, nothing like having the hands full, to keep the heart bright, and to keep the soul happy. You are dullards, you who have nothing to do: you fret and fume, and rebel, instead of fighting for you Lord; but if you would only go up "to the help of the Lord against the mighty," and would bear his burdens, he would help you to bear yours, and the sorrow that now seems as a knife in your bones would be as a spur to your activity. "I vowed," said one, "that I would be avenged on death for all the damage that he had done to me, and so I smote him right and left with the fiery sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; I preached the immortality that there is in Christ Jesus, and so I was avenged of death, and felt that I had conquered him." So do you; go and serve your Master still, and though Elija may depart, yet you shall fill up his place, and God's horsemen and chariots shall not be wanting.

And now, dear friends, in parting for the night, it is meet for us to say, "Farewell for this night, then we meet again in the morning." But, sometimes, this parting may be very significant, and therefore let us say, "Farewell," with the thought that some of us may never look each other in

the face again. I hope we can truly say, "Farewell!" and then we shall meet in the morning, when the night is over, and the death-dews drop no more, when the chill frost of midnight shall all have been melted away by the rising sun of immortality. Yes, we will meet; we shall meet to part no more. We will make an appointment *now*, to meet each other *then*, where our hearts, in faith, have often met before, at the throne of him who has washed us in his blood, and made us white, and so,—FAREWELL TILL THE MORNING!

But what of some of you? You can make no such appointment to meet us *there*, for your way is not thitherward—not with horses of fire to heaven, but with chariots of flame down to hell,—down, down, down for ever into the depths of grief! We dare not say that we will meet you *there*. If you will go there, you must go alone; if you will perish, you must perish by yourself. If you will live and die without a Savior, you cannot expect your friends to accompany you to that dreary world of woe. But why goest thou, why goest thou, O solitary traveler, where thou wouldst not have thy fellow go? Thou wouldst not see thy child damned,—let me say the word with solemn awe—thou wouldst not see thy child damned, wouldst thou? Then why shouldst thou so damned thyself? "But must it so!" say you. No, sinner, there is no "must" for that. There hangs my Master, the crucified redeemer, and if thou lookest to him, there will be another "must" for thee, namely, that thou must be saved. The road to heaven is by the cross of Calvary. Christ Jesus marks the way to glory by the crimson blood-drops which flowed from his pierced hands and feet. Trust Jesus; trust him wholly; trust him now; trust him for ever; and then we will meet, we will meet, again in the morning, and so,—GOOD NIGHT!

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A Present Religion

Beloved, now are we the sons of God. - 1 John 3:2

I shall not pretend to preach from the whole of my text this morning, short though it be. The word "now" is to me the most prominent word in the text, and I shall make it so this morning. "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God."

It is astonishing how distance blunts the keen edge of anything that is disagreeable. War is at all times a most fearful scourge. The thought of slain bodies and of murdered men must always harrow up the soul; but because we hear of these things in the distance, there are few Englishmen who can truly enter into their horrors. If we should hear the booming of cannon on the deep which girdles this island; if we should see at our doors the marks of carnage and bloodshed; then should we more thoroughly appreciate what war means. But distance takes away the horror, and we therefore speak of war with too much levity, and even read of it with an interest not sufficiently linked with pain. As it is with war, so it is with death. Death is a frightful thing; he who is the bravest must still fear before it, for at best it is a solemn thing to die. Man, therefore, adopts the expedient of putting off all thoughts of death: it may be very near to him, but he conceives it to be at a distance, and then the same effect is produced as when war is at a distance; its horror is forgotten, and we speak of it with less solemnity. So likewise with true religion; men are constrained to believe that there is truth in religion. Though there are some fool-hardy enough to deny it, the most of us in this enlightened land are obliged to acknowledge that there is a power in Godliness. What, then, does the worldling do? He practices the same expedient. He puts religion far away; he knows that its disagreeableness will be diminished by his believing it to be distant. Hence there has sprung up in the minds of the unregenerate world a notion that religion is a thing to be accomplished just at the close of life, and the usual prayer of an ungodly man, when in the slightest degree pricked in his conscience, is, "Oh, that I may be saved at last!" He does not feel anxious to be saved now; religion is a thing for which he has no appetite, and therefore believing it essential to insure his eternal welfare, he adopts the alternative of saying, "I hope to have it at last."

The religion, then, of the present, is not the worldling's religion. He tolerates that which speaks of eternity; that which deals with dying beds; that which leads him to look back with a specious repentance upon a life spent in sin, but not that which will enable him to look forward to a life spent in holiness. Very differently, however, do we act with affairs of the present life, for things that are sweet to us, become the more sweet by their nearness. Was there ever a child who longed for his father's house who did not feel that the holidays grew more sweet in his estimation the shorter the time was that he had to tarry?

What man is there who having once set his heart on riches, did not find his delight in the thought of being rich increase with the nearness of his approach to the desired object? And are we not all of us accustomed, when we think a good thing is at a distance, to try if we can shorten the time between us and it. We try anything and everything to push on the lagging hours; we chide them, wish that Time had double wings, that he might swiftly fly and bring the expected season. When the Christian talks of heaven, you will always hear him try to shorten the distance between himself and the happy land; he says, -

"A few more rolling suns at most
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast."

There may be many years between him and paradise, but still he is prone to say,

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long."

Thus do we all delight to shorten the distance between us and the things for which we hope. Now let us just apply this rule to religion. They who love religion love a present thing. The Christian who really seeks salvation, will never be happy unless he can say, "Now am I a child of God." Because the worldling dislikes it, he puts it from him, because the Christian loves it, therefore its very fairest feature is its present existence, its present enjoyment in his heart. That word "now" which is the sinners warning, and his terror, is to the Christian, his greatest delight and joy.

"There is therefore"—and then the sweetest bell of all rings—"there is therefore *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" to the sinner that same idea is the blackest of all, "He that believeth not is condemned *already*, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

This morning, in God's name, I shall endeavor to plead with men, and show them the importance of having a present religion. I am quite certain that this is a habit which is too much kept in the back-ground. I am sure from mixing with mankind, that the current belief is, that religion is a future thing, perhaps the wish is father to the thought. I am certain the ground of it is, men love not religion, and therefore they desire to thrust it far from them.

I shall commence by endeavoring to show that religion must be a thing of the present, because *the present has such intimate connection with the future*, and to proceed—We are told in Scripture that this life is a seed time, and the future is the harvest, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." The Scripture often speaks to us in words like these, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." It is always supposed in Scripture, that this life is the time of generating, if I may use such an expression, the life that is to come, as the seed generates the plant, even so doth this present life generate the eternal future. We know, indeed, that heaven and hell are, after all, but the developments of our present character, for what is hell but this, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is unholy, let him be unholy still?" Do we not know that in the bowels of every sin, damnation slumbers? Is it not a fearful truth that the germ of everlasting torment sleeps in every vile wish, every unholy thought, every unclean act, so that hell is but a great breaking out of slumbering lava, which had been so quiet, that while the mountain was covered with fair verdure, even to its summit, death comes and bide that lava rise; and down the steep of manhood's eternal existence, the fiery flame, and the hot scalding lava of eternal misery doth pour itself. Yet it was there before, for sin is hell, and to rebel against God is but the prelude of misery. So is it with heaven; I know that heaven is a reward, not of debt, but of grace; but still the Christian has that within him, which forestall for him a heaven. What did Christ say? "I *give* unto my sheep

eternal life." He did not say, I will give, but, I *give* unto them. "As soon as they believe in me, I give them eternal life," and "he that believeth, hath eternal life, and shall never come unto damnation." The Christian hath within him the seed-beds of a paradise, in due time the light that is sown for the righteous, and the gladness that is buried beneath the black earth for the upright in heart, shall spring up, and they shall reap the harvest. Is it not plain then that religion is a thing which we must have here? Is it not prominently revealed that religion is important for the present? for if this life be the seed time of the future, how can I expect to reap in another world other crops than I have been sowing here? how can I trust that I shall be saved, unless I am saved? how can I have hope that heaven shall be my eternal inheritance, unless the earnest be begun in my own soul on earth?

But again, this life is always said in Scripture to be a preparation for the life to come, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." "They that were ready went in with him to the supper, and the door was shut." There is in this world a getting ready for another world; to use a Biblical figure, we must here put on the wedding dress, which we are to wear for ever. This life is as the vestibule of the king's court, we must put our shoes from off our feet; we must wash our garments and make ourselves ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Somehow, in Scripture, the thought comes out as plain as if written with a sunbeam, this world is the beginning of the end,—it is the preparing-place for the future. Supposing you have no religion now, how will you stand when now is turned into eternity? When days and years are gone, how will it fare with you, if all your days have been spent without God and without Christ? Do you hope to hurry on the white garment after death? Alas! you shall be girt with your shroud, but not be able to put on the wedding raiment. Do you trust that you shall wash you and make you clean in the river Jordan? Alas! ye shall breed corruption in your tomb, but ye shall not find holiness there. Do ye trust to be pardoned after you have departed?

"There are no acts of pardon pass'd
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and fell despair,
Reign in eternal silence there."

Or, do ye think that when ye near the borders of the grave, then will be the time to prepare? Be not deceived. We read in Scripture one instance of a man saved at the eleventh hour. Remember, there is but one; and we have no reason to believe that there ever was, or ever will be another. There may have been persons saved on their dying beds, but we are not sure there ever were. Such things may have happened, but none of us can tell. Alas! facts are sadly against it; for we have been assured by those who have had the best means of judging—those who have long walked the hospital of humanity—that such as thought they were dying and made vows of repentance, have almost invariably turned back, like "the dog to his own vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Oh no; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" for to-day is the preparing time for the dread to-morrow—to-day is the making ready for the eternal future.

Let me urge one other reflection here. How are we saved? All through Scripture we are told we are saved by faith, except in one passage, wherein it is said, we are saved by hope. Now note, how certain it is that religion must be a present thing if we are saved by faith, because faith and hope cannot live in another world. "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Hope cannot exist in that world of realities where shadows are unknown. How can faith be exercised when we see a thing? for what a man perceiveth by faith that he realises not by sense; and although we say "seeing is believing," it is quite certain that seeing and believing are at opposite poles. Believing is an assurance of that which we see not, and in confidence of faith waiting until we do see it; but seeing is sensuous, and the very reverse of faith. Now if I am to be saved by faith, it is quite certain I must be saved in a state where faith can be exercised that is in this world; and if I am to be saved by hope, I cannot be saved by hope in that world where hope cannot exist; I must be saved here, for here is the only place where hope can breathe an air that lets it live. The air of heaven is too bright and pure, too heavenly, too warm. too sweet with angels' songs, for faith and hope to inhabit. They leave us on this side of the Jordan; if then we are saved by these I think it follows—and every one of you must perceive the inference—we must be saved now, because faith and hope are not things of the future. Oh how pleasant, if after these

remarks we can say, "Yes, it is so; it is even so, and we rejoice therein, for 'now are we the sons of God.'"

In the second place, as I have briefly shown the connection between the present and the future, let me use another illustration to show the importance of a present salvation. *Salvation is a thing which brings present blessings.* When you read Scripture, and alas there are few who care to read it as they ought in these times, they read anything rather than their Bibles—when you read Scripture, you will be struck with the fact that every blessing is spoken of in the present tense. You remember how the apostle in one of his epistles says, "Unto them which are saved, Christ power of God and the wisdom of God." He does not say to them who shall be saved, but to them which are saved. We know too that justification is a present blessing—"there is therefore *now* no condemnation." Adoption is a present blessing, for it says, "*Now* are we the sons of God," and we know also that sanctification is a present blessing, for the apostle addresses himself to "the saints who *are* sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called." All the blessings of the new covenant are spoken of in the present tense, because with the exception of eternal glory in heaven, they are all to be enjoyed here. I know this, that I shall be one day, if I am a believer in Christ, more sanctified than I am today—if not in the sense of consecration, yet still in the sense of purification—but at the same time I know this of a surety, that when I stand at God's right hand, midst the lamps of eternal brightness, and when these fingers move with vigor across the golden strings, and when this voice is filled with the immortal songs, I shall not be one whit more a child of God than I am now. And when the white robe is upon me, and the crown upon my head, I shall not be more justified than I am at the present moment, for it is the doctrine of Holy Scripture, that

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives
Salvation in full through his blood."

But the assurance of our possession in these things is a present blessing also. I will illustrate what I mean by a circumstance which happened to

myself. A lady called upon me in some distress of mind, and this was her difficulty:—She had, she trusted, been converted to God, enjoyed great peace of mind, and for a little season was very full of joy; because she believed that she had been forgiven, and was accepted in the beloved. Naturally enough, seeking her religious instructor, she went to the clergyman of the parish, who, unfortunately for her was a blind guide, for when she began to tell him concerning her joy, he checked her, by saying, "My good woman, this is all presumption." "Nay, sir," said she "I trust not; my hope is fixed on nothing else than Jesus; I repose alone in him." "That is right enough," said he, "but you have no authority to say you know you are saved; you have no authority to believe that you are already pardoned." And he told her that he did not believe it possible for any Christian to be assured of this except a very few eminent saints, they might hope, that was all; they might trust but they could never be sure. Ah! methinks he had gone but a very little way on the road to the kingdom of heaven. He must have been but a very small infant in Christ, if in Christ at all, to have told her so. For those of us who have for a few years put on the Lord Jesus, know of a surety that there is such a thing as infallible assurance, we know that although there is such a thing as presumption, there is a distinction which every Christian can easily mark between the one and the other. Presumption says, "I am a child of God, and I may live as like. I know I am saved, I need not therefore seek to have present communion with Christ." But Assurance says, "I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And then she meekly bows her head, and says, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe, keep me and I shall be kept; draw me and I will run after thee." Oh! my dear hearers, never believe that falsehood of the day—that a man cannot know himself to be a child of God. For if you tell us that, we can refute you with a thousand testimonies. We have seen the poor, the humble, and the illiterate, confident of their interest in Christ. It is true, we have seen them doubt; we have heard their wailings when they could not see Christ with their heart. Yea we have known the time when the greatest of God's people have had to tremble, and say -

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—

'Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?'"

But still, God's people may be assured; they may know, by the witness of the Spirit within, that they are born of God; for doth not an apostle say, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we *are* born of God." I would that we had more Christians who lived in the enjoyment of full assurance. How precious it is when the milk of faith settles down, and the thick cream of full assurance can be skimmed from the surface as marrow and fatness to the children of God. Religion, then, is a thing of present assurance. A man may know in this life, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he is accepted in Christ Jesus.

Yet I am inclined to think, that the worldly man most of all objects to present religion, because he does not like its duties. Most men would be very religious if religion did not entail obligations. Many a free liver would be a very pious man, if he were not curtailed of a few of his bottles of wine. Many a loose character would have no objection to go up to the temple and pray, and subscribe his name to the God of Jacob, if the gospel did not forbid all uncleanness, and everything that is lascivious. Many a tradesman would put on the Lord Jesus Christ, if there were no necessity to put off the old man, if he could keep his sins and have Christ too—oh, how willing would he be. Indeed, there are a great many who are so fond of it, that they have tried it. We know people who are like the Roman Emperor, who believed that Jesus Christ was God, but thought that all the other strange gods were likewise to be worshipped; so these people think religion a very good thing, but think sin a very good thing too, so they set up the two together, and their whole life is like Janus, two-faced. They look most comely Christians in the synagogue, but they look most unmistakable hypocrites if you see them in the market. Men will not direct a single eye to religion because it curtails license and entails duties. And this, I think, proves that religion is a present thing, because the duties of religion cannot be practiced in another world, they must be practiced here.

Now, what are the duties of religion? In the first place, here are its active

duties, which a man should do between man and man, to walk soberly and righteously, and uprightly in the midst of an evil generation. Lightly as some people speak about morality, or against morality, there is no true religion where there is no morality. Do not tell me about your orthodoxy, do not come and tell me about your private prayers and secret piety, if your life be bad, you are bad altogether. A good tree cannot bring forth anything but good fruit, and a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit. There is no questioning that; what your life is, that you are—for as out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, so out of the abundance of the heart the man lives. It is in vain for you to deprecate so strong a sentiment as this, and to say, "The best of saints are fallible." I know they are; I know that even the best of men will sin, but they will not sin willingly; if they sin publicly, it will be but an exception, their lives, under the power of Divine grace, will be holy, and pure, and upright. I believe the devil likes Antinomianism, and he says to the Romanist, "Preach on, you Priest; I do not mind what you preach, for you will enter my dominions. You tell people that they may live in sin, and then procure absolution for a shilling! Fine doctrine that!" And he pats the priest on the back, and gives him all the Assistance he can. Then comes there an Antinomian minister into the pulpit. The devil says, "Ah, though he rails against the Pope of Rome, I like them both, the one as much as the other." Then how he preaches! he begins preaching justification by faith alone, and he carries his argument a step too far, for he begins railing at good works, calls them legalists, who think it their duty to lead a holy life, and hints with a smirk and a smile, that the excellent conduct of a man is of little importance, so long as he believes the truth and goes to his chapel. "Ah," says the devil, "preach away; I love the two things, Antinomianism and Popery, for they are two of the finest quacks for canting souls." Again, I say, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." By our works we are not to be justified, but still by our works we shall be judged, and by our works we shall be condemned. So saith the Scriptures, and this we must receive. Religion, therefore, must be a present thing; we need not talk of walking righteously, and soberly, in the world to come -

"There all is pure, and all is clear,
There all is joy and love."

There will be no duty to discharge between the tradesman and the customer, between the debtor and the creditor, between the father and the child, between the husband and the wife, in heaven, for all relationships shall have passed away. Religion must be intended for this life; the duties of it cannot be practiced, unless they are practiced here.

But besides these, there are other duties devolving upon the Christian. Though it is every man's duty to be honest and sober, the Christian has another code of law. It is the Christian's duty to love his enemies, to be at peace with all men, to forgive as he hopes to be forgiven; and it is his duty not to resist evil, when smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also; it is his duty to give to him that asketh of him and from him that would borrow of him not to turn away—he is to be a liberal soul devising liberal things. It is the Christian's duty to visit his Master's children when they are sick, so that it may be said to him at last, "I was sick, and naked, and in prison, and ye visited me, and ministered to my necessities." Now, if religion be not a thing for this world, I ask you how is it possible to perform its duties at all? There are no poor in heaven whom we can comfort and visit, there are no enemies in heaven whom we can graciously forgive; and there are no injuries inflicted, or wrongs endured, which we can bear with patience. Religion must have been intended in the very first place for this world, it must have been meant that now we should be the sons of God. For again I repeat it, that the major part of the duties of religion cannot be practiced in heaven, and therefore religion must be a present thing.

But, coming near to our conclusion, I believe there are many more persons who do not like religion for to-day, but who want to have it at the last, for this reason: they think religion is not a happy thing; they believe it makes men miserable. They have met with persons with long faces, they have seen some who were born in stormy weather, and who seem to have lived all their lives long with a hurricane inside their hearts, never having one flash of sunlight, nor one pleasant rainbow across their brow. Many young people imbibe this idea. They think that surely religion must be a thing that will make men go moping and melancholy all through this world. In fact, they enter the chapel sometimes, and they hear the saints

singing—and what a sweet hymn it is—a sorry sweetness in truth!—
"Lord, what a wretched land is this;"

and they go out and say, "No doubt it is, we will have nothing to do with it." Looking upon religion as medicine which is extremely nauseous,—if they must drink it, they will put it off to the last; they will gulp it down with a "Lord, have mercy on me!" and ere its bitterness is fairly in their mouth, they expect to begin to enjoy its sweetness in heaven. What a mistake! Religion has its present enjoyments. I do solemnly affirm to-day, in the face of this congregation, and before Almighty God, if I were certain that I were to die like a dog and when I was buried there would be an end of me, had I my choice of the happiest life a man could lead, I would say, "Let me be a Christian," for if, as some say, it be a delusion, it is one of the most magnificent delusions that ever we devised. If any man could prove the religion of Christ to be a delusion, the next thing he should do would be to hang himself, because there is nothing worth living for. He might well sit down and weep to think he had made a ruin of so goodly a structure, and dissolved such a pleasant dream.

Ah! beloved, there are present enjoyments in religion. Speak, ye that know them, for ye can tell; yet ye cannot recount them all. Oh! would ye give up your religion for all the joys that earth calls good or great? Say, if your immortal life could be extinguished, would you give it up, even for all the kingdoms of this world? Oh: ye sons of poverty, has not this been a candle to you in the darkness? Has not this lightened you through the dark shades of your tribulation? Oh! ye horny handed sons of toil, has not this been your rest, your sweet reposer; Have not the testimonies of God been your song in the house of your pilgrimage? Oh! ye daughters of sorrow, ye who spend the most of your time upon your beds—and your couch to you is a rack of pain—has not religion been to you a sweet quietus? When your bones were sore vexed, could ye not even then praise him on your beds? Speak from your couches to-day, ye consumptives, blanched though your cheeks; speak this day from your beds of agony, ye that are troubled with innumerable diseases, and are drawing near your last home? Is not religion worth having in the sick chamber, on the bed of pain and anguish? "Ah!" they heartily say, "we can praise him on our beds; we can sing his high praises in the fires." And ye men of business,

Speak for yourselves! You have hard struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a great extremity, and whether you would succeed or not seemed to hang upon a thread. Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? Has it not calmed your minds? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it a pleasant thing to enter your closet, and shut-to the door, and tell your Father in secret all your cares? And O ye that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Saviour? Can you not say, that your religion did gild your gold, and make your silver shine more brightly? for all things that you have are sweetened by this thought, that you have all these and Christ too! Was there ever a child of God who could deny this? We have heard of many infidels who grieved over their infidelity when they came to die. Did you ever hear of a Christian acting the counterpart? Did you ever hear of any one on his death-bed looking back on a life of holiness with sorrow? We have seen the rake, with a wasted constitution shrivel into a corpse through his iniquities, and we have heard him bemoan the day in which he went astray. We have seen the poor debauched child of sin rotting with disease, and listened to her shriek, and heard her miserably curse herself that she ever turned aside, to what was called the path of gaiety, but what was really the path to hell. We have seen the miser too, who has gripped his bags of gold, and on his dying bed we have found him curse himself, that when he came to die, his gold, though laid upon his heart, could not still its achings and give him joy. Never, never did we know a Christian who repented of his Christianity. We have seen Christians so sick, that we wondered that they lived—so poor, that we pondered at their misery; we have seen them so full of doubts, that we pitied their unbelief; but we never heard them say, even then, "I regret that I gave myself to Christ." No; with the dying clasp, when heart and flesh were failing, we have seen them hug this treasure to their breast and press it to their heart, still feeling that this was their life, their joy, their all. Oh! if ye would be happy, if ye would be saved, if ye would strew your path with sunshine, and dig out the nettles and blunt the thorns, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek not happiness first; seek Christ first, and happiness shall come after. Seek ye first the Lord, and then he will provide for you everything that is profitable for you in this

life and he will crown it with everything that is glorious in the life to come. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

Before closing this discourse, I fear that there are a great many of you who will say, "Well, I care nothing at all about religion. it is of no avail to me;" No, my friends, and it is very probable that you will not care about it, until it shall be too late to care. Mayhap you will go on putting off these thoughts, until the day shall come, when they will come so thick upon you, that you will not be able to procrastinate any longer, and then will you in right earnest set about seeking Christ; but at that hour he will say to you, "Inasmuch as Moab hath wearied himself upon the high places, and he betaketh himself to my sanctuary, I will not hear him, saith the Lord." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" *now*, "for many *shall* seek to enter in, but shall not be able." Let us fear, lest, having the gospel preached in our ears, we should neglect and put it off until the last hour has struck, and we find ourselves without hope, when there is no time to seek a Saviour.

I know where this morning's sermon will be found profitable. It will be in the case of those who are seeking Christ. Old Flockhart, who used to preach till within the last few months in the streets of Edinburgh, a much despised, but a very godly man, used to say, "When I begin my sermon, I begin by preaching the law, and then I bring the gospel afterwards; for," he said, "it is like a woman who is sewing—she cannot sew with thread alone; she first sticks a sharp needle through, and then draws the thread afterwards. so," he says, "does the Lord with us; he sends the sharp needle of conviction, the needle of the law, into our hearts. and pricks us in the heart, and he draws through the long silken thread of consolation afterwards." Oh! I would that some of you were pricked in the heart to-day. Remember, there are thunders in this book; though they are sleeping now, they will wake by-and-bye. There are in this Bible curses too horrible for heart to know their full extent of meaning; they are slumbering now, but they shall waken and when they leap from between the folded leaves, and the seven seals are broken, where will you flee, and where shall you hide yourselves, in that last great day of anger? If, then, ye are pricked to the heart, I preach to you the gospel now. "Today, if ye will hear his voice. harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." This

day look to him that hung upon the cross. This day believe and live.

And now to illustrate the manner in which rebellious sinners are reconciled to God, I will relate to you an interesting anecdote from the life of a soldier. It may picture to your minds the majesty of God in strewing grace, and the humbling experience of the sinner in receiving it, and help us to answer that solemn question—"What must I do to be saved?" My author says, that himself and his comrades of a certain regiment serving in India, had been without pay for about six months, and there was strong suspicion throughout the ranks that their commanding officer had embezzled the money: he was a great gambler, and they thought it most likely that he had gambled away their pay. They were determined to seek redress; so all the private soldiers (with the exception of non-commissioned officers,) agreed that on a particular morning, when on parade, they should not obey the word of command. The day arrived, and they carried their design into execution. The regiment was assembled; the men in companies, headed by their respective officers, proceeded to the parade ground, and formed into open column. The commanding officer took his station in front and gave the word of command. Not one, however, of the privates obeyed. This being the conduct of the regiment, the commanding officer, with great self-possession, ordered every tenth man to be confined in the guard-house. It was done without a show of resistance. After which, all the privates fixed bayonets, shouldered arms, and marched off—the band playing and the drums beating alternately—all the way to the residence of the general, about a mile distant. There they halted, and formed in line fronting the house, in a most orderly manner. One man from each of the ten companies then stepped forward, and they proceeded to lodge a written complaint against the colonel. Having thus fulfilled their purpose, they marched back, and dismissed; but the next thing was to release the prisoners, and this they did without any violence being offered by the guard. Whatever extenuations we may conceive for such conduct, according to military law it was a heinous crime. The soldier's duty is to obey; he must not think for himself, but he must be as a tool in the hands of his superior officers, to do as he is told, and not to complain. Shortly after this, to the surprise of these soldiers, the general was seen approaching with a large army of Sepoys, infantry and cavalry, with field pieces in front. The regiment went out and

respectfully saluted him, forming in line. But this was not what the general came for. They saw the storm brewing and prepared to fight. After the two lines had been formed, facing each other, the General moved out on horseback. and said, "Twenty-second, take the command from me." They obeyed. He then said, "Order arms." Next—"Handle arms;"—and last, which was most disgraceful to them—"Ground army" Having thus disarmed, he ordered his black cavalry to charge upon them, and drive them from their arms. One more order he gave to those disaffected men, that they should strip off their accoutrements and lay them on the ground, and be off to their cantonments. When he had thus disarmed and dishonored the men, he forgave them.

And now will not this incident fitly represent the manner of God with sinners, when according to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he brings terms of peace and reconciliation to us who are in revolt against him? He says, "Ground arms, give up your sins, take off your self-righteousness." He disarms us, dishonors us, and strips on all our comely array, and then says, "Now I will forgive you." If there be any one here who has thrown down his weapons of rebellion, and whose fine ornaments of beauty are stained with shame, let him believe that God will now forgive him; he forgives those who cannot forgive themselves. The great Captain of our salvation will pardon those whom he has humbled. He will have you submit to his will, and though that will may at first seem imperious to drive you from your quarters, and visit you with punishment, you shall presently find that his sovereign will is gracious, and he delighteth in mercy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," for thus saith the Word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

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A Pressed Man Yielding To Christ

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on he Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. - John 9:35-38

Last Sabbath morning,* I spoke to you concerning one who was impressed into the King's service. That was Simon, the Cyrenian, who was compelled to bear Christ's cross. He was not a volunteer, but; a pressed man; yet, I think that, after he had been forced to bear the cross, he willingly carried it, and I hope that he afterwards became a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, strange to say, here is another pressed man; for I do not think that this man, whose eyes had been opened by Christ, had thought of becoming a believer in the Son of God until the Lord Jesus found him out. Before he had reached that point; indeed, before he knew that the prophet who had opened his eyes was the Son of God, the Pharisees had cast him out of the synagogue, so that he was compelled to bear the cross for Christ although he did not then fully know Christ, and certainly had not believed upon the Son of God. Yet, in his case also, it appears that he cheerfully took up the cross which had been at the first forcibly laid upon him. It may happen that there are some persons here who are in a similar position, some who have been ridiculed for being Christians even before they are Christians, who have been mocked at merely because they go to a place of worship, though as yet they have not yielded themselves to Christ; well, if that is the case; with any, seeing that the cross is laid upon their shoulders, I do trust that they will not throw it off, but that they will bravely bear it for Christ, and freely suffer what, up till now, has seemed to them to be a piece of injustice, for they have been treated as if they were believers in Christ, when really they are not yet on the Lord's side.

This man, then, bearing Christ's cross in a certain way, was cast out of the synagogue, and then Christ found him, and blessed him. Observe, dear friend, where Christ began with him; for it will show us where and how the blessing usually enters. The door by which the richest of heaven's favors must come to us is indicated by our Lord going to that door, and

opening it. He said to the man, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God." So that faith in the Son of God is the gate of benediction. Faith is that window of agate and gate of carbuncle by which the divine light of Jesus's love comes streaming into the soul. This is the way by which God's mercy enters the heart of man, and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ himself begins there; and in all our dealings with the unconverted, it will be wise for us also to begin there. That is the place where the decisive battle will have to be fought; for, upon the believing or the non-believing on the Son of God, the eternal destiny of each individual will turn. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." That wrath abides even now upon him if the life of God is not in him. Let us hammer away at that all-important point of faith in Christ. This is the Thermopylae, of Christian experience. If this pass can be stormed and carried, we can capture the citadel of men's hearts; but if unbelief continues to guard that narrow passage to eternal life and to hold it against the gospel and its invitations, and exhortations, and promises, and threatenings, then nothing whatever can be done. So, in this enquiry of our Lord, we have most instructive teaching. His object, no doubt, was to bless this man by working in him saving faith, and therefore he said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

I think our text will help us, first, to speak of true faith,—how it is known; secondly, true faith,—how it progresses; and thirdly, true faith,—how we can promote it.

I. First, I want to speak concerning TRUE FAITH,—the faith that saves—HOW IT IS KNOWN.

First, it is absolutely essential that it should be faith in the Son of God. Our blessed Lord knew that this man believed in him as a prophet; so might he not have been content with that? No; because, to believe in Christ merely as a prophet is not saving faith. It may be a step towards salvation, and it may lead up to it; but the faith that is absolutely necessary is that belief in him as the Son of God; and he who does not believe in the Deity of Christ has not a Saviour who can save him. The work of saving a soul is a divine operation, and no one but a divine being

can accomplish it. It is he who sitteth upon the throne who saith, "Behold, I make all things new!" There cannot be anyone except the Creator who can create; and the Creator must, in every case, be God. To save a soul, there must be a work performed which is analogous to the resurrection; but, in order to raise the dead, there must be the presence and power of God. It is one of those operations which it is not conceivable can be performed by an angel or by any created being. The Highest alone can accomplish it; has he not said of himself, "I kill, and I make alive"? The power of life and death must rest with God alone. Hence, then, the work of salvation needs a power nothing less than divine. He who believes in Christ as a mere man has not believed in a person who can give him salvation; and Christ cannot accomplish the stupendous task if he be only man, for the Saviour must be God.

There is no true and logical standpoint, in reference to the Deity of Christ, except one of two things. Either our Lord was the Son of God, equal with the Father, or else he was an impostor, for he most distinctly claimed that he was the Son of God. In the chapter preceding our text at the 54th verse, we read that Jesus said to the Jews, "If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God." Then they took up stones to cast at him because he said that he was the Son of God; and, in this case of the blind man whom he had healed, he took pains to find him out that he might communicate to him in private the fact that he was himself the Son of God. He never withdrew his claim to the Deity; if he had only said to the Jews, "No, I am not the Son of God;' you are mistaken in supposing that I said I was. The expressions I used are not intended to convey that idea," then they would not have crucified him. This was the chief point of their quarrel with him, and I must again say that either he was God, or he wilfully misled the people by using words which made them think that he was God. His words have led millions of Christians, from those days until now, to worship him as God; and they were perfectly justified, by his utterances, in doing so; and if he meant anything less than that, then he was a deceiver. But he did really mean that he was God, and it is our joy and glory to rest in him as being alike the Son of Mary and the Son of Jehovah himself, "Light of Light, very God of very God," co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; and here we feel that we can rest for our soul's salvation,

we can lean with our whole weight on One who is indeed "mighty to save." Seeing that all power is his, and that he is equal with God, he can and he will save all those who put their trust in him. Do not any of you, I beseech you, be content with any faith less than that. If you have any sort of faith which does not recognize Christ as God, do with it as the man did with the bank note, when he found that it was bad,—he laid it down, and ran away from it, for fear anybody should suspect him of being its owner. Put away every kind of confidence that is short of faith in the Son of God, and abhor it, for it is a damnable delusion; and may the Lord bring you fully into this blessed state of salvation through believing on the Son of God!

A second point about saving faith is that it rests upon a knowledge of him. This man said to Jesus, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" He was not one whose notion of faith was that he need not know what he believed. The Church of Rome seems to inculcate some kind of implicit faith (or credulity) which can exist apart from knowledge; but how can I believe that which I do not know Paul puts it thus, "Faith cometh by hearing." You must first hear and know what it is you are to believe before you can believe it; otherwise, your faith is vain, like that of the man of whom I have sometimes spoken, who said, "I believe what the Church believes." "But what does the Church believe?" It believes what I believe." "Then what do you and the Church believe?" "Why, we both believe the same thing." That is not the kind of believing that can save the soul. It is through the knowledge of Christ that we are saved. To know Christ is sometimes said to be analogous to believing in Christ. You must know what it is that you have to believe; a faith that does not know is no faith at all. Read through the Epistles of John, and mark with your pencil every time the word "know" is used. The apostle makes that word "know" come in again and again, for a man must know that which he is to believe and hence this man says to Christ, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"

For my part, I could never be content without unquestioning certainty as to my soul's salvation. Do you think that is more than a man ought to wish for. Are any of you at ease while you are afraid that you have a mortal disease working within you? Oh, no! You want to know, from a qualified physician, the truth about your case. And if it were whispered in

your ear, at this moment, that your house was being broken into or was on fire, would you sit still here, and not trouble yourself as to whether the report were true or not? Would you not want to go at once, and see for yourself. If you knew that you bought an estate, some time ago, but you have since heard that the title to it is a very uncertain one, in fact, that, in all probability, you will lose all you have paid for it, would you not say, "I ought to have taken care to be certain about the title, and I would not have bought the estate if I had not felt that the deeds relating to it were all right". Well, then, if you desire certainty about your bodily health, and about the safety of your house, and about the validity of your title-deeds, can you afford to go without certainty as to your soul's affairs? No, you cannot; therefore, rest not till you have it. If you have various questions about your spiritual condition, boldly face those questions, and answer them; but never let any questions about your eternal welfare be such that you dare not face them, and do not wish to search out the answers to them. Pry to the very bottom of them; and, better still, ask the Lord to search you, and know your heart, to try you, and know your thoughts, and to lead you in the way everlasting; and be not content till you can truthfully say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." This man, of whom I am speaking, knew that Christ had opened his eyes, therefore he must be at least a prophet. He also knew, further, that whatever that prophet told him must be true, for the man who had opened his eyes must have been sent by God, and God does not work miracles by liars. He said to himself, "This man is undoubtedly a faithful person, or God would not employ him in such a wonderful work as that of opening the eyes of a man who was born blind;" and then he stood perfectly prepared to receive what—ever might be spoken by this prophet of whom he knew something, though he did not know enough to understand what was meant by the Savior when he asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God"? He, therefore, sat as an enquirer at the Savior's feet, waiting for something to be told him which should enable him to believe.

You, dear friend, may not be in exactly the same condition that this man was in; but, still, your case may be, in many respects, a parallel one. You say, perhaps, "I wish, above all things in the world, that I could believe in Christ." Do you intend to sit down, and try to make yourself believe in

him That would be a very unwise thing because faith is not wrought in the soul in that fashion. Suppose it was rumoured, at the present moment, that there had been another massacre in Alexandria, and that our troops had been driven out of the city; how would you decide whether the report was to be believed or not Would you sit down in your pew, and say, "I will try to make myself believe it". Well, you might come, by a process of reasoning, to some sort of conclusion as to whether it was or was not a likely thing; but the mere sensible plan would be to enquire what foundation there was for the report; and if, on going to the War Office, you were informed, by someone in authority, "Yes, there has been a very great disaster," well, then, knowing the facts of the case, you could believe. The enquiry at headquarters would be the way to ascertain the truth of the report, and just so is it in connection with believing in Christ. if I am to believe in him, I ask, with this man, "Who is he." and until I know who he is, it is idle for me to talk about forcing myself to believe in him.

Now listen. He in whom you are asked to believe for salvation is, first, of all, himself God. Then, in infinite mercy, he came and took upon himself our nature, and dwelt among men. He voluntarily came,—being God,—but he was also sent of God, appointed and authorized to be God's Ambassador to man. He was, in addition to being sent of God, anointed of God, for the Spirit of God rested upon him without measure, qualifying him for his work. The life he led here on earth was unique, there was never another like it, and the imagination of man cannot write the history of another man that shall be at all comparable to the life of Christ. It stands apart in a lone, simple majesty, utterly inimitable, absolutely perfect. Then he died, and by that death he for ever put away the sin of his people. He took upon himself the sin which he had never committed; he was numbered with the transgressors, and he suffered as if men's transgressions had been his own; he died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And God has accepted those sufferings as a propitiation for all who believe in him; and now, this is the witness of God concerning him, that he has raised him from the dead, and taken him up to his throne, and made him to sit there, at his Father's right hand, where, at this moment, he is making intercession for all who come unto God by him. And, now, our prayers are accepted through him; and

the infinite blessings, which are his, he distributes among us; and he is shortly coming again, with sound of trumpet, and attended by myriads of saints and angels. As he ascended from Olivet, in like manner also will he descend to earth again. King of kings and Lord of lords shall he be in that day; "and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." He is God, he still lives, it is the living, reigning Christ whom we preach unto you. He lives in glory, and he also lives here by the presence of his Holy Spirit, who is with us, and who is to abide with us evermore; and it is upon him as God incarnate, as Savior, crucified, risen, and gone into the glory, that you are asked to place your soul's confidence. If you would learn this truth more fully, read the four Gospels, and the Epistles, and ask the Spirit, who inspired the writers of them, to explain and apply them to you. That is the way to obtain faith. Many a man has been reading in the Bible the story of the cross, and so he has believed in Jesus. Many another has heard about the Savior, and so has been led to believe in him. It is the simplest thing in the world to believe upon trustworthy evidence; and when we get the evidence of Christ's life and death manifesting the glory of his person, the graciousness of his character, and the efficacy of his atoning-blood, then are we led to believe in him. True faith is based upon knowledge of Christ, as it was in this man's case. Take care, dear friends, that you always remember that simple but important truth.

And, further, true faith always expresses itself to the Lord. This man, when he had believed in Jesus, said, "Lord, I believe." True faith ought also to express itself to men, as Paul puts it, in writing to the Romans, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" or, as the Master himself puts it, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore, the confession before men ought not to be neglected in any case; yet I fear, and hope, that there are some pilgrims who steal into heaven, scarcely known by men to be Christians,—at least, not avowed as such by open profession. I do not recommend that dodging behind the hedges, and getting to heaven along back roads; that is a bad plan, but, still, I trust some have managed it, though with much trouble and loss to themselves; but, in every case, every one who has believed has made the confession of

that faith to the Master himself. He has said to Jesus, as this man did, "Lord, I believe," even though he has added, with another man, "Help thou mine unbelief." He has said to Jesus, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." There has been a personal acknowledgment, as we sometimes sing it,—

"My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine."

It is a very vital point about true faith that it thus recognizes its obligation to speak to him, and to avow itself to him. How sweetly doth faith, sometimes, come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved, and owning to him that she is his, and he is hers! She cannot help making this confession; she would be untrue to herself and to her Lord if She did not do so.

In one respect, We are better off than this man was, for we have many divine promises to help us to believe in Christ. Have you ever noticed, dear friends, how much we live upon the promises of our fellow-men? In buying a small article at a shop, you pay your twopence far it across the counter; but, the larger the business transaction gets to be, the less there is of metallic currency in connection with it, and then you often pay each other in promises. The commonest form of a promise is a bank note; and it is worth while to observe how much a bank note is made after the model of God's promises. How does the wording of this bank note run it is headed, "Bank of England;" and it begins, "I promise." You take this note readily enough instead of five golden sovereigns, because you read on it, "I promise to pay the bearer;" and God's promise is payable to "the bearer." Whoever has the promise in his possession, whoever has faith enough to lay hold of God's promise, may read it in this way: "I promise to pay the bearer." I remember when I first snatched at one of God's precious promises; I could hardly hope that I had any right to it, for I felt myself so utterly unworthy, but I snatched it up, and ran with it to the Bank of Faith, and as soon as I presented it, received its full value. God always honours his own promises; here is one: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Go to him with that gracious message, and it

shall be fulfilled to you whoever you are. The note says, "I promise to pay the bearer." If a sweep takes that note to the Bank of England, he will get the money for it;—I mean a sweep in character as well as by trade, for the declaration on it is, "I promise to pay the bearer."

What does it new say on the bank note "I promise to pay the bearer on demand." That is how all God's promises run: "on demand." It is worthy of note that, in the olden time, when the Lord had made many promises to his people, he added, "I will yet for this be enquired of by thee house of Israel, to do it for them; "as though the fulfillment of the promise was delayed until it was asked for. No doubt many of God's great and precious promises are not realized by you and me because they are not presented to the Lord as we should take a note to the bank to get it cashed. We do not enquire of God as much as we ought. You hear of enquirers going to see the minister; that may be a good thing, but the best sort of enquirers are those I heard before I came up here to preach to-night, when some good earnest, souls met down in the lecture-hall to enquire of God for a blessing, and to ask him to help his servant to speak the Word with power.

Now, coming back to this bank note, I daresay you would not mind having a pile of paper, of this kind, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and then you would say to yourself, "Now I am a rich man." But you have not a single farthing there, you have only a promise "to pay the bearer on demand the sum of five pounds." "Ah!" you say, "but that promise is good all the world over." Whose promise is it? Well, it is signed by the chief cashier, but he only signs it "for the Governor and Company of the Bank of England." That is where the value of the promise lies; and it is our comfort, to know that we have a noble name written below all God's promises, for the Lord Jesus Christ has signed them all in God's behalf, for the great Governor of heaven and earth, who has no need of any "company" to be joined with him, for his sole resources are fully equal to the fulfillment of every promise that he has ever issued. Now, if we treat men's promises with respect, and pass them from hand to hand as if they were genuine gold, and we constantly do so; shall we not treat God's promises with something more than respect, and trust them with implicit confidence. Will any man have the impudence to say, "I have faith in a

note signed by the chief cashier of the Bank of England, but cannot trust a promise that is certified by the Lord Jesus Christ himself?" Shall I consider that bank note to be as good as the money it represents, and yet, when I hold in my hand God's Word, signed, and sealed, and ratified by the sprinkling of the very blood of his dear Son, shall I dare to say, "I find it hard to believe in that word"? If I talk so, I shall grieve the people of God, and what is far worse, shall grieve the Lord himself.

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject, which is, TRUE FAITH, HOW IT PROGRESSES.

Very often it has a very small beginning. Saving faith does not always come on a sudden. Some men are saved, as Saul of Tarsus was; they are struck down in the midst of their sins, and converted in a remarkable and unusual manner; but with many others there is, first, a faint twilight; then, by-and-by, a little more; and, at last, the sun has fully risen upon them. Perhaps you cannot tell when it did actually rise; but you know that it has risen, for there is the light and the brightness of its shining.

In the case of the man of whom I am speaking, faith began with a preparedness to believe. His eyes had been opened, and he was thereby made ready to believe anything that Jesus might tell him. And there is many a man who, looking back upon God's goodness to himself, and God's goodness to his father and mother, and God's goodness to gracious people in general, and thinking of the holy and lovely character of Christ, has in that way been prepared to believe when the truth was clearly set before him.

This man went a step further on the right road, for he desired to believe. He said, "Who is he, Lord," not, "that I might know about him, and talk about him"—but, "that I might believe on him?" He had a desire to possess true faith; and there are many like him, who desire to believe, but who have not exercised faith in Christ. This is very wonderful, but it is true. Of all things in the world, to believe in Christ is one of the most simple, yet that is the reason why many find it so difficult. If it were difficult, it would seem easy to them; but, being easy, it appears difficult. Some of you, dear friends, when I try to describe how we come to trust in

Christ, will twist and turn what I say, even if I make it "as plain as a pikestaff." You think, "Oh, he must mean something very different from what he says!" You really cannot get this idea into your heads,—that you have just to depend upon Christ, to trust him, and then you are saved, for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Whenever we use a metaphor, or figure, or illustration to try to explain the simplicity of faith, straightway somebody finds a difficulty even in that. When I have been trying to catch a sinner, I find that he has as many hiding-places as there are days in the year. I have stopped up one after another, and I have said to him, "No, salvation only comes through believing." "Yes, sir, I know, but—" and down he runs into another hole. When I have dug him out of that, and fancied I should surely catch him, he says, "Oh, yes! we are to trust the Savior, but—" and again he is off. Somehow, men seem very ingenious in trying to find out reasons why they should not be saved, and all their foolish ingenuity seems to be employed in attempting to escape from this blessed divine simplicity, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." May God the Holy Spirit lead them to believe in him! He must lead them, for no man can see Christ until his eyes are divinely opened. We may put the truth as plainly as ever we can, and preach it so that we think we cannot be misunderstood; but men will misunderstand us still, even those who desire to believe in Christ, until the Holy Spirit shall work effectually in them.

This man went still further on the right road; for he not only desired to believe, but he made enquiry in order that he might believe. I put it to you very simply, just now, with regard to making enquiries concerning a certain piece of news. Well, this man did the same. He said to the Master, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him." If sinners would only make enquiries about the Savior, they would soon trust in him. You will find, as a rule, that the people who rail at the New Testament, have never read it. If they would but read it, their cavils might soon come to an end, and be followed by a blessed faith in Christ; but, instead of doing so, they read what some objection-manufacturer has said about the Bible, instead of going to the Book itself, and seeing what it really teaches, if I were very thirsty, I do not think that I should abstain from going to a well because somebody told me that it contained bad water; but I should go, and see, and taste for myself; and when a soul gets very thirsty, if it is wise, it goes

to the Word for itself. I advise you to do that, dear friends. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

When this man had made his enquiry, and received Christ's answer, he soon became decided. He said, "Lord, I believe." I like that simple, clear avowal of faith. So often, when we are conversing with an enquirer, he says, "Yes, sir; I hope I believe." Oh, dear! is that all you can say? "Well, I trust! believe;" and so faith is surrounded by fog.—"I hope I believe; I trust I believe." Man, don't you know whether you believe or not? You may know it; one thing I know, you have no business to go to sleep till you do know this once for all; for, if you are not a believer, you are an unbeliever. There is no middle state between the two; and if you are an unbeliever, you are "condemned already," because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. This matter of believing ought never to be left in doubt at all, but it should be definitely settled, so that you can say, with this man, "Lord, I believe."

Then, further, he acted as a believer: for "he worshipped him." This proves how his faith had grown. I should like to ask you who are the people of God when you are happiest. I think you will agree with what I am going to say; and if you do not, it will still be just as true to me. My happiest moments are when I am worshipping God, really adoring the Lord Jesus Christ, and having fellowship with the ever-blessed Spirit. In that worship, I forget the cares of the church, and everything else; and, to me, it is the nearest approach to what it will be in heaven, where, day without night, they offer perpetual adoration unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Hence, what a memorable moment it was for this man when he worshipped Christ! Now, if Christ was not God, that man was all idolater, a man-worshipper; and you and instead of being regarded as very excellent people, by those who call themselves "Unitarian Brethren," should be condemned as idolaters. If Christ was not God, we are not Christians; we are deceived dupes, we are idolaters, as bad as the heathen whom we now pity. It is making a man into a God if Christ be not God. But, blessed be his holy name, he is God; and we feel that it is the supreme delight of our being to worship him. We cannot veil our face with our wings, for we have none; but we do veil them with his own robe of righteousness whenever we approach him. We cannot cover

our feet with our wings, as the angels do; but we do take his blood and his righteousness both as a covering for our feet, and as wings with which we fly up to him; and though as yet we have no crowns to cast at his dear feet, yet, if we have any honor, any good repute, any grace, anything that is comely, anything that is honest, we lay it all at his feet, and cry, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

III. Now I come to the third point, which is this, TRUE FAITH,—HOW TO PROMOTE IT.

Brothers and sisters beloved, there are many of you who are constantly looking out for souls, and trying to bring them to Christ; you have here an example of what you may do in endeavoring to lead them to exercise faith in Jesus.

First, if you have any choice as to those to whom you go, seek out the oppressed. You are to go, so far as you can, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" but if you may specially look for some more than others, seek out the sick, the sad, the weary, the poor, the broken-down ones, and especially such as have been put out of the synagogue. When our missionaries have gone among the Brahmins in India, they have had a few converts; but the most blessing has been given among the poor people who have no high caste of which they are proud. When the gospel was taken to them, they gladly received it. The gospel worker will be wise if, instead of shunning those whom even nominally religious people put away, he looks after them first. They are likely soil for the good seed of the kingdom to grow in, and bring forth fruit. Our Lord Jesus Christ, at Sychar, did not go to some goodly matron, who was an ornament to her sex; but you know where he found the woman who became his disciple and missionary, and you know what kind of woman she was; and, to this day, he delights to go about, as Whitefield used to say, "sweeping up the devil's castaways." Those whom nobody else wants, and nobody else will have, our blessed Lord and Master delights to receive. Do you, therefore, look after those out-of-the-way sinners. I like that expression, those out-of-the-way Sinners; because our Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and

on them that are out of the way." Out-of-the-way sinners are the sort he came to save; therefore, look out for them, you who would follow the example of the great Soul-Winner.

Then, next, when you come to close quarters with them, ask them questions, as Christ did. He said to this man, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Put the enquiry pointedly and personally. Here am I, up in the pulpit, firing the gospel gun, and the shot flies where God directs it; but you, downstairs, who love the Lord, can, as it were, hold a pistol close to the sinner's head. Take them separately, one by one; and make them "stand and deliver." Put the question as our Lord did, "Dost thou believe?" See, friend," you can say, "the minister has been preaching about faith. 'Dost thou believe?'" This is what nine people out of ten want, somebody to come and make a personal application of the truth to them. They are like soldiers out upon the battlefield; they lie there, wounded, bleeding, dying. Close by, there is all that is needed to bind up their wounds, and plenty of it; then, why do they lie there in agony? They need personal attention, and it is your business, as an army surgeon, to go and put on the lint, and bind up the wounds. Oh, that we had multitudes who would do this, and that all God's people were constantly looking out for opportunities of making a personal application of the truth to those who hear it! "Dost thou believe?" said the Lord Jesus to this man, and by that question he held him fast. That is the way to win souls, begin with a personal question.

Then, be ready to answer enquiries. This is what our Lord himself did when he revealed himself to this man. Tell them all you know; and if you cannot tell them all they want to know, try to bring them to somebody more advanced in spiritual things than you yourself are, so that, with prayer, and patience, and wise instruction, he may lead them to Christ.

Next, pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself to them, for that is the way faith comes. We cannot speak of Christ as he should be spoken of; but, when he reveals himself, then the sinners see him. All the portraits of a beauty never touch the heart like one glance from her eyes; and all the portraits of Christ, that ever were painted by his most admiring disciples, never make such an impression on the heart of man

as when once he says, as he said to this man, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." None but Christ himself can preach Christ to the full. He must reveal himself, or the Spirit must reveal him, or else men do not see him.

Finally, glorify Christ by you're your personal testimony. Recollect that wondrous intercessory prayer of our Lord, in which he said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." It was so kind, yet just like him, not to say, "through my word," though it is his word that we are to proclaim; but we get it into our hearts, and so appropriate it that, when we utter it, we speak out of our own heart, and soul, and then it becomes our word, too, and so sinners believe on Christ through our word. Go on speaking your word, that is, Christ's word spoken by you, for this is how to win souls for him.

Now, in closing, I want to begin again, and give you another little sermon altogether, only I shall not be able to preach it to you, but just to give you the heads of it, and leave it with you.

The first head is, when you are believing, mind that you believe in Jesus himself. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" or is it somebody else in whom you are believing? Is it merely what others say about Christ that you believe? Is it your own opinion of Christ? Or is it really the Son of God upon whom you are believing when you are believing, believe in Jesus himself.

Next, when you are enquiring, enquire of Jesus himself. This is a beautiful thing, to my mind. Here is a man asking Christ about Christ,—asking Jesus, "Who is he?" and, all the while, speaking to the very person about whom he was enquiring. He did not know it was Jesus, yet he had gone to the very fountain-head. Now, perhaps some of you have made enquiries of Christian people, and you have read the Bible, and prayed, and yet you cannot find Jesus; then go direct to him, by faith, and say, "Lord, show me thyself." That is the way to learn of him. Have I a book of which I cannot make heads or tail as I read it? If I knew where the author lived, I would call on him, and say, "Dear sir, will you kindly tell me what you mean by this expression? I cannot understand it." That is the way to

find anything out; go to the fountain-head. So, go you to Christ always; and, when you are enquiring, enquire of Christ himself.

Next, when you are seeking Christ, ask Christ to reveal himself to you, for there is nobody who can reveal Christ as Christ can reveal himself by his blessed Spirit.

And, next, when you are confessing your faith, confess it to Christ himself. Say, as this man did, "Lord, I believe." Say to your minister, or to your mother, or to your friends, "I believe;" but take, care, above all the rest, that you say, "Lord, I believe."

And, lastly, when you are worshipping, worship Christ himself: "He worshipped HIM," and no one else. Take care that your reverence and adoration are not given, in any degree, to the church, or to any person in it, or to any priest, or minister, or anything created or made; but worship God, and God in Christ Jesus; and the Lord bless you, beloved, for his name's sake! Amen.

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Presumptuous Sins

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins. - Psalm 19:13

All sins are great sins, but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion, and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God. But there be some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion, and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is not greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous sinful thing, yet there are some

transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness, and a more double scarlet-dyed hue of criminality than others. Now the presumptuous sins of our text are just the chief of all sins: they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable, that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception: "But the soul that sinneth presumptuously shall have no atonement; it shall be out off from the midst of my people." And now, under the Christian dispensation, although in the sacrifice of our blessed Lord there is a great and precious atonement for presumptuous sins, whereby sinners who have sinned in this manner are made clean, yet, without doubt, presumptuous sinners, dying without pardon, must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God, and a more wonderful manifestation of the unutterable anguish of the torment of eternal punishment in the pit that is digged for the wicked.

I shall this morning, first of all, endeavor to *describe presumptuous sins*; then, secondly, I shall try, if I can, to *show by some illustrations, why the presumptuous sin is more heinous than any other*; and then thirdly, I shall try to *press the prayer upon your notice*—the prayer, mark you, of the holy man—the prayer of David: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins. "

I. First, then, WHAT IS PRESUMPTUOUS SIN? Now, I think here must be one of four things in a sin in order to make it presumptuous. It must either be a sin against light and knowledge, or a sin committed with deliberation, or a sin committed with a design of sinning, merely for sinning's sake, or else it must be a sin committed through hardihood, from a man's rash confidence in his own strength. We will mark these points one by one.

1. A sin that is *committed willfully against manifest light and knowledge* is a presumptuous sin. A sin of ignorance is not presumptuous, unless that ignorance also be willful, in which case the ignorance itself is a presumptuous sin. But when a man sins for want of knowing better—for want of knowing the law, for want of instruction, reproof, advice, and admonition, we say that his sin, so committed, does not partake to any great extent of the nature of a presumptuous sin. But when a man knows

better, and sins in the very teeth and face of his increased light and knowledge, then his sin deserves to be branded with this ignominious title of a presumptuous sin. Let me just dwell on this thought a moment. *Conscience* is often an inner light to men, whereby they are warned of forbidden acts as being sinful. Then if I sin against conscience, though I have no greater light than conscience affords me, still my sin is presumptuous, if I have presumed to go against that voice of God in my heart, an enlightened conscience. You, young man, were once tempted (and perhaps it was but yesterday) to commit a certain act. The very moment you were tempted, conscience said, "It is wrong, it is wrong"—it shouted murder in your heart, and told you the deed you were about to commit was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Your fellow-apprentice committed the same sin without the warning of conscience; in him it was guilt—guilt which needs to be washed away with the Saviour's blood. But it was not such guilt in him as it was in you, because your conscience checked you; your conscience told you of the danger, warned you of the punishment, and yet you dared to go astray against God, and therefore you sinned presumptuously. You have sinned very grievously in having done so. When a man shall trespass on my ground, he shall be a trespasser though he have no warning, but if straight before his face there stands a warning, and if he knowingly and willingly trespasses, then he is guilty of a presumptuous trespass, and is to be so far punished accordingly. So you, if you had not known better; if your conscience had been less enlightened, you might have committed the deed with far less of the criminality which now attaches to you, because you sinned against conscience, and consequently sinned presumptuously.

But, O! how much greater is the sin, when man not only has the light of conscience, but has also *the admonition of friends*, the advice of those who are wise and esteemed by him. If I have but one check, the check of my enlightened conscience, and I transgress against it, I am presumptuous; but if a mother with tearful eye warns me of the consequence of my guilt, and if a father with steady look, and with affectionate determined earnestness, tells me what will be the effect of my transgression—if friends who are dear to me counsel me to avoid the way of the wicked, and warn me what must be the inevitable result of continuing in it, then I am presumptuous, and my act in that very

proportion becomes more guilty. I should have been presumptuous for having sinned against the light of nature, but I am more presumptuous when, added to that, I have the light of affectionate counsel and of kind advice, and therein I bring upon my head a double amount of divine wrath. And how much more is this the case, when the transgressor has been gifted with what is usually called a religious education; in childhood he has been lighted to his bed by the lamps of the sanctuary, the name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby, the music of the sanctuary woke him like a matin hymn at morning; he has been dandled on the knee of piety and has sucked the breasts of godliness; he has been tutored and trained in the way he should go; how much more fearful I say, is the guilt of such a man than that of those who have never had such training, but have been left to follow their own wayward lusts and pleasures without the restraint of a holy education and the restraints of an enlightened conscience!

But, my friends, even this may become worse still. A man sins yet more presumptuously, *when he has had most special warning from the voice of God against sin.* "What mean you?" say you. Why, I mean this. You saw but yesterday a strong man in your neighborhood brought to the grave by sudden death; it is but a month ago that you heard the bell toll for one whom once, you knew and loved, who procrastinated and procrastinated until he perished in procrastination. You have had strange things happen in your very street, and the voice of God has been spoken loudly through the lips of Death to you. Ay, and you have had warnings too in your own body; you have been sick with fever, you have been brought to the jaws of the grave, and you have looked down into the bottomless vault of destruction. It is not long ago since you were given up; all said they might prepare a coffin for you, for your breath could not long be in your body. Then you turned your face to the wall, and prayed; you vowed that if God would spare you, you would live a godly life, that you would repent of your sins; but to your own confusion you are now just what you were. Ah! let me tell you, your guilt is more grievous than that of any other man, for you have sinned presumptuously, in the very highest sense in which you could have done so. You have sinned against reproofs, but what is worse still, you have sinned against your own solemn oaths and covenants, and against the promises that you made to

God. He who plays with fire must be condemned as careless; but he who has been burned out once, and afterward plays with the destroying element, is worse, than careless; and he who has himself been scorched in the flame, and has had his locks all hot and crisp with the burning, if he again should rush headlong into fire, I say he is worse than careless, he is worse than presumptuous, he is mad. But I have some such here. They have had warnings so terrible that they might have known better; they have gone into lusts which have brought their bodies into sickness, and perhaps this day they have crept up to this house, and they dare not tell to their neighbor who stands by their side what is the loathsomeness that even now doth breed upon their frame. And yet they will go back to the same lusts; the fool will go again to the stocks, the sheep will lick the knife that is to slay him. You will go on in your lust and in your sins, despite warnings, despite advice, until you perish in your guilt. How worse than children are grown-up men! The child who goes for a merry slide upon a pond, if he be told that the ice will not bear him, starteth back affrighted, or if he daringly creepeth upon it how soon he leaves it, if he hears but a crack upon the slender covering of the water! But you men have conscience, which tells you that your sins are vile, and that they will be your ruin; you bear the crack of sin, as its thin sheet of pleasure gives way beneath your feet; ay, and some of you have seen your comrades sink in the flood, and lost; and yet you go sliding on, worse than childish, worse than mad are you, thus presumptuously to play with your own everlasting state. O my God, how terrible is the presumption of some! How fearful is presumption in any! O! that we might be enabled to cry, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

2. I said again, that another characteristic of a presumptuous sin was *deliberation*. A man, perhaps, may have a passionate spirit, and in a moment of hot haste he may utter an angry word of which in a few short minutes he will sincerely repent. A man may have a temper so hot that the least provocation causes him at once to be full of wrath. But he may also have a temperament which has this benefit to balance it, that he very soon learns to forgive, and cools in a moment. Now, such a man does not sin presumptuously, when suddenly overcome by anger, though, without doubt, there is presumption in his sin, unless he strives to correct that passion and keep it down. A man, again, who is suddenly tempted and

surprised into a sin which is not his habit, but which he commits through the force of some strong temptation, is guilty, but not guilty of presumption, because he was taken unawares in the net and caught in the snare. But there are other men who sin deliberately; there are some who can think of a lust for weeks beforehand and dote upon their darling crime with pleasure. They do, as it were, water the young seedling of lust until it grows to the maturity of desire, and then they go and commit the crime. There are some to whom lust is not a passer-by, but a lodger at home. They receive it, they house it, they feast it; and when they sin they sin deliberately, walk coolly to their lusts, and in cold blood commit the act which another might haply do in hot and furious haste. Now, such a sin has in it a great extent of sinfulness, it is a sin of high presumption. To be carried away, as by a whirlwind of passion, in a moment is wrong; but to sit down and deliberately resolve upon revenge is cursed and diabolical. To sit down and deliberately fashion schemes of wickedness is heinous, and I can find no other word fitly to express it. To deliberate carefully how the crime is to be done, and, Haman-like, to build the gallows, and to set to work to destroy one's neighbor, to get the pit digged that the friend may fall into it and be destroyed, to lay snares in secret, to plot wickedness upon one's bed—this is a high pitch of presumptuous sin. May God forgive any of us, if we have been so far guilty!

Again, when a man continues long in sin, and has time to deliberate about it, that also is a proof that it is a presumptuous sin. He that sins once, being overtaken in a fault, and then abhors the sin, has not sinned presumptuously; but he who transgresses to-day, to-morrow, and the next day, week after week, and year after year, until he has piled up a heap of sins that are high as a mountain, such a man, I say, sins presumptuously, because in a continued habit of sin there must be a deliberation to sin; there must be at least such a force and strength of mind as could not have come upon any man if his sin were but the hasty effect of sudden passion. Ah! take heed, ye that are sodden in sin, ye that drink it down as the greedy ox drinketh down water, ye who run to your lust as the rivers run to the sea, and ye who go to your passions as the sow to her wallowing in the mire. Take heed! your crimes are grievous, and the hand of God shall soon fall terribly on your heads, unless by divine grace it be granted to you to repent and turn unto him. Fearful must be

your doom if unpardoned, God should condemn you for presumptuous sin. O "Lord, keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sin."

3. Again: I said that a presumptuous sin must be a *matter of design*, and have been committed with the intention of sin. If at your leisure at home you will turn to that passage in the book of Numbers, where it says there is no pardon for a presumptuous sin under the Jewish dispensation, you will find immediately afterward a case recorded. A man went out on the Sabbath-day to gather sticks; he was taken in the act of Sabbath-breaking, and the law being very stringent under the Jewish dispensation, he was ordered at once to be put to death. Now, the reason why he was put to death was not because he gathered sticks on the Sabbath merely, but because the law had just then been proclaimed, "In it thou shalt do no manner of work." This man willfully, out of design, in order, as it were, to show that he despised God—to show that he did not care for God—without any necessity, without any hope of advantage, went straight out, in the very teeth of the law, to perform, not an act which he kept in his own house, which might perhaps have been overlooked, but an act which brought shame upon the whole congregation, because, infidel-like, he dared to brazen it out before God; as much as to say, "I care not for God. Has God just commanded, 'Ye shall do no manner of work?' Here am I; I do not want sticks to-day; I do not want to work; not for the sake of sticks, but with the design of showing that I despise God, I go out this day and gather sticks." "Now," says one, "surely there are no people in the world that have ever done such a thing as this." Yes, there are; and there are such in the Surrey Music Hall this day. They have sinned against God, not merely for the pleasure of it, but because they would show their want of reverence to God. That young man burned his Bible in the midst of his wicked companions—not because he hated his Bible, for he quivered and looked pale at the ashes on the hearth when he was doing it; but he did it out of pure bravado, in order to show them, as he thought, that he really was far gone from any thing like a profession of religion. That other man is accustomed sometimes to stand by the wayside, when the people are going to the house of God; and he swears at them, not because he delights in swearing, but because he will show that he is irreligious, that he is ungodly. How many an infidel has done the same—not because he had any pleasure in the thing itself, but because out of the wickedness of his

heart he would spit at God, if it were possible, having a design to let men know that though the sin itself was cheap enough, he was determined to do something which would be like spitting in the face of his Maker, and despising God who created him! Now, such a sin is a masterpiece of iniquity. There is pardon for such a one—there is full pardon to those who are brought to repentance; but few of such men ever receive it; for when they are so far gone as to sin presumptuously, because they *will* do it—to sin merely for the sake of showing their disregard of God and of God's law, we say of such, there is pardon for them, but it is wondrous grace which brings them into such a condition that they are willing, to accept it. O that God would keep back his servants here from presumptuous sins! And if any of us here have committed them, may he bring us back, to the praise of the glory of his grace!

4. But one more point, and I think I shall have explained these presumptuous sins. A presumptuous sin also is one that is committed *through a hardihood of fancied strength of mind*. Says one, "I intend tomorrow to go into such-and-such a society, because I believe, though it hurts other people, it does me no hurt." You turn round and say to some young man, "I could not advise you to frequent the Casino—it would be your ruin." But you go yourself sir? "Yes." But how do you justify yourself? Because I have such strength of principle that I know just how far to go, and no further. Thou liest, sir; against thyself thou liest; thou liest presumptuously in so doing. Thou art playing with bombshells that shall burst and destroy thee; thou art sitting over the mouth of hell with a fancy that thou shalt not be burned. Because thou hast gone to haunts of vice and come back tainted, much tainted, but because thou art so blind as not to see the taint, thou thinkest thyself secure. Thou art not so. Thy sin, in daring to think that thou art proof against sin, is a sin of presumption. "No, no," says one; "but I know that I can go just so far in such-and-such a sin, and there I can stop." Presumption, sir; nothing but presumption. It would be presumption for any man to climb to the top of the spire of a church, and stand upon his head. "Well, but he might come down safe, if he were skilled in it." Yes, but it is presumptuous. I would no more think of subscribing a farthing to a man's ascent in a balloon, than I would to a poor wretch cutting his own throat. I would no more think of standing and gazing at any man who puts his life in a position of peril,

than I would of paying a man to blow his brains out. I think such things, if not murders, are murderous. There is suicide in men risking themselves in that way; and if there be suicide in the risk of the body, how much more in the case of a man who puts his own soul in jeopardy just because he thinks he has strength of mind enough to prevent its being ruined and destroyed. Sir, your sin is a sin of presumption; it is a great and grievous one; it is one of the masterpieces of iniquity.

O! how many people there are who are sinning presumptuously to-day! You are sinning presumptuously in being to-day what you are. You are saying, "In a little time I will solemnly and seriously think of religion, In a few years, when I am a little more settled in life, I intend to turn over a new leaf, and think about the matters of godliness." Sir, you are presumptuous. You are presuming that you shall live; you are speculating upon a thing which is as frail as the bubble on the breaker; you are staking your everlasting soul on the deadly odds that you shall live for a few years, whereas, the probabilities are, that you may be cut down ere the sun shall set: and it is possible, that ere another year shall have passed over your head, you may be in the land where repentance is impossible, and useless were it possible. O! dear friends, procrastination is a presumptuous sin. The putting off a thing which should be done to-day, because you hope to live to-morrow, is a presumption. You have no right to do it—you are, in so doing, sinning against God, and bringing on your heads the guilt of presumptuous sin. I remember that striking passage in Jonathan Edwards' wonderful sermon, which was the means of a great revival, where he says, "Sinner, thou art this moment standing over the mouth of hell, upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; thou art hanging over the jaws of perdition, by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are creaking now." It is a terrible thing to be in such a position as that, and yet to say, "to-morrow," and to procrastinate. You remind me, some of you, of that story of Dionysius the tyrant, who, wishing to punish one who had displeased him, invited him to a noble feast. Rich were the viands that were spread upon the table, and rare the wines of which he was invited to drink. A chair was placed at the head of the table, and the guest was seated within it. Horror of horrors! The feast might be rich, but the guest was miserable, dreadful beyond thought. However splendid might be the array of the servants, and however rich

the dainties, yet he who had been invited sat there in agony. For what reason? Because over his head, immediately over it, there hung a sword, a furbished sword, suspended by a single hair. He had to sit all the time with this sword above him, with nothing but a hair between him and death. You may conceive the poor man's misery. He could not escape; he must sit where he was. How could he feast? How could he rejoice? But O, my unconverted hearer, thou art there this morning, man, with all thy riches and thy wealth before thee, with the comforts of a home and the joys of a household; thou art there this day, in a place from which thou canst not escape; the sword of death above thee, prepared to descend; and woe unto thee, when it shall cleave thy soul from thy body! Canst thou yet make mirth, and yet procrastinate? If thou canst, then verily thy sin is presumptuous in a high degree. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, with which I shall deal very briefly. I am to try and show **WHY IT IS THAT THERE IS GREAT ENORMITY IN A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN.**

Let me take any one of the sins; for instance, *the sin against light and knowledge*. There is greater enormity in such a presumptuous sin than in any other. In this our happy land it is just possible for a man to commit treason. I think it must be rather difficult for him to do it; for we are allowed to say words here which would have brought our necks beneath the guillotine if they had been spoken on the other side the Channel; and we are allowed to do deeds here which would have brought us long years of imprisonment if the deed had been done in any other land. But I suppose it is just possible to commit treason here. Now, if two men should commit treason—if one of them should wantonly and wickedly raise the standard of revolt to-morrow, should denounce the rightful sovereign of this land in the strongest and most abominable language, should seek to entice the loyal subject of this country from their allegiance, and should draw some of them astray, to the hurt and injury of the common weal; he might have in his rebellious ranks one who had joined incautiously, not knowing whereunto the matter might tend, who might come into the midst of the rebels, not understanding the intention of their unlawful assembling, not even knowing the law which prohibited

them from being banded together, I can suppose these two men brought up upon a charge of high treason: they have both, legally, been guilty of it; but I can suppose that the one man who had sinned ignorantly would be acquitted, because there was no malignant intent; and I can suppose that the other man, who had willfully, knowingly, maliciously and wickedly raised the standard of revolt, would receive the highest punishment which the law could demand. And why? Because in the one case it was a sin of presumption, and in the other case it was not so. In the one case the man dared to defy the sovereign, and defy the law of the land, willfully, out of mere presumption. In the other case not so. Now, every man sees that it would be just to make a distinction in the punishment, because there is—conscience itself tells us—a distinction in the guilt.

Again: some men, I have said, sin *deliberately*, and others do not do so. Now, in order to show that there is a distinction here, let me take a case. To-morrow the bench of magistrates are sitting. Two men are brought up. They are each of them charged with stealing a loaf of bread. It is clearly proved, in the one case, that the man was hungry, and that he snatched the loaf of bread to satisfy his necessities. He is sorry for his deed, he grieves that he has done this act; but most manifestly he had a strong temptation to it. In the other case the man was rich, and he willfully went into the shop merely because he would break the law and show that he was a law-breaker. He said to the policeman outside, "Now, I care neither for you nor the law; I intend to go in there, just to see what you can do with me." I can suppose the magistrate would say to one man, "You are discharged; take care not to do the like again; there is something for your present necessities; seek to earn an honest living." But to the other I can conceive him saying, "You are an infamous wretch; you have committed the same deed as the other, but from very different motives; I give you the longest term of imprisonment which the law allows me, and I can only regret that I can not treat you worse than I have done." The presumption of sin made the difference. So when you sin deliberately and knowingly, your sin against Almighty God is a higher and a blacker sin than it would have been if you had sinned ignorantly, or sinned in haste.

Now let us suppose one more case. In the heat of some little dispute some one shall insult a man. You shall be insulted by a man of angry temper;

you have not provoked him, you gave him no just cause for it; but at the same time he was of a hot and angry disposition; he was somewhat foiled in the debate, and he insulted you, calling you by some name which has left a stain upon your character, so far as epithets can do it. I can suppose that you would ask no reparation of him, if by to-morrow you saw that it was just a rash word spoken in haste, of which he repented. But suppose another person should waylay you in the street, should week after week seek to meet you in the market-place, and should, after a great deal of toil and trouble, at last meet you, and there, in the center of a number of people, unprovoked, just out of sheer, deliberate malice, come before you and call you a liar in the street; I can suppose that, Christian as you are, you might find it necessary to chastise such insolence, not with your hand, but with the arm of that equitable law which protects us all from insulting violence. In the other case I can suppose it would be no trouble to forgive. You would say, "My dear fellow, I know we are all hasty sometimes—there, now, I don't care at all for it; you did not mean it." But in this case, where a man has dared and defied you without any provocation whatever, you would say to him, "Sir, you have endeavored to injure me in respectable society; I can forgive you as a Christian, but as a man and a citizen I shall demand that I am protected against your insolence."

You see, therefore, in the cases that occur between man and man, how there is an excess of guilt added to a sin by presumption. O! ye that have sinned presumptuously—and who among us has not done so?—bow your heads in silence, confess your guilt, and then open your mouths, and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me, a presumptuous sinner."

III. And now I have nearly done—not to weary you by too long a discourse—we shall notice THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS PRAYER—"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

Will you just note, that this prayer was the *prayer of a saint*, the prayer of a holy man of God? Did David need to pray thus? Did the "man after God's own heart" need to cry, "Keep back thy servant?" Yes, he did. And note the beauty of the prayer. If I might translate it into more metaphorical style, it is like this: "Curb thy servant from presumptuous

sin." "Keep him back or he will wander to the edge of the precipice of sin. Hold him in, Lord; he is apt to run away; curb him; put the bridle on him; do not let him do it; let thine overpowering grace keep him holy; when he would do evil, then do thou draw him to good, and when his evil propensities would lead him astray, then do thou check him." "Check thy servant from presumptuous sins."

What then? Is It true that the best of men may sin presumptuously? Ah! it is true. It is a solemn thing to find the Apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome of sins. He says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate affection," and such like. What! do saints want warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The highest saints may sin the lowest sins, unless kept by divine grace. You old experienced Christians, boast not in your experience; you may trip yet, unless you cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Ye whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not "I shall never sin," but rather cry out, "Lord, lead me not into temptation, and when thou leave me not there; for unless thou hold me fast I feel I must, I shall decline, and prove an apostate after all." There is enough tinder in the hearts of the best men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God should quench the sparks as they fall. There is enough corruption, depravity, and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity, if free and sovereign grace does not prevent. O Christian, thou hast need to pray this prayer. But I think I hear you saying, "Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing?" So said Hazeal, when the prophet told him that he would slay his master; but he went home and took a wet cloth and spread it over his master's face and choked him, and did the next day the sin which he abhorred before. Think it not enough to abhor sin, you may yet fall into it. Say not, "I never can be drunken, for I have such an abhorrence of drunkenness;" thou mayest fall where thou art most secure. Say not, "I can never blaspheme God, for I have never done so in my life;" take care; you may yet swear most profanely. Job might have said, "I will never curse the day of my birth;" but he lived to do it. He was a patient man; he might have said, "I will never murmur; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and yet he lived to wish that the day were darkness wherein he was brought forth.

Boast not, then, O Christian; by faith thou standest. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

But if this need to be the prayer of the best, how ought it to be the prayer of you and me? If the highest saint must pray it, O mere moralist, thou hast good need to utter it. And ye who have begun to sin, who make no pretensions to piety, how much need is there for you to pray that you may be kept from presumptuously rebelling against God.

Instead, however, of enlarging upon that point, I shall close my few remarks this morning by just addressing myself most affectionately to such of you as are now under a sense of guilt by reason of presumptuous sins. God's Spirit has found some of you out this morning. I thought when I was describing presumptuous sin that I saw here and there an eye that was suffused with tears; I thought I saw here and there a head that was bowed down, as much as to say, "I am guilty there." I thought there were some hearts that palpitated with confession, when I described the guilt of presumption. I hope it was so. If it was I am glad of it. If I hit your consciences, it was that I meant to do. Not to your ears do I speak, but to your hearts. I would not give the snap of this my finger to gratify you with mere words of oratory, with a mere flow of language. No, God is my witness. I never sought effect yet, except the effect of hitting your consciences. I would use the words that would be most rough and vulgar in all our language, if I could get at your heart better with them than with any other; for I reckon that the chief matter with a minister is to touch the conscience. If any of you feel, then, that you have presumed against God in sinning, let me just bid you look at your sin, and weep over the blackness of it; let me exhort you to go home and bow your heads with sorrow, and confess your guilt, and weep over it with many tears and sighs. You have greatly sinned, and if God should blast you into perdition now, he would be just; if now his fiery thunderbolt of vengeance should pierce you through, if the arrow that is now upon the string of the Almighty should find a target in your heart, he would be just. Go home and confess that, confess it with cries and sighs. And then what next wilt thou do? Why, I bid thee remember that there was a man who was a God. That man suffered for presumptuous sin. I would bid thee this day, sinner, if thou knowest thy need of a Saviour, go up to thy chamber, cast

thymself upon thy face, and weep for sin; and when thou hast done that, turn to the Scriptures, and read the story of that man who suffered and died for sin. Think you see him in all his unutterable agonies, and griefs, and woes, and say this -

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

Lift up your hand, and put it on his head who bled, and say,

"My faith would lay its hand
On that dear head of thine,
While, like a penitent, I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Sit down at the foot of his cross, and watch him till your heart is moved, till the tears begin to flow again, until your heart breaks within you; and then you will rise and say -

"Dissolved by his mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found."

O sinner, thou canst never perish, if thou wilt cast thyself at the foot of the cross. If thou seekest to save thyself thou shalt die; if thou wilt come, just as thou art, all black, all filthy, all hell-deserving, all ill-deserving, I am my Master's hostage, I will be answerable at the day of judgment for this matter, if he does not save thee, I can preach on this subject now, for I trust I have tried my Master myself. As a youth I sinned, as a child I rebelled, as a young man I wandered into lusts and vanities: my Master made me feel how great a sinner I was and I sought to reform, to mend the matter; but I grew worse. At last I heard it said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" and I looked to Jesus. And O! my Saviour, thou hast eased my aching conscience, thou hast given me peace; thou hast enabled me to say -

"Now, freed from sin I walk at large;
My Saviour's blood's a full discharge
At his dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

And O! my heart pants for you. O that you who never knew him could taste his love now. O that you who have never repented might now receive the Holy Ghost who is able to melt the heart! And O that you who are penitents would look to him now! And I repeat that solemn assertion —I am God's hostage this morning; ye shall feed me on bread and water to my life's end, ay, and I will bear the blame for ever, if any of you seek Christ and Christ rejects you. It must not, it can not be. "Whosoever cometh," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." May God Almighty bless you; and may we meet again in yonder Paradise; and there will we sing more sweetly of redeeming love and dying blood, and of Jesus' power to save -

"When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave."

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Pricked In Their Heart

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
- Acts 2:36-37

This was the first public preaching of the gospel after our Lord was taken up into glory. It was thus a very memorable sermon, a kind of first-fruits of the great harvest of gospel testimony. It is very encouraging to those who are engaged in preaching that the first sermon should have been so successful. Three thousand made up a grand take of fish at that first cast of the net. We are serving a great and growing cause in the way chosen of God, and we hope in the future to see still larger results produced by that same undying and unchanging power which helped Peter to preach such a heart-piercing sermon.

Peter's discourse was not distinguished by any special rhetorical display: he used not the words of man's wisdom or eloquence. It was not an oration, but it was a heart-moving argument, entreaty, and exhortation. He gave his hearers a simple, well-reasoned, Scriptural discourse, sustained by the facts of experience; and every passage of it pointed to the Lord Jesus. It was in these respects a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its contents. His plea was personally addressed to the people who stood before him, and it had a practical and pressing relation to them and to their conduct. It was aimed, not at the head, but at the heart. Every word of it was directed to the conscience and the affections, It was plain, practical, personal, and persuasive; and in this it was a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its aim and style. Yet Peter could not have spoken otherwise under the impression of the divine Spirit: his speech was as the oracles of God, a true product of a divine inspiration. Under

the circumstances, any other kind of address would have been sadly out of place. A flashy, dazzling oration would have been a piece of horrible irreverence to the Holy Ghost; and Peter would have been guilty of the blood of souls if he had attempted it. In sober earnestness he kept to the plain facts of the case, setting them in the light of God's Word; and then with all his might he pressed home the truth upon those for whose salvation he was labouring. May it ever be the preacher's one desire to win men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! May no minister wish to be admired, but may he long that his Lord and Master may be sought after! May none bewilder their people with the clouds of theoretic philosophy, but refresh them with the rain of revealed truth? Oh, that we could so preach that our hearers should be at once pricked in their hearts, and so be led at once to believe in our Lord Jesus, and immediately to come forward and confess their faith in his name!

We must not forget, however, to trace the special success of the sermon on the day of Pentecost to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, in which Peter had shared. This it is which is the making of the preacher. Immersed into the Holy Spirit, the preacher will think rightly, and speak wisely; his word will be with power to those who hear. We must not forget, also, that there had been a long season of earnest, united, believing prayer on the part of the whole church. Peter was not alone: he was the voice of a praying company, and the believers had been with one accord in one place crying for a blessing; and thus not only was the Spirit resting upon the preacher, but on all who were with him. What a difference this makes to a preacher of the gospel, when all his comrades are as much anointed of the Spirit as himself! His power is enhanced a hundredfold. We shall seldom see the very greatest wonders wrought when the preacher stands by himself; but when Peter is described as standing up "with the eleven," then is there a twelve-man ministry concentrated in one; and when the inner circle is further sustained by a company of men and women who have entered into the same truth, and are of one heart and one soul, then is the power increased beyond measure. A lonely ministry may sometimes effect great things, as Jonah did in Nineveh; but if we look for the greatest and most desirable result of all, it must come from one who is not alone, but is the mouthpiece of many. Peter had the one hundred and twenty registered brethren for a

loving body-guard, and this tended to make him strong for his Lord. How greatly I value the loving co-operation of the friends around me! I have no word, to express my gratitude to God for the army of true men and women who surround me with their love, and support me with their faith. I pray you, never cease to sustain me by your prayers, your sympathy, and your co-operation, until some other preacher shall take my place when increasing years shall warn me to stand aside.

Yet much responsibility must rest with the preacher himself; and there was much about Peter's own self that is well worthy of imitation. The sermon was born of the occasion, and it used the event of the hour as God intended it to be used. It was earnest without a trace of passion, and prudent without a suspicion of fear. The preacher himself was self-collected, calm, courteous, and gentle. He aired no theories, but went on firm ground, stepping from fact to fact, from Scripture to Scripture, from plain truth to plain truth. He was patient at the beginning, argumentative all along, and conclusive at the end. He fought his way through the doubts and prejudices of his hearers; and when he came to the end, he stated the inevitable conclusion with clearness and certainty. All along he spake very boldly, without mincing the truth—Ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain him whom God has highly exalted. He boldly accused them of the murder of the Lord of glory, doing his duty in the sight of God, and for the good of their souls, with great firmness and fearlessness. Yet there is great tenderness in his discourse. Impulsive and hot-headed Peter, who, a little while before, had drawn his sword to fight for his Lord, does not, in this instance, use a harsh word; but speaks with great gentleness and meekness of spirit, using words and terms all through the address which indicate a desire to conciliate, and then to convince. Though he was as faithful as an Elijah, yet he used terms so courteous and kindly that, if men took offence, it would not be because of any offensiveness of tone on the speaker's part. Peter was gentle in his manner, but forceful in his matter. This art he had learned from his Lord; and we shall never have master-preachers among us till we see men who have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Oh, that we could become partakers of our Lord's Spirit, and echoes of his tone! Then may we hope to attain to Pentecostal results, when we have preachers like Peter, surrounded by a band of earnest witnesses, and all baptized with the Holy

Ghost and with fire.

When we follow the run of Peter's argument, we do not wonder that his hearers were pricked in their hearts. We ascribe that deep compunction to the Spirit of God; and yet it was a very reasonable thing that it should be so. When it was clearly shown to them that they had really crucified the Messiah, the great hope of their nation, it was not wonderful that they should be smitten with horror. Looking as they were for Israel's King, and finding that he had been among them, and they had despitefully used him, and crucified him, they might well be smitten at the heart. Though for the result of our ministry we depend wholly upon the Spirit of God, yet we must adapt our discourse to the end we aim at; or, say rather, we must leave ourselves in the Spirit's hand as to the sermon itself as well as in reference to the result of the sermon. The Holy Ghost uses means which are adapted to the end designed. Because, beloved, I do desire beyond all things that many in this congregation may be pricked in the heart, I have taken this concluding part of Peter's discourse to be the text of my sermon this morning. Yet my trust is not in the Word itself, but in the quickening Spirit who works by it. May the Spirit of God use the rapier of his Word to pierce the hearts of my hearers!

First, note that Peter speaks to his hearers upon their evil conduct to the Lord Jesus; and, secondly, he declares to them the exaltation that God has bestowed upon him. When we have dwelt on these two things, we will notice, in the third place, the result of knowing this grand fact—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I. First, then, Peter dwelt tenderly, but very plainly, upon THEIR EVIL CONDUCT TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." As a nation, Israel had rejected him whom God had sent. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone further, and had consented unto his death; nay, had even clamoured for it, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." Solemnly had the Jews exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children." None of them had protested against the murder of the innocent One; but many of them had been eager to make an end of him. This Peter, in plain words, charged upon them, and they could not

deny it; nor did they pretend to do so. It is well when a sense of guilt compels a man to stand silent under the rebuke of God. We then have hope of him that he will seek for pardon.

Men and brethren, we are not in Jerusalem, and the death of our Lord happened more than eighteen hundred years ago; therefore we need not dwell upon the sin of those long since dead. It will be more profitable for us practically to consider how far we have been guilty of similar sins against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at home. Let each one consider his own case. I may be addressing some to-day who have blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus. I do not suppose that you have been guilty of the vulgar language of blasphemy, which is coarse and revolting, as well as profane; but there are politer methods of committing the self-same crime. Some, with their elaborate criticisms of Christianity, wound it far more seriously than atheists with their profanities. In these days, wiseacres, with their philosophy, derogate from the glory of our Lord's nature, and, with their novel doctrines, undermine his gospel. Denying the atonement, or teaching it as something other than a substitutionary sacrifice, they try to make away with that which is the very heart and soul of the Redeemer's work. Men nowadays drink in opinions which lessen the guilt of sin, and, of course, lower the value of the atoning blood. The cross is still a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Men do not now accept the words of the Bible as authoritative, nor the teaching of the apostles as final; they set themselves up to be teachers of the great Teacher, reformers of the divine gospel. They do not accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus one half so much as they criticize it. If any here present have been thus guilty, may the Holy Spirit convince them of their sin! Since the Lord God hath made this atoning Jesus both Lord and Christ, and set him on his right hand, any teaching which does despite to him, however learned, however advanced, however cultured it may seem to be, is a grievous sin against the Lord God himself. By such conduct we are, as far as in us lies, again putting the Lord Jesus to death; we are attempting to make away with that which is the very life and glory of Christ. O my hearer, if you have denied his Deity, rejected his atoning blood, ridiculed his imputed righteousness, or scoffed at salvation by faith in him, may you be pricked in the heart as you see that God hath made that same Jesus to be Lord of all!

Much more common, however, is another sin against our Lord Jesus—namely, neglecting him, ignoring his claims, and postponing the day of faith in him. I trust that none here are willing to die unconverted, or would even dare to think of passing away without being washed in the precious blood; yet, my hearers, you have lived to manhood; to ripe years; perhaps even to old age, without yielding your hearts to the Lord Jesus, and accepting him as your Saviour. To say the least of it, this is a very sad piece of neglect. To ignore a man altogether is, in a certain sense, as far as you are concerned, to kill that man.

If you put him out of your reckoning, if you treat him as if he were nothing, if your estimate of life is made as if he were a cipher, you have put your Lord out of existence in reference to yourself. You treat him with empty compliment by observing his day, and hearing his Word; but you have no real regard for him. Is not this a cruel fault? From morning till night your Lord is not in all your thoughts; he never affects your dealings with your fellow-men; you never endeavour to catch his spirit of love, and considerateness, and meekness; and thus, as a Leader and Exemplar, he is dead to you. You have never confessed your sin before him, nor sought for pardon at his hands, nor have you looked to see whether he hath borne your sins in his own body on the tree. O soul, this is base neglect—ungrateful contempt! God thinks so much of his Son that he cannot set him too high; he has placed him at his own right hand, and yet you will not spare him a thought! The great God thinks heaven and earth too little for him, and magnifies him exceedingly above all, as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and yet you treat him as if he were of no account, and might be safely made to wait your time and leisure. Is this right? Will you treat your Saviour thus? May this prick you in the heart, and may you cease from this base ingratitude!

There are others who have done more than this, for they have rejected Christ. I now allude to those of you who have not been able to resist the appeals made to you by the Lord's ministers. You have felt a good deal—felt more than you would like to confess. You have been so inclined to seek the Saviour that you have almost done so; sin has flashed in your face like the flames of Tophet, and in alarm you have resolved to seek

salvation; you have gone home to bend the knee in prayer, you have read the Scriptures to learn the way of eternal life; but, alas! an evil companion crossed your path, and the question came, "Shall it be this man or Christ?" You chose the man: I had almost said, you chose Barabbas, and rejected Jesus. A sinful pleasure came before you when you had begun to be serious, and the question arose, "Shall I give up this pleasure, or shall I renounce all hope of Christ?" You snatched at the pleasure, and you let your Saviour go. Do you not remember when you did violence to your conscience? There was an effort about it, as you stifled conviction. You had to put forth a decided act of the will to quench the Spirit of God, and to escape from the strivings of your awakened conscience. I know not to whom this may apply; but I am certain, as certain as Peter was when he spoke to the crucifiers of Christ, that I am speaking to some who have been rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ, not once nor twice. Some of you have distinctly rejected him almost every Sabbath-day; but especially when the Word of the Lord has been with extraordinary power, and you have felt it shake you, as a lion shakes his prey. Thank God, you are not past feeling yet! I pray you, do not presume upon the continuance of your tenderness. You will not always feel as you have felt: the day may come when even the thunders of God may not be heard by your deafened ear, and the love of Christ will not affect the heart which you have made callous by wilful obstinacy. Woe to the man when his heart is turned to stone! When flesh turns to stone, it is a conversion unto eternal death; just as the turning of stone to flesh is conversion to eternal life. God have mercy upon you, and prick you in the heart this morning, while you yet have tenderness enough to feel that you have rejected him whom you ought to embrace with all your heart!

I must come a little closer to certain of you, who have forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ. There are a few unhappy persons here this morning, over whom I greatly grieve, because of their wanderings; and yet I am glad that they have not quite forsaken the courts of the Lord's house. These once professed to be disciples of Christ; but they have gone back, and walk no more with him. They were once numbered with us, and went in and out of our solemn assemblies for prayer and breaking of bread; but now we know them not. They were not backward to confess themselves Christians, But now they deny their Lord. In former days they were

zealous, and apparently devout; they were quick in the service of God, and sound in their creed. But there came a day—I need not describe the circumstances, for they differ in different cases—when two roads were before them, and they must go either to the right or to the left; and they took the road by which they turned their back upon Christ, and upon the vitality of godliness. They went off into sin, and apostatized from the faith. We fear "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." They have gone aside unto crooked ways, and we fear that the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. O my backsliding hearer, I hope you are not a Judas; my trust is that you may be a Peter! You have denied your Master, but I hope you will yet weep bitterly, and be restored to your Lord's service. For your good I must bring home your wanderings to you; may the Lord prick you in the heart about them! Why have you left your Lord? Wherein has he wearied you? There may be present persons from the country, or friends from America, who were once glad to be numbered with the children of God, but now they care nothing for God, or his people. Alas! they take part with the adversaries of Christ, and the despisers of his precious blood! Friend, you are here this morning that I may bring your sin to remembrance, and ask you why you have done this thing! Were you a hypocrite? If not, why have you turned aside? God has exalted to his throne the Saviour, on whom you have turned your back; have you not acted madly in what you have done? The Most High God is on the side of Jesus, and you are avowedly on the other side; is this right, or wise? It is painful to me to speak of these things. I hope it is far more painful for you to hear of them. I want you to feel as David did, when his heart smote him. What have you been doing? Has the Lord Jesus deserved this at your hands? Turn, I pray you, from your evil way, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

II. After Peter had dwelt upon the sin of his hearers in treating the Lord so ill, he declared to them **THE EXALTATION BESTOWED ON HIM BY GOD**. The great God loved, and honoured, and exalted that same Jesus whom they had crucified. O my hearers, whatever you may think of the Lord Jesus, God thinks everything of him! To you he may be dead and buried, but God hath raised him from the dead. To God he is the ever-living, the ever well-beloved Christ. You cannot destroy the Lord Jesus, or

his cause. If you could do all that the most malicious heart could suggest, you could not really defeat him. Men wreaked their vengeance on him: once they put him to a felon's death, they laid him in the grave, and sealed the stone; but he rose again, for God was on his side. My hearer, whatever you do, you cannot shake the truth of the gospel, nor rob the Lord Jesus of a single beam of his glory. He lives and reigns, and he will live and reign, whatever becomes of you. You may refuse his salvation but he is still a Saviour, and a great one. His gospel chariot rolls on, and every stone which is placed to hinder it is crushed into the earth, and compelled to make a road for him. If you resist the Lord, you do it at your peril; but you do it in vain. You might as well hope to reverse the laws of nature, quench the sun, and snatch the moon from her orbit, as hope to overthrow the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; for God is on his side, and his throne is established for ever. God hath raised his Son from the dead, and taken him up to sit at his right hand, and there he will remain while his enemies shall be made his footstool. By this you may see what evil you have done through rejecting Christ, and may know who he is whom you have neglected refused, and forsaken.

Let me remind you that, when we read of our Lord as being at the right hand of God, we perceive that he enjoys infinite felicity. At the right hand of God there are pleasures for evermore; and David said, as the representative of our Lord, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." He who was the Man of sorrows now overflows with gladness. All his work and warfare done, he rests in boundless blessedness. His priestly work being finished, he sits down. No more does he feel the cross and nails, no more does he endure the mockery of cruel eyes and ribald lips. He is full of joy, that joy which he bids his people share when he says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His portion is measureless, infinite, inconceivable delight. Can it be that you are opposed to him, and neglect him, while God lavishes upon him more than all the bliss of heaven, and makes him to be the fountain of unspeakable delight to all his redeemed ones? Grieve that you should grieve him whom God thus loads with blessedness.

Moreover, remember that at the right hand of God our Lord sits in infinite majesty. Jesus, whom you think little of, Jesus, from whom you

turn aside, is to-day adored of angels, obeyed by seraphs, worshipped by just men made perfect. He is the highest in the highest heavens. Do you not hear the blast of heaven's trumpets, which proclaims him head over principalities and powers? Do you not hear the song which ascribes to him honour, and glory, and power, and dominion, and might? My faith anticipates the happy day when I shall stand a courtier in his unrivalled courts, and behold him, the Lamb upon the throne, reigning high over all, with every knee in heaven and in earth gladly bowing before him. Can it be that you have neglected him whom God hath exalted? Can it be that you have refused him, that you have done despite to him, that you have, as far as you could, put him to death whom Jehovah has made Lord of all?

Nor is this all: for the place at the right hand of God, to which he is now exalted, is the place of power. There sits the Mediator, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, while his enemies are being subdued under him. Do not believe it, O proudest of doubters, that thou canst take away from Christ any measure of his power! He overrules all mortal things; he directs the movements of the stars; he rules the armies of heaven. He restrains the rage of his adversaries, and what he suffers to be let loose he turns to his glory. All power is given to him in heaven and earth; he reigns in the three realms of nature, providence, and grace. His kingdom ruleth over all, and of his dominion there shall be no end. O sirs, what do our hearts suggest but that we bow at his feet? that we worship him with loving reverence? that we yield to that supreme power which is used for purposes of love? Yet it is this Christ, this mighty Christ, who is set at nought by some of you, so that you run the risk of perishing because you have no heart for him and his great salvation.

Learn, next, that he is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, seated as our Judge. If we refuse him as a Saviour, we shall not be able to escape from him as Judge in the last great day. All the acts of men are being recorded, and in that day, when the great white throne shall be set in the heavens, all things shall be made manifest, and we must stand unveiled in his presence. You have often heard and sung of him whose face was more marred than that of any man, when he was here as a sacrifice for guilty men. If you refuse him, you will have to stand before

his bar to answer for it. The most awful sight for the impenitent in the day of judgment will be the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not find that they cry, "Hide us from the tempest," nor "Hide us from the angel-guards," nor "Hide us from their swords of fire," but, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Love, when once it turns to wrath, is terrible beyond compare. As oil when set on fire blazes with great force, so the meek and loving Jesus, when finally rejected, will exhibit a wrath more terrible than death.

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."

Perhaps through ignorance you have rebelled; repent, and take another course. You supposed that when you kicked against a sermon, you had only put down the minister's words; but in reality you resisted the Saviour's love. You thought that when you turned away from Christ and his people, it was only leaving a church, and having your name crossed out of a book. Ah, sirs! take heed, for I fear you have left the Lamb of God, and renounced your part in his Book of Life! At the last it may turn out to have been an awful thing to have been put forth from the Church of Christ on earth; for when we, as a church, do our Lord's bidding, that which we bind on earth is bound in heaven. In refusing the Lord's Word, you refuse him who speaks from heaven: you refuse not only his words, but himself, and he shall be your Judge—your Judge most just, most holy. Oh, how will you bear it? How will you bear to stand at the bar of the despised Saviour?

Peter also showed his hearers that the Lord was greatly exalted in heaven as the Head over all things to his church, for he had that day shed abroad the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes from Christ, and as the witness of his power. He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and he bears witness with both. Christ's power was marvellously proved when, after he had been but a little while in heaven, he was able to bestow such gifts upon men, and specially to send the tongues of fire, and the rushing mighty wind, which betoken the energy of the Holy Ghost. He is

such a Lord that he can save or destroy. The Christ that died upon the cross hath all things committed into his hands. He can this morning send forth salvation to the ends of the earth, so that multitudes shall believe and live; for him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Or, he can turn the key the other way, and shut the door against this untoward generation; for he openeth, and no man shutteth; and he shutteth, and no man openeth. In any case, be ye sure of this, ye Gentiles, even as Peter would have the house of Israel be sure of it, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I notice that, at this time, few writers or preachers use the expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." We have lives of Christ, and lives of Jesus; but, brethren, he is THE LORD. Jesus is both Lord and Christ: we need to acknowledge his Deity, his dominion, and his divine anointing. He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and we can never praise him too much. A great and grievous error of the times is a want of reverence for our Lord and his sacrifice. To sit in judgment on his sacred teaching, is to spit in his face; to deny his miracles, is to strip him of his own clothes; to make him out to be a mere teacher of ethics, is to mock him with a purple robe; and to deny his atonement, in philosophical phraseology, is to crown him with thorns, and crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Be not guilty of this, my hearers, for God hath made this same Jesus "both Lord and Christ"; let us worship him as Lord, and trust him as Christ.

III. Now I come to my closing point, which is, THE RESULT OF KNOWING THIS ASSUREDLY. May I here pause to ask—do you know this assuredly? I hope all of you believe that God hath made Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in his complex person, as God-and-man, to be "both Lord and Christ." He was Lord, as God, always; but as God-and-man, he is now Lord and Christ. Manhood and Godhead are in him united in one wondrous Parson, and this Person is "both Lord and Christ." You believe it. But do you so believe it that it is a fact of the utmost importance to you? Will you assuredly believe it, that the man of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, is to-day both Lord and Christ? If you do now believe this, what are your feelings as you review your past misconduct towards him? Does not your past neglect prick you in the heart? If you do not so believe, it is

of little use for me to describe what the result of such belief would be, for that result will not take place in you; but if you have so believed, and Jesus is to you Lord and Christ, you will look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn for him. As you recollect your negligence of him, your rejection of him, your backsliding from him, and all your ungrateful acts which show contempt of him, your heart will be ready to break, and you will be seized with a great sorrow, and a hearty repentance. The Lord work it in you, for his Son's sake!

Observe, that as the result of Peter's sermon, his hearers felt a mortal sting. "They were pricked in their heart." The truth had pierced their souls. When a man finds out that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart, and views his own conduct with abhorrence. We all remember the story of Llewellyn and his faithful dog. The prince came back from the hunt, and missed his infant child, but saw marks of blood everywhere. Suspecting his dog Gelert of having killed the child he drove his vengeful sword into the faithful hound, which had been bravely defending his child against a huge wolf, which lay there, all torn and dead, "tremendous still in death." Yes, he had slain the faithful creature which had preserved his child. Poor Gelert's dying yell pierced the prince to the heart; and well it might. If such emotions fitly arise when we discover that we have, in error, been ungenerous and cruel to a dog, how ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down his life that we, who were his enemies, might live?

I recall an awfully tragic story of an evil couple, who kept an inn of base repute. A young man called one night to lodge. They noticed that he had gold in his purse, and they murdered him in the night. It was their own son, who had come back to gladden their old age, and wished to see whether his parents would remember him. Oh, the bitterness of their lamentation when they found that through the lust of gold they had murdered their own son!

Take out of such amazing grief its better portion, and then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of evil—entreating the Son of God, the perfect One, the Lover of our souls, and you come near the meaning of being "pricked in the heart." Oh, to think that we should despise him who

loved us, and gave himself for us, and should rebel against him that bought us with his own blood while we were his enemies! I would to God everyone here, that has not come to Christ, would feel a sting in his conscience now; and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man, and died for love of guilty men.

When we read "they were pricked in their heart," we may see in it the meaning, that they felt a movement of love to him—a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards him. They said to themselves, "Have we treated him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?" They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved, but their desires and affections went out towards the offended One, and they cried, "What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards him whom we now love?" To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton's hymn:—

"I saw One hanging on a tree,
in agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail him there.

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

Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition, and prove ourselves to be his friends and humble servants.

As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited obedient faith. They were roused to action, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of all, and they hastened to be obedient unto him. When Peter said, "Repent!" they did indeed repent. If repentance be grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance be a change of mind and life, they were indeed altered men. Then Peter said, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the sin; they were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them—"You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord hath put away your sin for ever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him."

O my hearers, to what a place have I brought you now! If indeed the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character, if you have seen the wrong that you have done, if you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord, and if you will now come to him repenting and believing, and will confess him as he bids you confess him in baptism; then you have full remission, and you shall be partakers of the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, and henceforth you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God hath raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me: pure

gold needs no gilding, and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur.

May God write out this old, old story on your hearts! Oh, that he would issue a new edition of his gospel of love, printed on your hearts! Every man's conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you hot from the press this morning, a living epistle to be known and read of all men; and specially to be read by your children at home, and your neighbours in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for his name's sake! Amen.

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Pride And Humility

Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility. - Proverbs 18:12

Almost every event has its prophetic prelude. It is an old and common saying, that "coming events cast their shadows before them;" the wise man teaches us the same lesson in the verse before us. When destruction walks through the land, it casts its shadow; it is in the shape of pride. When honor visits a man's house, it casts its shadow before it; it is in the fashion of humility. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty;" pride is as surely the sign of destruction as the change of mercury in the weather-glass is the sign of rain, and far more infallibly so than that. "Before honor is humility," even as before the summer, sweet birds return to sing in our land. Everything hath its prelude. The prelude of destruction is pride, and of honor, humility. There is nothing into which the heart of man so easily falls as pride, and yet there is no vice which is more frequently, more emphatically, and more eloquently condemned in Scripture. Against pride, prophets have lifted up their voices, evangelists have spoken and teachers have discoursed. Yea, more; the everlasting

God has mounted to the very heights of eloquence when he would condemn the pride of man; and the full gushing of the Eternal's mighty language has been most gloriously displayed in the condemnation of the pride of human nature. Perhaps the most eloquent passage of God's Word is to be found toward the conclusion of the book of Job, where, in most splendid strains of unanswerable eloquence, God hides pride from many by utterly confounding him; and there is another very eloquent passage in the 14th chapter of Isaiah, where the Lord's holy choler seems to have risen up, and his anger to have waxed hot against the pride of man, when he would utterly and effectually condemn it. He says concerning the great and mighty king of Babylon, "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations? For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms." Mark how God addresses him, describing hell itself as being astonished at his fall, seeing that he had mounted so high; and yet declaring, assuredly, that his height and greatness were nothing to the Almighty, that he would pull him down, even though, like an eagle, he had built his nest among the stars. I say there is nothing more eloquently condemned in Scripture than pride, and yet there is no trap into which we poor silly birds so easily flee, no pitfall into which, like foolish beasts of the earth, we so continually run. On the other hand, humility is a grace that hath many promises given to it in the Scripture. Perhaps most promises are given to faith, and love is often considered to be the brightest of the train of virtues; yet humility holds by no means an inferior place in God's word, and there are hundreds of promises linked to it. Every grace seems to be like a nail on

which precious blessings hang, and humility hath many a mercy suspended from it. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" and in multitudes of other passages, we are reminded that God loveth the humble, but that he "bringeth down the mighty from their seats, and exalteth the humble and meek." Now, this morning, we shall have a word to say concerning *pride* and *humility*. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from the one, and produce in our hearts the other.

I. In the first place, we shall have something to say concerning the vice of PRIDE. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty." Pride, *what is it?* Pride, *where is its seat?* The heart of man. And pride, *what is its consequence?* Destruction.

1. In the first place, I must try to *describe pride* to you. I might paint it as being the worst malformation of all the monstrous things in creation; it hath nothing lovely in it, nothing in proportion, but everything in disorder. It is altogether the very reverse of the creatures which God hath made, which are pure and holy. Pride, the first-born son of hell, is indeed like its parent, all unclean and vile, and in it there is neither form, fashion, nor comeliness.

In the first place, pride is a *groundless thing*. It standeth on the sands; or worse than that, it puts its foot on the billows which yield beneath its tread; or worse still, it stands on bubbles, which soon must burst beneath its feet. Of all things pride has the worst foothold; it has no solid rock on earth whereon to place itself. We have reasons for almost everything, but we have no reasons for pride. Pride is a thing which should be unnatural to us, for we have nothing to be proud of. What is there in man of which he should glory? Our very creation is enough to humble us; what are we but creatures of to-day? Our frailty should be sufficient to lay us low, for we shall be gone to-morrow. Our ignorance should tend to keep pride from our lips. What are we, but like the wild ass's colt which knoweth nothing? And our sins ought effectually to stop our mouths, and lay us in the dust. Of all things in the world, pride towards God, is that which hath the very least excuse; it hath neither stick nor stone whereon to build. Yet like the spider, it carrieth its own web in its bowels, and can, of itself, spin

that wherewith to catch its prey. It seems to stand upon itself, for it hath nothing besides whereon it can rest. Oh! man, learn to reject pride, seeing that thou hast no reason for it; whatever thou art, thou hast nothing to make thee proud. The more thou hast, the more thou art in debt to God; and thou shouldst not be proud of that which renders thee a debtor. Consider thine origin; look back to the hole of the pit whence thou wast digged. Consider what thou wouldst have been, even now, if it were not for Divine grace. And, consider, that thou will yet be lost in hell if grace does not hold thee up. Consider that amongst the damned, there are none that would have been more damned than thyself, if grace had not kept thee from destruction. Let this consideration humble thee, that thou hast nought whereon to ground thy pride.

Again, it is a *brainless thing* as well as a groundless thing; for it brings no profit with it. There is no wisdom in a self-exaltation. Other vices have some excuse, for men seem to gain by them; avarice, pleasure, lust, have some plea; but the man who is proud sells his soul cheaply. he opens wide the flood-gates of his heart, to let men see how deep is the flood within his soul; then suddenly it floweth out, and all is gone - and all is nothing, for one puff of empty wind, one word of sweet applause - the soul is gone, and not a drop is left. In almost every other sin, we gather up the ashes when the fire is gone; but here, what is left? The covetous man hath his shining gold, but what hath the proud man? He has less than he would have had without his pride, and is no gainer whatever. Oh! man, if thou wert as mighty as Gabriel, and had all his holiness, still thou wouldst be an arrant fool to be proud, for pride would sink thee from thine angel station to the rank of devils, and bring thee from the place where Lucifer, son of the morning, once dwelt, to take up thine abode with hideous fiends in perdition. Pride exalts its head, and seeks to honor itself; but it is of all things most despised. It sought to plant crowns upon its brow, and so it hath done, but its head was hot, and it put an ice crown there, and it melted all away. Poor pride has decked itself out finely sometimes; it hath put on its most gaudy apparel, and said to others, "how brilliant I appear!" but, ah! pride, like a harlequin, dressed in thy gay colours, thou art all the more fool for that; thou art but a gazing stock for fools less foolish than thyself. Thou hast no crown, as thou thinkest thou hast, nothing solid and real, all is empty and vain. If thou, O man, desirest

shame, be proud. A monarch has waded through slaughter to a throne, and shut the gates of mercy on mankind to win a little glory; but when he has exalted himself, and has been proud, worms have devoured him, like Herod, or have devoured his empire, till it passed away, and with it his pride and glory. Pride wins no crown; men never honor it, not even the menial slaves of earth; for all men look down on the proud man, and think him less than themselves.

Again, pride is *the maddest thing* that can exist; it feeds upon its own vitals; it will take away its own life, that with its blood may make a purple for its shoulders: it sappeth, and undermineth its own house that it may build its pinnacles a little higher, and then the whole structure tumbleth down. Nothing proves men so made as pride. For this they have given up rest, and ease, and repose, to find rank and power among men: for this they have dared to risk their hope of salvation, to leave the gentle yoke of Jesus, and go toiling wearily along the way of life, seeking to save themselves by their own works, and at last to stagger into the mire of fell despair. Oh! man, hate pride, flee from it, abhor it, let it not dwell with thee. If thou wantest to have a madman in thy heart, embrace pride, for thou shalt never find one more mad than he.

Then pride is a *protean thing*; it changes its shape; it is all forms in the world; you may find it in any fashion you may choose, you may see it in the beggar's rags as well as in the rich man's garment. It dwells with the rich, and with the poor. The man without a shoe to his foot may be as proud as if he were riding in a chariot. Pride can be found in every rank of society - among all classes of men. Sometimes it is an Arminian, and talks about the power of the creature; then it turns Calvinist, and boasts of its fancied security - forgetful of the Maker, who alone can keep our faith alive. Pride can profess any form of religion; it may be a Quaker, and wear no collar to its coat; it may be a Churchman, and worship God in splendid cathedrals; it may be a Dissenter, and go to the common meeting-house; it is one of the most Catholic things in the world, it attends all kinds of chapels and churches; go where you will, you will see pride. It cometh up with us to the house of God; it goeth with us to our houses; it is found on the mart, and the exchange, in the streets, and everywhere. Let me hint at one or two of the forms which it assumes.

Sometimes pride takes the doctrinal shape; it teaches the doctrine of self-sufficiency; it tells us what man *can* do, and will not allow that we are lost, fallen, debased, and ruined creatures, as we are. It hates divine sovereignty, and rails at election. Then if it is driven from that, it takes another form; it allows that the doctrine of free grace is true but does not feel it. It acknowledges that salvation is of the Lord alone, but still it prompts men to seek heaven by their own works, even by the deeds of the law. And when driven from that, it will persuade men to join something with Christ in the matter of salvation; and when that is all rent up, and the poor rag of our righteousness is all burned, pride will get into the Christian's heart as well as the sinner's - it will flourish under the name of self-sufficiency, teaching the Christian that he is "rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing." It will tell him that he does not need daily grace, that past experience will do for to-morrow - that he knows enough, toils enough, prays enough. It will make him forget that he has "not yet attained;" it will not allow him to press forward to the things that are before, forgetting the things that are behind. It enters into his heart, and tempts the believer to set up an independent business for himself, and until the Lord brings about a spiritual bankruptcy, pride will keep him from going to God. Pride has ten thousand shapes; it is not always that stiff and starched gentleman that you picture it; it is a vile, creeping, insinuating thing, that will twist itself like a serpent into our hearts. It will talk of humility, and prate about being dust and ashes. I have known men talk about their corruption most marvellously, pretending to be all humility, while at the same time they were the proudest wretches that could be found this side the gulf of separation. Oh! my friends, ye cannot tell how many shapes pride will assume; look sharp about you, or you will be deceived by it, and when you think you are entertaining angels, you will find you have been receiving devils unawares.

2. Now, I have to speak of *the seat of pride* - the heart. The true throne of pride everywhere, is the heart of man. If, my dear friends, we desire, by God's grace, to put down pride, the only way is to begin with the heart. Now let me tell you a parable, in the form of an eastern story, which will set this truth in its proper light. A wise man in the east, called a dervish, in his wanderings, came suddenly upon a mountain, and he saw beneath his feet a smiling valley, in the midst of which there flowed a river. The

sun was shining on the stream, and the water as it reflected the sunlight, looked pure and beautiful. When he descended, he found it was muddy, and the water utterly unfit for drinking. Hard by he saw a young man, in the dress of a shepherd, who was with much diligence filtering the water for his flocks. At one moment he placed some water into a pitcher, and then allowing it to stand, after it had settled, he poured the clean fluid into a cistern. Then, in another place, he would be seen turning aside the current for a little, and letting it ripple over the sand and stones, that it might be filtered, and the impurities removed. The dervish watched the young man endeavouring to fill a large cistern with clear water; and he said to him, "My son, why all this toil? - what purpose dost thou answer by it?" The young man replied, "Father, I am a shepherd; this water is so filthy that my flock will not drink of it, and, therefore, I am obliged to purify it little by little, so I collect enough in this way that they may drink, but it is hard work." So saying, he wiped the sweat from his brow, for he was exhausted with his toil. "Right well hast thou laboured," said the wise man, "but dost thou know thy toil is not well applied? With half the labour thou mightest attain a better end. I should conceive that the source of this stream must be impure and polluted; let us take a pilgrimage together and see." They then walked some miles, climbing their way over many a rock, until they came to a spot where the stream took its rise. When they came near to it, they saw flocks of wild fowls flying away, and wild beasts of the earth rushing into the forest; these had come to drink, and had soiled the water with their feet. They found an open well, which kept continually flowing, but by reason of these creatures, which perpetually disturbed it, the stream was always turbid and muddy. "My son," said the wise man, "set to work now to protect the fountain and guard the well, which is the source of this stream; and when thou hast done that, if thou canst keep these wild beasts and fowls away, the stream will flow of itself, all pure and clear, and thou wilt have no longer need for thy toil." The young man did it, and as he labored, the wise man said to him, "My son, hear the word of wisdom; if thou art wrong, seek not to correct thine outward life, but seek first to get thy heart correct, for out of it are the issues of life, and thy life shall be pure when once thy heart is so." So if we would get rid of pride, we should not proceed to arrange our dress by adopting some special costume, or to qualify our language, by using an outlandish tongue, but let us seek of

God that he would purify our hearts from pride, and then assuredly if pride is purged from the heart, our life also shall be humble. Make the tree good, and then the fruit shall be good; make the fountain pure, and the stream shall be sweet. Oh! that God might grant us all, by his grace, that our hearts may be kept with diligence, so that pride may never enter there lest we be haughty in our hearts, and find that afterwards cometh wrath.

3. This brings me to the other point, which is, *the consequence of pride* - destruction, a fact which we can prove by hundreds of instances in Scripture. When men have become proud, destruction has come upon them. See you yon bright angel chanting the loud anthem of praise before his Maker's throne? Can anything tarnish that angel's glory, rob him of his harp, despoil him of his crown? Yes, see there enters a destroyer whose name is pride. He assaults the angel, and his harp-strings are snapped in twain. His crown is taken from his brow, and his glory is departed, and yon falling spirit descending into hell is he who once was Lucifer, son of the morning. He has now become Father of nights, even the Lord of Darkness, Satan, the Fallen one. See you again that happy pair walking in the midst of luscious fruits, and flowery walks and bowers of Paradise? Can aught spoil Eden, and ruin those happy beings? Yes, pride comes in the shape of a serpent, and asks them to seek to be as gods. They eat of the forbidden fruit, and pride withers their paradise and blasts their Eden. out they go to till the ground, whence they were taken, to beget and to bring forth us who are their children - sons of toil and sorrow. Do you see that man after God's own heart, continually singing his Maker's praise? Can aught make him sad? Can you suppose that he shall ever be laid prostrate on the earth, groaning, and crying, and asking "that the bones which God hath broken may rejoice?" Yes, pride can do that. it will put into his heart that he will number his people, that he will count the tribes of Israel, to show how great and mighty is his empire. It is done, and a terrible pestilence sweeps o'er his land on account of his pride. Let David's aching heart show how destruction comes to a man's glory when he once begins to make a god of it. See that other good and holy man who, like David, was much after God's own heart. He is rich and increased in goods. The Babylonian ambassadors are come, and he shows them all he has. Do you not hear that threatening, "Thy treasures shall be

carried away, and thy sons and thy daughters shall be servants to the king of Babylon?" The destruction of Hezekiah's wealth must come, because he is proud thereof. But for the most notable instance of all, let me show you yonder palace, perhaps the most magnificent which has even yet been built. In it there walks one who, lifting up his head on high, as if he were more than mortal man, exclaims, "See ye this great Babylon that I have builded?" Oh! pride, what hast thou done? thou hast more power than a wizard's wand! Mark the mighty builder of Babylon creeping on the earth. Like oxen he is devouring grass; his nails have grown like birds' claws, his hair like eagles' feathers, and his heart has gone from him. Pride did all that, that it might be fulfilled which God hath written, "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty."

Is thine heart haughty, *sinner*, this morning? Dost thou despise God's sovereignty? Wilt thou not submit thyself to Christ's yoke? Dost thou seek to weave a righteousness of thine own? Art thou seeking to be or to do something? Art thou desirous of being great and mighty in thine own esteem? Hear me then, sinner, destruction is coming upon thee. As truly as ever thou exaltest thyself, thou shalt be abased; thy *destruction*, in the fullest and blackest sense of the word, is hurrying on to overwhelm thee. And oh! Christian, is thine heart haughty this morning? Art thou come here glorying in thy graces? Art thou proud of thyself, that thou hast had such high frames and such sweet experiences? Mark thee, brother, there is a destruction coming to thee also. Some of thy proud things will be pulled up by the roots, some of thy graces will be shattered, and thy good works, perhaps, will become loathsome to thee, and thou wilt abhor thyself in dust and ashes. As truly as ever thou exaltest thyself, there will be a destruction come to thee, O saint - the destruction of thy joys and of thy comforts, though there can be no destruction of thy soul.

Pride, you know, is most likely to meet with destruction, because it is too tall to walk upright. It is most likely to tumble down, because it is always looking upward in its ambition, and never looks to its feet. There only needs to be a pitfall in the way, or even a stone, and down it goes. It is sure to tumble, because it is never contented with being where it is. It is always seeking to be climbing, and boys that will climb must expect to fall. Pride is foolhardy, and will venture upon scaling any rock.

Sometimes it holds on by a brier, and that pricks it; sometimes by a flint, and that cuts it. There it goes, toiling and laboring on, till it gets as high as it can, and then, from its very height, it is likely to fall. Nature itself tells us to avoid high things. Who is he that can stand upon an eminence without a reeling brain, and without a temptation to cast himself down? Pride, when most successful, stands in slippery places. Who would choose to dwell on a pinnacle of the temple? That is where pride has built its house, and verily it seems but natural that pride should down if pride will up. God will carry out this saying, "Before destruction, the heart of man is haughty." Yet beloved, I am persuaded that all I can say to you, or to myself, can never keep pride from us. The Lord alone can bolt the door of the heart against pride. Pride is like the flies of Egypt; all Pharaoh's soldiers could not keep them out; and I am sure all the strong resolutions and devout aspirations we may have cannot keep pride out unless the Lord God Almighty sends a strong wind of his Holy Spirit to sweep it away.

II. Now, let us consider briefly the last part of the text, "BEFORE HONOR IS HUMILITY." So then, you see our heavenly Father does not say that we are not to have honor. He has not forbidden it; he has only forbidden us to be proud of it. A good man may have honor in this life. Daniel had honor before the people; Joseph rode in the second chariot, and the people bowed the knee before him. God often clothes his children with honor in the face of their adversaries, and makes the wicked confess that the Lord is with them in deed and in truth. But God forbids our making that honor a cloak for pride, and bids us seek humility which always accompanies as well as precedes true honor.

1. Now let us briefly enquire, in the first place, *what is humility?* The best definition I have ever met with is, "to think rightly of ourselves." Humility is to make a right estimate of one's-self. It is no humility for a man to think less of himself than he ought, though it might rather puzzle him to do that. Some persons, when they know they can do a thing, tell you they cannot; but you do not call that humility? A man is asked to take part in some meeting. "No," he says, "I have no ability;" yet, if you were to say so yourself, he would be offended at you. It is not humility for a man to stand up and depreciate himself and say he cannot do this, that, or the

other, when he knows that he is lying. If God gives a man a talent, do you think the man does not know it? If a man has ten talents he has no right to be dishonest to his Maker, and to say, "Lord, thou hast only give me five." It is not humility to underrate yourself, Humility is to think of yourself, if you can, as God thinks of you. It is to feel that if we have talents, God has given them to us, and let it be seen that, like freight in a vessel, they tend to sink us low. The more we have, the lower we ought to lie. Humility is not to say, "I have not this gift," but it is to say, "I have the gift, and I must use it for my Master's glory. I must never seek any honor for myself, for what have I that I have not received?" But, beloved, humility is to feel ourselves lost, ruined, and undone. To be killed by the same hand which, afterwards, makes us alive, to be ground to pieces as to our own doings and willings, to know and trust in none but Jesus, to be brought to feel and sing -

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

Humility is to feel that we have no power of ourselves, but that it all cometh from God. Humility is to lean on our beloved, to believe that he has trodden the winepress alone, to lie on his bosom and slumber sweetly there, to exalt him, and think less than nothing of ourselves. It is in fact, to annihilate self, and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as all in all.

2. Now, what is *the seat or throne of humility*? The throne of humility must be the heart. I do hate, of all things, that humility which lives in the face. There are some persons who always seem to be so very humble when you are with them, but you can discover there is something underneath it all, and when they are in some other society, they will brag and say how you told them your whole heart. Take heed of the men who allow you to lay your head in their lap and betray you into the hands of the Philistines. I have met with such persons. I remember a man who used to pray with great apparent humility, and then would go and abuse the servants, and make a noise with all his farming men. He was the stiffest and proudest man in the church, yet he invariably used to tell the Lord, in prayer, that he was nothing but dust and ashes, that he laid his hand on his lip, and his mouth in the dust, and cried, "Unclean, unclean."

Indeed he talked of himself in the most despairing way, but I am sure if God had spoken to him, he must have said, "O, thou that liest before my throne, thou sayest this, but thou dost not feel it; for thou wilt go thy way and take thy brother by the throat, exalt thyself above all thy fellow-creatures, and be a very Diotrephes in the church, and a Herod in the world." I dislike that humility which rests in outward things. There is a kind of oil, sanctimonious, proud humility, which is not the genuine article, though it is sometimes extremely like it. You may be deceived by it once or twice, but by-and-bye you discover that is a wolf dexterously covered with sheep's clothing. It arrayeth itself in the simplest dress in the world; it talks in the gentlest and humblest style; it says, "We must not intrude our own peculiar sentiments, but must always walk in love and charity." But after all, what is it? It is charitable to all except those who hold God's truth, and it is humble to all when it is forced to humble. It is like one of whom, I dare say, you have read in your childish books, -

"So, stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot stand upright."

True humility does not continually talk about "dust and ashes," and prate about its infirmities, but *it feels* all that which others say, for it possesses an inwrought feeling of its own nothingness.

Very likely the most humble man in the world won't bend to anybody. John Knox was a truly humble man, yet if you had seen him march before Queen Mary with the Bible in his hand, to reprove her, you would have rashly said, "What a proud man!"

Cringing men that bow before everybody, are truly proud men; but humble men are those who think themselves so little, they do not think it worth while to stoop to serve themselves. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were humble men, for they did not think their lives were worth enough to save them by a sin. Daniel was a humble man; he did not think his place, his station, his whole self, worth enough to save them by leaving off prayer. Humility is a thing which must be genuine; the imitation of it is the nearest thing in the world to pride. Seek of God, dear friends, the gift of true humility. Seek to have that breaking in pieces by

the Holy Spirit, that breaking in the mortar with the pestle which God himself gives to his children. Seek that every twig of his rod may drive pride out of you, so that by the blueness of your wound, your soul may be made better. Seek of him, if he does not show you the chambers of imagery within your own heart, that he may take you to Calvary, and that he may show you his brightness and his glory, that you may be humble before him. Never ask to be a mean, cringing, fawning thing: ask God to make you a man - those are scarce things now-a-days - a man who only fears God, who knows no fear of any other kind. Do not give yourselves up to any man's power, or guidance, or rule, but ask of God that you may have that humility towards him, which gives you the noble bearing of a Christian before others. Some think that ministers are proud when they resent any interference with their ministry. I consider they would be proud if they allowed it for the sake of peace, which is only another word for their own self-seeking. It is a great mercy when God gives a man to be free from everybody, when he can go into his pulpit, careless of what others may think of him. I conceive that a minister should be like a lighthouse-keeper; he is out at sea, and nobody can suggest to him that he had better light his candles a little later, or anything of the kind. He knows his duty, and he keeps his lamps burning; if he were to follow the opinions of the people on shore, his light might be extinguished altogether. It is a merciful providence that they cannot get to him, so he goes on easily, obeys his regulations as he reads them, and cares little for other people's interpretation. So a minister should not be a weathercock, that is turned by the wind, but he should be one who turns the wind; not one who is ruled by others, but one who knows how to stand firm and fast, and keep his light burning, trusting always in God; believing, that if God has raised him up, he will not desert him, but will teach him by his Holy Spirit, without the ever-changing advice of men.

3. Now, in the last place, *what comes of humility?* "Before honor is humility." Humility is the herald which ushers in the great king; it walks before honor; and he who has humility, will have honor afterwards. I will only apply this spiritually. Have you been brought to-day to feel, that in yourself you are less than nothing, and vanity? Art thou humbled in the sight of God, to know thine own unworthiness, thy fallen estate in Adam, and the ruin thou hast brought upon thyself by thine own sins? Hast thou

been brought to feel thyself incapable of working out thy own salvation, unless God shall work in thee, to will and to do of his own good pleasure? Hast thou been brought to say, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner?" Well, then, as true as the text is in the Bible, thou shalt have honor by-and-bye. "Such honor have all the saints." Thou shalt have honor soon to be washed from all thy guilt; thou shalt have honor soon to be clothed in the robes of Jesus, in the royal garments of the King; thou shalt have honor soon to be adopted into his family, to be received amongst the blood-washed ones who have been justified by faith. Thou shalt have honor to be borne, as on eagles' wings, to be carried across the river, and at last to sing his praise, who has been the "Death of deaths, and hell's destruction." Thou shalt have honor to wear the crown, and wave the palm one day, for thou hast now that humility which comes from God. You may fear that because you are now humbled by God, you must perish. I beseech you do not think so; as truly as ever the Lord has humbled you, he will exalt you. And the more you are brought low, the less hope you have of mercy; the more you are in the dust, so much the more reason you have to hope. So far from the bottom of the sea being a place over which we cannot be carried to heaven, it is one of the nearest places to heaven's gate. And if thou art brought to the very lowest place to which even Jonah descended, thou art so much the nearer being accepted. The more thou knowest thy vileness; remember the blacker, the more filthy, the more unworthy thou art in thine own esteem, so much the more right hast thou to expect that thou wilt be saved. Verily, honor shall come after humility. Humble souls, rejoice; proud souls, go on in your proud ways, but know that they end in destruction. Climb up the ladder of your pride, you shall fall over on the other side and be dashed to pieces. Ascend the steep hill of your glory; the higher you climb the more terrible will be your fall. For know you this, that against none hath the Lord Almighty bent his bow more often, and against none has he shot his arrows more furiously than against the proud and mighty man that exalteth himself. Bow down, O man, bow down; "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

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Pride Catechized

Should it be according to thy mind; he will recompense it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. - Job 34:33

Dear friends, it is never wise to dispute with God. Let a man strive with his fellow, but not with his Maker. If we must discuss any point, let it be with imperfect beings like ourselves, but not with the infallible and infinitely wise God; for, in most of our discussions, these questions will come back to us, "Should it be according to thy mind? Art thou master? Is everyone to be subordinate to thee?"

I am going to speak, this evening, to those who have a quarrel with God concerning the way of salvation. They are very unwise not to take salvation just as God brings it to them; but they do not. They have some difficulty or other, so they raise a dispute, and they have been, perhaps for years, cavilling at the Saviour whose infinite goodness has provided a way of salvation exactly adapted to their needs. I am going to use Elihu's words, and apply them to their case.

I. To begin at the beginning, here is, first, A QUESTION: "Should it be according to thy mind?" You say that you are willing to find mercy, and that you are very teachable; but you object to the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

First, then, what is it to which you object? Do you object to the very basis of the plan, namely, that God will forgive sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Son? I know that some do object to this; they cannot bear to hear about atonement by blood, or justification by imputed

righteousness. Others, who will not say that they object to atonement, spirit away the very meaning of it. They cannot endure that glorious doctrine of substitution which is such a joy to us. Christ standing in the sinner's stead, and the sinner then standing in the place of Christ,—Christ taking the sinner's sin, and the sinner wearing Christ's righteousness,—all this they absolutely reject. "No doubt Christ did something for sinners," they say; but they cannot define what he did; and, as for the sin of any man being actually put away by Christ being punished in the room and place and stead of the ungodly sinner, they will not believe it.

Yet, that is God's plan of salvation, and some of us know, in our inmost hearts, that we never had peace until we accepted that plan of salvation; and that now, if it should be taken away from us, we should lose all the joy of existence, and should go back to the despair which, at one time, was so heavy upon us that we could sympathize with Job when he said, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." We could better afford that the sun should be quenched, that the moon should be darkened, that all springs should be dried, that the very air itself should disappear,—we could better afford to die, and rot in our graves, than that we should lose our Saviour, and his atoning blood, and justifying righteousness. Whatever you, Mr. Objector, may say about it, we say to you, "Should it be according to thy mind?" Would you have Christ to die, and yet not really secure salvation by his death? Could you invent a better plan, or even one half as good,—

"So just to God, so safe for man,"—

so consolatory to a wounded conscience, so constraining to gratitude when that conscience has been pacified? Would you, could you, propose anything one thousandth part as good as God's plan of salvation? Even if you could, "should it be according to thy mind?" Who are you, a guilty sinner, to despise the Saviour's blood? If you had your deserts, you would years ago have been in the lowest pit of hell; will you set aside the cross of Christ, and seek to put something else in the place of the crucified Redeemer?

But, possibly, you do not object to the doctrine of substitution, but your

objection is to the way of salvation by faith. "I don't like that doctrine of justification by faith," says one, "for I am sure that, when it is preached, people will begin to think that there is no virtue in good works, and that they may live as they like." I have often heard such a remark as yours, my friend, but experience is dead against you. Whenever justification by faith has been uppermost in the preaching, the morals of the people have been purest, and their spirituality has been brightest. But whenever the preachers have extolled the works and ceremonies of the law, or the Arminianism which brings in something of trust in works, or human power, it is most certain that there has been a declension in point of morals, while religion itself has seemed almost ready to expire. You may go to those who preach up salvation by works to hear them talk, but you had better not go to see how they live, whereas those who preach justification by faith can boldly point to the multitudes who have accepted this truth, and whose godly lives prove the sanctifying power of the doctrine.

But if you object to this doctrine, how would you like to have it altered? "Oh, well! I would like to have some good feelings put in with faith." And how, then, would any man be saved? Can he command his own feelings? Those feelings come naturally enough after faith; but, if they be demanded without faith, how will they ever be presented to God? Besides, feelings would claim some credit if they were thus joined with faith. A man would be able to boast that he had felt his way to heaven, and he would have the same self-congratulatory spirit which we see in those who trust in works and ceremonies; and thus Christ would be robbed of his glory as the sinner's Saviour. Man would put his dirty hand upon the crown, and place it upon his own head; but that must never be the case. You shall be saved if you trust the Saviour; but if you do not like that way of salvation, you never can be saved. Why should the plan of salvation be changed for you? Is God to be tied down to act only as you please? Is he to alter his gospel to suit the fancies of rebellious men? That must not be. There is no mistake about this matter: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;" and our Lord himself said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." That is the only message for him if he continues in his unbelief; and it shall not be altered to suit the mind of any man that lives.

"Oh, but!" say some, "we object to the requirements of the gospel, especially to that verse where Christ says, 'Ye must be born again.' Where is the need of that? We were christened when we were children; We were confirmed as we grew older; we have taken the sacrament; but we do not agree with that hard saying, 'Ye must be born again.'" They will not walk with Christ if he insists upon that condition.

Moreover, he requires the giving up of all known sin, the hating of all sin, and the objector says, "But may I not retain my one darling sin? May I not keep my pet evil? I will give up all else, but that one I must have." And when men are told that, wherever Christ comes, he makes a radical change, he casts out Satan and all his imps, drives them out by main force, and takes complete possession of the soul,—they bar the door of their heart against the Saviour, for they do not want such strong measures as his in their case.

Well, sirs, as you say that Christ's requirements are not according to your mind, what would you like them to be? Do you wish to be allowed to continue taking what you call your little drop, which is powerful enough to make you reel across the street? Then there is somebody over yonder who would like to keep his adulteries, and another who would like to keep his petty thefts, and another who would like to keep on with his swearing, and another who would like to retain his covetousness, so that he could still grind the poor to powder, and make money by crushing them, What sin is there, in the whole world, that would be put to death if men were left to pick and choose the Agag which each one wished to save? No; Christ came to save his people from their sins,—not in them; and it is essential to salvation that sin should be repented of, and, being repented of, should be renounced, and that, by the help of God, we should lead a new life, under a new Master, serving from a new motive, because the grace of God has renewed our spirit.

"Should it be according to thy mind?" No, certainly not; for, putting all reasons into one, it is not the slightest use for you to make any objection to the gospel, for you wilt be lost if you do not accept it just as it is revealed in the Scriptures. Christ will never alter the gospel one jot or

tittle not the cross of a "t" or the dot of an "i"—to please the biggest man that lives. "Oh! but, really, I am a man of education; am I to be saved in the same way as the man who does not know A from B?" Precisely; there is no other way of salvation for you. There is not one gate for Doctors of Divinity and another for the poor and ignorant. "But I am a person of good character, a matronly woman; am I to be saved just in the same way as a Magdalene?" Precisely the same; there is no other Saviour for you than the one in whom Mary Magdalene delighted and trusted. "But, sir, you do not surely mean to say that all these street Arabs are to go to heaven in the same way as a man who has kept shop, and been respectable, all his life!" Yes, I do; all must go in exactly the same road. Queens and chimney-sweeps must enter heaven by the same gate, or not enter at all. There is but one name given among men whereby we must be saved; there is no other Saviour but Christ Jesus the Lord; he suits every class of persons, big sinners and little ones, if there are any little sinners anywhere. All must come to Christ, and at his feet confess their sin, for God's plan cannot be altered for anyone. My dear sir, we are not going to have any enlargement, or rather, any mystification, of the plan of salvation to suit your profound mind. There will be no golden handles put to the doors of heaven to suit you, my lord, with all your wealth and pride. Nay, nay, nay; come to Christ, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest; but there is no other way of obtaining rest of heart and conscience.

I have thus tried to mention a few of the objections which men make to God's plan of salvation. Now let me ask two or three questions. First, should not God have his way? Is it not intolerable that you and I should raise objections at all when the mercy of God, if it ever comes to us, is a pure gift of charity? God may well say to us, "Shall I not do as I will with mine own?" There is no man living who has any absolute right to receive anything from God except destruction. That terrible doom we have all merited, but nothing beyond that. If we were shut up in prison, and kept upon dry bread, so long as we were out of hell, we should still be under obligation to God. If the Lord should choose to show mercy to only one man in the world, he has a perfect right to do so; if he chooses to give it to a few, or if he chooses to give it to all, he has the right to do so. He is absolutely sovereign, and these are the words that he would have every

one of us to hear and to heed: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The crown rights of the King of kings must never be assailed; for us beggars to turn choosers, and to dictate to God what he shall give to us;—for us condemned criminals to begin to make bargains with God as to how he shall preserve our lives, if he chooses to do so,—oh, this will never do! You know, dear friends, that when we give even a trifling charity, we like to do it in our own way. I remember that, one Christmas-time, a certain gentleman had given away a quantity of meat to many poor people; he had been so generous that he had given away all he had. The next morning, a woman came to him, bringing back the piece of meat which she had received, which was meant for boiling, and she said she wanted to have a piece for roasting. There was none left for changing, so she had to take what had been given to her, or go without any at all. You are quite sure that, the next year, that woman's name was put down among the first to have a Christmas gift, are you not! On the contrary, the gentleman said, "She will not be troubled, next year, either with a boiling piece or a roasting piece from me; I will take good care of that." I think it was quite natural that he should say so, for our common proverb regards it as ingratitude when we "look a gift horse in the mouth." When anything comes to us entirely as a gift, it is not for us to cavil at it, but to accept it; and this is specially true of God's great gift of salvation. O Lord, if thou wilt but save me, save me anyhow! If I may be delivered from this accursed sin of mine, and made pure and holy, do it, Lord, after thine own gracious fashion! It is not for me to suggest any plan to thee, but to leave myself entirely in thy hands, and to let it be according to thy mind.

Further, is not God's way the best? The mind of God is so infinitely great, and good, and wise, that it cannot be supposed that, even if he left the plan of salvation to our option, we could choose anything half as good as what he decrees and appoints. Should he, for a single moment, hold his sovereignty in abeyance, and allow us to be kings and princes on our own account, what follies we should perpetrate! We should choose a way of salvation that would not honour God, nor destroy evil, nor even be good for our own selves. Some people would like a heaven into which they could enter without being born again; but what kind of heaven would that be! Some would like to have joy and peace without believing in Christ.

Some would like to have eternal felicity, and yet indulge their lusts. This would be an evil of the most awful kind. It is better that sin should bring to man infinite sorrow than that it should be linked with eternal enjoyment. The mischief of it is that it does get linked with enjoyment for a while by foolish men, who forget what must come afterwards; but God has never joined these two things together, it is only wicked men who have pretended to celebrate this unholy marriage. God proclaims a perpetual separation between sin and happiness, and it is well that it should be so.

Now, to conclude this first part of our subject, suppose the plan of salvation should be according to any human mind, whose mind is to decide what it shall be? Yours? Nay, mine. And another says, "No, mine." Our proverb rightly says, "Many men, many minds;" and if we were to have salvation arranged according to the mind of each one of us, there would be a pretty quarrel before we left this place. You say, friend, that it is to be according to your mind; but why not according to your neighbour's mind? If man's mind were to decide it, what should we have? Why, you would all contradict each other, and there would be no plan of salvation at all it God did not settle it once for all.

Then, besides, should it be according to your mind to-day? "Yes," you say, "I have made up my mind." But you will take your mind to pieces to-morrow,—what little there is of it,—and then you will put it together again the next day, and say, "I have made up my mind; I am a man of mind, you know." Ah, yes! we know you, sir. There is a certain tribe of people about, nowadays, who call themselves "men of culture," and they sneer at everybody who does not go in for that kind of boasting. If they were really men of mind, they would never talk like that, for the man who has the most culture generally has enough to be a little modest, and not to brag about what he is. Well, then, if salvation is to be according to man's mind, whose mind is to decide it, and on what day, and at what hour of the day is the verdict of that man's mind to be taken? It is vacillating, changing like the moon, never twice in the same mood on the same day; so salvation cannot be according to our mind, for it would be chaos, it would be destruction, if that were the case.

II. Now, secondly, here is A WARNING: "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose."

By this I understand that, whatever our will may be, God will carry out his own purpose. As surely as God is God, he will never be defeated in anything. He who is omniscient, and therefore sees the end from the beginning, is also omnipotent, and therefore can work his own will exactly as he chooses,—he will never be baffled by the will of men. I believe in the free agency of man as much as anyone who lives; but I equally believe in the eternal purpose of God. If you ask, "How do you reconcile those beliefs?" I answer,—They have never been at variance yet, so there is no need to attempt to reconcile them. They are like two parallel lines, which will run side by side for ever;—man responsible because he does what he wills, and God infinitely glorious, achieving his own purposes, not only in the world of dead, inert matter, but also through those who are free agents; without changing them in the least degree, leaving them just as free as ever they were, he yet, in every jot and tittle, performs the eternal purpose of his will.

I would also remind you that, though you cavil at God's way of salvation, God will punish sin just the same. There is many a man who has said, "I will never believe that God will send men to hell;" but he has himself gone there, and then he has changed his mind in a very remarkable and terrible fashion when it is too late. There are many who say, "It should be this, or it should not be that;" but they do not ask, "What saith the Scripture?" Yet that is the all-important point; for, whatever you may say as to what it should be or should not be, makes no difference to God. He will take less notice of you and your opinion than you do of a gnat or a midge that flies about you on a summer's evening. He is so infinitely great and good that any opposition you and I may think that we can raise against him shall be less than nothing, and vanity. Shall tow contend with fire, or the war with the flame? Shall nothing oppose itself to omnipotence? Shall the creature of a day, that is and is not, attempt to wrestle with the Eternal? No, this cannot be; therefore, God will have his way, and he will punish sin.

And, further, my friends, though you may object to God's way of

salvation, others will be saved by it. Christ did not die in vain. He will rejoice in every one whom he purchased with his blood. He will not lose one of the jewels that are to deck his crown for ever. You may strive against his kingdom, but that kingdom will come when he pleases. The King eternal, immortal, invisible, shall surely reign for ever and ever; and if your voice is not heard in the great Hallelujah chorus of heaven, yet not one of its notes will be missing. Christ shall be glorified to the highest possible degree, whosoever may oppose him. It is well that those who object to God's plan of salvation should know these facts. That is how Christ treated objectors when he was upon the earth. When they murmured at what he told them, he did not tone down the unpalatable truth; he did not say to them, "You are robbing me of my honour and glory, and I shall never prosper; " but he said, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me draw him." On another occasion, he said, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." He did not humble himself to them, but again proclaimed his own truth in all its majesty and sublimity, that they might bow before him and his message.

Just once more, upon this point, let me say that God will certainly magnify his own name, whoever may oppose him: "Whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose," shall make no difference to him. His grace comes like the dew, which tarries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men. Oftentimes, he is found of them that seek him not; and to those who were not his people, he says, "Ye are my people;" thus magnifying his own amazing grace. Whoever may stand out against him, he shall lack none of his honour and glory, world without end.

III. This brings us to the third part of our subject, on which I desire to say exactly what Elihu said: "and not I." We cannot be absolutely sure what these three words mean; but, if they mean what I think they do, they teach us a lesson, Which I have called A PROTEST.

Whenever you find anyone opposing God, say to yourself, "and not I." When there is any wrong thing being done, and it comes under your notice, say, "and not I." Take care that you go not with a multitude to do evil; do not take upon your tongue just what others may be saying, but

bear your individual protest against the evil; even if you stand alone, say, "and not I."

What Elihu did mean, I think, was this. Whoever opposes God should know that he is not dealing with a man like himself. If you hear a preacher make a statement, and you feel, "That is not the Word of the Lord," pray God to forgive him for his sin in making it; but if he speaks with the sound of his Master's feet behind him and what he says is the Word of God, then do not trifle with it. If it be clearly a revealed truth, it may grate against your feelings, and set your teeth on edge; but what of that? You had better get your teeth and your feelings put right, for the truth of God cannot be altered in order to please you. Someone says, "I cannot believe that statement, because it seems too shocking." That is just why I do believe it, for it does me good by shocking me; and if it is in God's Word, I am bound to accept it. "Oh!" you say, "but something within me revolts against it." It is only natural it should do so, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and it naturally cries out against the thing that is most surely true. The supreme majesty of God's Word is that before which we have to bow, and not the insignificant usurpers of our inward feelings, fancies, and whims. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

Elihu also means, I think, "I will not be responsible for the man who refuses God's Word. I will not stand in his place, or take the blame which is due to him. He shall be recompensed, and not I, for I have spoken the truth. I will not bear the responsibility of it. If men choose to refuse it, they must take the consequences; to the Lord alone they must stand or fall."

And, once more, Elihu means, "If you refuse God's Word, it is not I. I will not share in your rebellion against him." Ah! my dear hearers, there are some of you who think yourselves very intelligent, and wise, and thoughtful, and you imagine that you know a great deal more than I do, and therefore you refuse to receive God's Word. Well, if you do so, I will not; I am determined about this matter, and I say, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." And, mark you, by "Jehovah" I mean the old Testament God. I have never seen him superseded in his

own Word, though some men profess that it is so. According to them, the God of the Hebrews was not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, though Jesus never said so, but quite the reverse. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is he whom we worship this day; and his character, as it is written out in full in the Old and New Testament, is that which we admire and delight in. Others may have new gods, newly come up, which our fathers knew not; but not I. He who made the heavens and the earth, he who led forth his people out of Egypt, and divided the sea, even the Red Sea, he whose mercy endureth for ever, the God who shines forth all along as the God of a covenanted people to whom he did reveal himself, "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Learned men may dispute as much as they like about him, but we bow humbly at his feet. We question nothing that he does; we believe it to be right even when we do not understand it; and it is our hope that others will do the same; but if they will not, it will not affect our own decision.

IV. Our last head is, A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION.

If there are any who refuse the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for any reason known only to themselves, we venture to ask them to say what it is: "Therefore speak what thou knowest." It was not in Elihu's mind to tell Job to be silent, and never open his mouth again. Speech is the glory of man, and freedom of speech, as far as concerns his fellow-creatures, is the right of every man. It is far better that, when there is a difficulty or an objection, it should be fairly stated, than that it should lie smothered up within the soul to breed untold mischief. Therefore, if thou hast an objection to God's Word, write it out, and look at it. Or, if thou carest not to do that, state it, if not to thy friend,—if thou preferest privacy,—state it to thyself; only bring it out, and let it be known. But, at the same time, when thou art speaking, "speak what thou knowest."

Now, what dost thou really know of God? Little enough do the most of us know; but, still, I think we know enough to know that he is not the god of modern times, whom some preach. One single night of frost will destroy millions upon millions of creatures that were happy and enjoyed life; and this is done by that God of whom we are often assured that he cannot possibly punish sin, or put men to pain. But he does it. Hear the cry of the

poor seamen, when the storm tosses the great barque, and drives it on the rock. See how everywhere the Lord is a great God and terrible. Even though he condescends to be a Father to those of us who trust in Jesus Christ, his Son, and is gentle as a nurse to us, yet is he the God of thunder and of fire, the great and almighty God, the King who will not be questioned by his subjects, and who will not alter his arrangements to please their fancies.

It is well for us to speak of God as we have found him. He has dealt kindly and graciously with us: "he hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; "else had we been cast away for ever. We long that others may be able to speak of God in the same way; not saying what they would have him to be, but what he has revealed himself to be, in nature, and in providence, and especially in grace. Let us all come humbly to his feet. He bids us look to his dear Son, and so find peace and salvation. If we will not do so, there is nothing for us but to be driven from his presence, and from the glory of his power, world without end. Will we dare to defy him? Have we the impiety so to do? O God, humble us! Beneath the terror of thy majesty, and the glory of thy righteousness, and the supreme splendour of thy love, bow us down, to accept thy grace, and to become thine for ever and ever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Pride Catechized And Condemned

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that

thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? - 1 Corinthians 4:7

Pride grows apace like other ill weeds. It will live on any soil. In the natural heart it flourishes, springing up without sowing, and growing without watering; and even in the renewed heart it all too readily takes root when Satan casts abroad a handful of its seed. Of all creatures in the world the Christian is the last man who ought to be proud; and yet, alas, we have had mournful evidence both in past history and in our own observation, and worst of all in our own personal experience, that Christian men may become lifted up, to their own shame. Paul set himself very earnestly to deal with this disease when he saw it raging among the Corinthians. He felt it needful to do so, for it was leading to other mischiefs of the most disgraceful kind. Pride and self-conceit had led the members of the church in Corinth to choose for themselves distinct leaders, and to arrange them selves under separate banners: the followers of this man thinking themselves better than the followers of that. Thus the body of Christ was divided, and all sorts of ill feeling, jealousy, emulation and envy sprang up in the church of God where all ought to have been mutual helpfulness and loving unity. Paul therefore earnestly, and with great wisdom, assailed the spirit of pride.

Paul was well aware of one fact, namely, that pride is shallow and superficial. It cannot endure honest questioning, and so Paul tried it by the Socratic method, and put it through a catechism. He puts three questions to it in this verse, and these three all called upon his friends to go a little lower in their contemplation of themselves than their pride had before allowed them to go. Pride said, "I have such and such gifts"; but Paul replied, "what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Thus he digged deeper and undermined pride. The receipt of those gifts from God it had forgotten altogether; therefore, by bringing that fact to mind the apostle took pride right under the root, and that is always the best way to destroy a weed. To cut off the green top, and leave the crown of the root so that it may spring up in the next shower, or the next sunshine, is of no avail; but to go deep down and tear up the root is effectual: this Paul did with pride by reminding the vainglorious Corinthians that the gifts which they possessed were no ground of glory, because they had received them

as alms from the charity of God.

Another truth is also illustrated by Paul's procedure, namely, that pride is always inconsistent with the true doctrine of the gospel. You may use this test concerning any preaching, or teaching that you meet with: if it legitimately and logically leads a man to boast of himself, it is not true. Our chemists use litmus to discover the presence of acid in any liquid submitted to them, for the paper then takes a reddish tint; and you may use this as your test, that when a doctrine makes you red with pride it contains the acid of falsehood. That which puffs up is not of God, but that which lays the man low, and exalts Jesus Christ, has at least two of the tokens of truth. That which glorifies man cannot have been revealed by God, for he has said that no flesh shall glory in his presence. Such teaching may appear very lustrous with affected holiness, and very fascinating, with pretended spirituality, and there may be much in your fondest desires which inclines your heart towards it, as there always is in the novelties of the present day, but try it whether it be of God by the test which is here suggested. If with a sleek hand it brushes your feathers the right way, and makes you feel "What a fine fellow I am," you ought at once to flee from it. The very fact that it flatters you should be to you like a fog horn to warn you of danger. Say to every doctrine which fosters pride, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God and of truth, or thou wouldst not speak so well of me."

My object this morning shall be to attempt to do with our own pride what Paul sought to do with that of the Corinthians, namely, to go a little deeper than we generally go when measuring our own abilities; and then I shall try to use the silver spade of the doctrines of grace, so that this hemlock of pride may be taken up by the roots. Looking at the text I notice, first, a question to be answered with ease—"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" secondly, a question to be answered with shame "Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" and then, thirdly, I shall occupy your attention a few minutes with other questions which these questions suggest. May the Holy Spirit graciously bless the word.

I. In a two-fold form the apostle gives us A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED WITH EASE. There may be some who would be puzzled with these questions, but I do not suppose there are any such people present; at any rate, there are no such members of our church. When we are asked, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" our answer is immediately, "God by his grace has made us to differ" and if we are asked, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" we reply, "We have nothing but our sin; for every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

We are the more glad to hear Paul say this, because he was what is nowadays styled a "self-made" man. It very frequently happens that a man who makes himself has very great respect for his maker. Is it not natural that he should worship his creator? Paul was a man who, as far as the Christian church is concerned, at any rate, had forced his way up without aid from others. He began in that church with no respect, but under very much suspicion. The brethren had heard that he persecuted the saints, so that at first they would scarce receive him; his name was a terror rather than a pleasure, but Paul, with that high spirit, that consecrated ardor, that indefatigable industry, that wondrous courage of his, backed, of course, by the grace of God, came to the front until he could honestly claim, without egotism, that he was "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, though," said he, "I be nothing." Paul was a man who had not been borne upon the crest of the wave into an eminent position, he did not wake up one morning and find himself famous, but he had put forth all his powers in the struggle of life, and labored with persistent energy year after year. When he persecuted the saints of God he did it ignorantly, in unbelief, and thought he did God service; and all his life long for him to know a thing to be right was to strive after it. He had been kept from self-seeking and deceit, he had been an intensely active, strong-minded, high-souled man, and he had done a grand life-work by which the church is still affected; and yet Paul himself had nothing whereof to glory. His testimony to his own indebtedness to God's grace is so plain, and given so many times over, that we cannot mistake it. He says distinctly, "By the grace of God I am what I am." He counted his own righteousness as worthless, and only desired that he might be found in Christ, arrayed in the righteousness which is of God by faith. Do we

address to-day any self-made man, as the world calls men who have risen from the ranks? Have you taken credit to yourself, dear friend, for your success in life? Do you plume yourself upon your having risen by your own exertions"? Then cease from such boasting, and in the spirit of the apostle ask yourself the question, "Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

Our question is easy to answer, whether it be applied to natural gifts or to spiritual ones. There is a tendency to boast in natural gifts, but if questioned concerning them we must give the self-evident answer that any natural gifts we possess are not to be set to our credit, but were bestowed on us by God. Some gifts come to us as the result of birth, and of course in that matter we had no hand. It may be we were born of Christian parents, and that pedigree is one for which we shall always be thankful: we had sooner number our parents with the saints of God than with the peers of the realm: but truly, brethren, we should be foolish to boast of godly ancestors, for we had not the choosing of them. Children of pious parents, you cannot look with disdain even upon those who are basely born, for you did not cause yourselves to be born any more than they did.

From their birth some derive physical strength. It always seems to me to be a very insane thing for a man to glory in his animal force, for there can be no merit in it; yet there are some who do so. In the strength of those brawny limbs of theirs, and those powerful muscles, some vaunt themselves abundantly. Though the Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man, yet some count it a very wonderful thing that they can outleap or outrun their fellows. O athlete, though thou be strong as Samson, or swift as Asahel, what hast thou that thou hast not received? Hadst thou been born with a tendency to consumption, or with some other hereditary weakness, couldst thou have prevented it? And now that thou art strong, art thou to be praised for that any more than a horse or a steam engine?

The same is true of beauty of person, which too frequently is the cause of vanity. Beauty is often a snare on this account. What if thy features be delicately chiselled, what if thine eyes are bright as the morning, and thy countenance fair as the lily, what if there be a charm in thine every

glance; what hast thou in all these for which to praise thyself? Jezebel also was fair to look upon, and is she to be praised? Is not thy beauty the gift of God? Bless thy Creator for it, but do not despise those who are less comely, for in so doing thou wilt despise their Maker. How often do we hear a laugh raised behind their backs against persons who are somewhat grotesque, or it may be deformed, but God made them, and who is he that shall dare to taunt the Maker with what he has done? What hast thou, O thou fairest among women; what hast thou, O thou comeliest among the sons of men, but what thou hast received? Cease, then, those mincing airs and tossings of the head.

The same is true with regard to the rank which comes of birth. Some men are born—according to heraldic arrangements—noble. In what way is a new-born babe noble? Can true nobility arise out of anything but personal character? They are, however, born with the repute of nobility, and are at once regarded with respect. Are they not our future rulers? Through no deed or desert, or talent or heroism of their own, some are as it were by accident, or rather by the sovereign ordinance of providence, placed above others, wherefore then should they glory in what is so purely a matter of gift? O thou who art great and honorable amongst men, what hast thou but what thou hast received? Walk in lowly gentleness, and live with true nobility of character, and so make thy rank a blessing.

Brethren and sisters, how much all of us owe in the matter of birth for which we sometimes take to ourselves credit. We have never fallen, perhaps, into the grosser immoralities, but should we not readily have done so if we had been huddled together in chambers where decency struggles for existence, or been compelled to take our walks abroad where blasphemy and vice contend with law and order, and are not to be subdued? If the worst of examples had been before us instead of the best, what might we not have become? We have sinned enough as it is, but very much of the fact that we have not sinned more must be laid rather to the account of our having commenced life under favorable circumstances than to any meritorious conduct of our own. In this respect, what have we that we did not receive? You have been honest, thank God for it: but you might have been a thief if your father had been so. You have been chaste

and modest, be glad of it: you might not have been so had you been encompassed with other surroundings. You are at this time respected and reputable, and you carry on business in an upright manner; had you been as poor as some, you might have been tempted to as dirty transactions as they are chargeable with. In these common matters of morality we cannot tell how much we owe to birth, and how little to ourselves. Certainly self-applause ceases as we hear the question, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

In the matter of talent there are very great differences. One man will very soon make his way in the world where others fail. Put him where we will, he will make his fortune; and his friends laughingly say that if he were transported to the desert of Sahara he would sell the sand at a profit. But who gave him that talent? What has he that he has not received? Another can study an art or a science and become proficient in it in a short time; as a boy he is a leader at school, and as a man he is eminent in his sphere; still, are not his wisdom and insight gifts from heaven? Another man has the gift of eloquence, and can speak well, while his fellow has the pen of a ready writer. In either of these gifts a man may take so much content as by-and-by to become vainglorious, but the truth taught in our text ought always to prevent that folly. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" That which God gave to thee he might have withheld, and the man whom thou despisest might have had thy gifts: he would have been foolish to despise thee if thou hadst been without them, and thou art foolish now to despise him.

What differences there are, too, as to what men are helped to make of themselves by education. Now-a-day there is a better opportunity of education for all ranks and conditions of men, for which I am earnestly thankful, and hope that true religion will be connected with the advantage; but all boys trained in the same school do not leave it equally educated. One is quick, and another dull; one manages to place himself foremost, and another is doomed to be in the rear. Whether the difference be in the original conformation of the man, or be the result of different teaching, the result must alike be subject for thankfulness to God, for whether it be natural talent or excellent education, both are received.

Equally so is it with wealth. I may address some one to whom God has given large substance; but, my dear friend, in the course of the accumulation of that substance you have had plenty of evidence that "it is God that giveth thee power to get wealth." There was a time when you had little enough, and it was a singular providence which put you in the way of rising. There have been times, too, when a little turn of the scale would have sent you into bankruptcy, but the markets went the other way, and you were made. You have seen others who were ahead of you in the race of prosperity left far behind, and though God has prospered you I know there have been anxious moments when you have had to lift up your eyes to the Most High, and beseech him by his tenderness and mercy to help and deliver you. Well, inasmuch as this wealth is a blessing if you know how to use it rightly, ascribe the possession of it to God, who has made you his steward. Do you tell me that you have had a keener eye and exercised more industry than others, as well as a better judgment? True, but who gave you the judgment, and who gave you the health with which to be industrious? Many another man has been as industrious, and yet has failed; many another has been as willing to work, but he has been disabled by sickness; many another man has had as keen an eye, but alas, his judgment has been baffled by misfortune; another man began life with as clear a brain as you, but now he is confined in the asylum and you still are in possession of all your faculties. O sirs, never sacrifice to your own net and drag, and say, "We brought up these treasures from the deep"; but bless God who gave you all that you have of earthly things, for what have you that you have not received? I would that you felt more than you do that you are only stewards, that your possessions are lent to you to be used for God's glory and the good of others, and neither to be squandered nor hoarded for yourselves.

But now, brothers and sisters, this is very emphatically true as to our spiritual gifts, and I invite you to consider this truth—"What hast thou that didst not receive?" There has long been a great doctrinal discussion between the Calvinists and the Arminians upon many important points. I am myself persuaded that the Calvinist alone is right upon some points, and the Arminian alone is right upon others. There is a great deal of truth in the positive side of both systems, and a great deal of error in the

negative side of both. If I was asked, "Why is a man damned?" I should answer as an Arminian answers, "He destroys himself." I should not dare to lay man's ruin at the door of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, if I were asked, "Why is a man saved?" I could only give the Calvinistic answer, "He is saved through the sovereign grace of God, and not at all of himself." I should not dream of ascribing the man's salvation in any measure to himself. I have not found, as a matter of fact, that any Christian people care seriously to quarrel with a ministry which contains these two truths in fair proportions. I find them kicking at the inferences which are supposed to follow from one or the other of them, and sometimes needlessly crying to have them "reconciled;" but the two truths together, as a rule, commend themselves to the conscience, and I feel sure that if I could bring them both forward this morning with equal clearness I should win the assent of most Christian men. At this time, however I have to confine myself to the statement that all the grace we have is the gift of God to us, and I trust none will, therefore, suppose that I deny the other side of the question. I believe assuredly that we have nothing good in us but what we have received. For instance, we were dead in trespasses and sin, and we were quickened into spiritual life: my brethren, did that life spring out of the ribs of death? Did the worm of our corruption beget the living seed of regeneration? It were absurd to think so. God be praised for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, which led him to quicken us by his grace. We have been forgiven our great sins—wholly forgiven; through the precious blood of Christ we have been made clean. Did we deserve it? Does any man who professes to be a Christian say for a single moment that he deserved the ransom paid by Christ, and deserved the pardon of his sin? It would be monstrous blasphemy even to imagine such a thing. Oh no; "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." God forgave us freely; there could not possibly have been any quality in sin which could have called forth forgiving love. He had mercy upon us because he would have mercy upon us; not because we could claim anything at his hand.

Everything, dear friend, that makes you to differ from the common sinner is the gift of God's grace to you. You know it is. You have faith in Christ: yes, but did not the Holy Spirit work it in you? Do you not cheerfully

subscribe to the doctrine that faith is of the operation of God? You have repentance of sin, but was the repentance natural to you? Did you not receive it from him who is exalted on high to give repentance? Is not your repentance his gift? "Truly," one will say, "but then the same gospel was preached to others as to us." Precisely so. Perhaps the very sermon which was the means of your conversion left others as they were. What made the difference then? Do you reply, "We willed to believe in Jesus." That is true; an unwilling faith would be no faith: but then who influenced your will? Was your will influenced by some betterness of nature in you so that you can claim credit for it? I for one reject with abhorrence any such an idea. Do you reply, "Our will was influenced by our understanding, and we chose what we knew to be best." But then, who enlightened your understanding? Who gave you the light which illuminated your mind, so that you chose the way of life? "Oh," say you, "but our hearts were set towards salvation, and the hearts of others were not." That also is true, but then who set your heart that way, who was the prime mover? Were you or God? There is the question, and if, my dear brother, you dare affirm that in the matter of your own salvation you were the prime mover I am at a loss to understand you, and I hope there are few of your creed. Jesus is not Alpha to you. You do not love him because he first loved you. You were evidently not converted, or turned at all, but you turned yourself. You are not a new creature, but are your own new-creator. Do you look to see the same thing in others? Why, then, do you act as you do? Why do you pray the Lord to turn others if you believe that he did not turn you? Do you pray the Lord to convert your children? Why do you do it? If it is left entirely to them to be the prime movers, why pray to God about them? "Ah," says one, "God must treat all alike." I ask again, why do you pray for your children? You ask God to do a wrong thing in blessing your children in preference to other people, if it be true that he is bound to treat all alike. When you go practically to work these sentiments do not hold water. The man who knows that the Holy Spirit was first in his operations upon the mind, and who calls Christ Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of his salvation, is the man who can fairly go to the Lord, and pray for the conversion of this man or that; and he too is sure to give God all the glory of his salvation, and magnify and bless the grace of the Most High.

Perhaps, my dear brother, there is a difference between you and other saints. I am sure there is reason for some saints to eclipse others, for some professors are very poor things indeed. Well, brother, you have a great deal more faith than others; where did you get it? If you received it from anywhere but from God, you had better get rid of it. Dear brother, you have more joy than some, and possibly you feel ashamed of your fellow Christians who are so doubting and sad: beware that you do not become vain of your joy, and remember, that if your joy is true joy you received it of the Lord. Are you more useful than others? You cannot help looking at certain professors who are idle, and wishing that you could stir them up. I know I do; I would put a sharp pin into their downy cushions if I could: but for all that who gives us activity, who gives us usefulness, who gives us zeal, who gives us courage, who gives us everything? If you, dear friend, get into such a condition that you begin to whisper to yourself, "I have improved my gifts and graces at a very noble rate, and am getting on exceedingly well in spiritual things," you will soon have to come down from your high places. If you register yourself A 1 at Lloyd's I will not sail with you, brother, for I fear your proud barque will tempt the tempest. I would rather sail with some poor Christian man whose weather-beaten vessel would go to the bottom if Jesus were not on board, for I am persuaded he is safe. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." Blessed is the man who lies low at the foot of the cross, and who, concerning everything that he has, whether temporal or spiritual, ascribes all to the Giver of all Good.

Now we must pass on briefly to think of the second point.

II. HERE IS A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED WITH SHAME. "If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" If any of us have fallen into vain glory, and we all have more or less done so, let us answer this question with confusion of face. Brother, sister, have you gloried in anything you have received? Then bethink you how wrongly you have acted, for you have robbed God of his honor. To glory in man is altogether inconsistent with glorying in God. Depend upon it every particle of praise we take to ourselves is so much stolen out of the revenues of the King of kings. Will a man rob God? Will a redeemed man rob God? Will a poor sinner snatched from between the jaws of death and

hell by undeserved mercy, rob God? Lord have mercy upon us.

When we boast we also leave our truthful position, and every Christian ought to be ashamed to stand anywhere but in the truth. When I confess myself to be weak, helpless, and ascribe all I have to grace, then I stand in the truth; but if I take even the remotest praise to myself, I stand in a lie. The Lord have mercy upon us if we have dared to act falsehood in his presence.

Let us remember, too, that whensoever we prize ourselves highly we are sure to esteem our Lord less. Do you see any spiritual beauty in yourself? Then it is because you do not know what true beauty is? Do you say, "I am rich and increased in goods"? Then you know nothing, or very little, of what true wealth is. You have mistaken gilt for gold, and rags for raiment. I counsel thee buy of Jesus gold tried in the fire, and fine linen wherewith thou mayest be clothed. Depend upon it our judgment is very much like a pair of scales: if Christ goes up self goes down; and if self rises Jesus falls in our esteem. No man ever sets a high price upon self and Christ at the same time.

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall be,"

is a rule without exception.

Besides, if you and I have gloried in what we possess we have undervalued our fellow Christians, and that is a great sin. They are very dear to Jesus, and he accounts even their deaths precious. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones that believe in me"; but if we over-estimate ourselves the natural consequence is that we underestimate others. Have I ever thought, "I am a rich man; and these poor people, though good Christians, are nobodies compared to me: I am of far more consequence to the church"? Have I conceived, because I have a measure of talent, that those holy men and women who cannot speak for Christ are of no great account? Or have I, because I happened to be an old, experienced Christian, snuffed out the young ones, and said "They are only a pack of boys and girls"? Is this the way to speak of those who

were bought with the blood of Christ, and are members of Christ's body? It will not do for us to despise the meanest saint. I believe there are many who are now pushed into the background and shoved into any hole and corner whom Christ looks upon with special delight, and will place first when he comes. Verily I say unto you, "There are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first."

Besides, all this honoring of ourselves generally puts us off from the right course as to our gifts, and makes us forget that these things are only lent us, to be used for our Master. It is required of stewards that they be found faithful, not that they vaunt themselves and deck themselves in their Master's goods. We have too much to do to afford to boast. Look at yonder young soldier who has just received his armor and his helmet. He has just entered the service. Look with what pleasure he sees his comely face reflected in his breastplate; how much he admires his plume, he thinks how grand he shall look in such gear. My dear fellow, all this while you have forgotten that to wear these things in the thick of the battle, where they will bear the dint of the sword, is what awaits you, and you do not consider that, not your gallant appearance, but your valour is what we want to see. When a man exalts himself because of what he possesses he does not act as a soldier of the cross should do.

Here we will insert an illustration or two. There is a tendency in some to exalt themselves because God has placed them in office. They are ministers, deacons, elders, superintendents, or something. What mighty airs they give themselves! "Honour to whom honor is due"—they seem to have learned the text by heart, and to have seen a personal reference in it. Have you never seen the footmen of princes when they are playing the great man? What wonders of nature and art they often are. I was admiring one of them the other day, with all the reverence due. The vision of his pomp quite staggered me, for he was so gorgeous to look upon. I feel sure that his royal master was nothing like so striking, and certainly could not have been more pompous or aristocratic. While I was looking on with due wonder and reverence, somebody cruelly remarked, "What a flunkey!"—a most irreverent observation, and yet very natural. My brothers, whenever you and I, because we have our best clothes on, and are ministers, or deacons, or elders, act as if we were very great men,

somebody or another is sure to call us flunkeys too; not perhaps exactly in so many words, but in language to the same effect. Do not let us expose ourselves to such contempt, and if ever we have done so, let us be rebuked at once by the thought of what we have seen in others.

Some persist in boasting about their experience. This also is vanity. Suppose a man here, who is a great pedestrian, has been over the Alps and traversed Europe; here is his walking stick, and it boasts, "I am the most traveled walking stick in creation, I have smitten the craggy brows of the Alps and bathed myself in the Nile." "Well," says one, "but wherever you have gone you have been carried by a power beyond yourself." So let the man who boasts in experience remember that in the paths of peace he has gone nowhere except as the Lord's hand has borne him onward; he has been nothing but a staff in God's hands, and while he should be grateful he should never be proud.

I was in a beautiful garden the other day, upon the rocks, where the choicest of flowers and tropical plants are growing: while all around the rocks are bare, with scarce a trace of vegetable life. Now, suppose that garden were proud, and boasted of its fruitfulness. The answer would be, "Every basketful of earth had to be carried up to you, and you would not bear fruit now if it was not for the stream of water that is turned on, and tracked through many little mazes, and brought to the root of each plant you bear; you would be a rock again in a few months if you were left to yourself; therefore let the former of the garden rejoice in his work, but the garden itself may not glory." That is what the most fruitful believer would be if God let him alone—a barren rock, a wilderness.

Suppose I address some Christian who is happy, and joyous, and cheerful, and has such dainty bits sent home to him out of the promises, such precious words from Scripture applied to his heart. Dear friend, are you apt to think that there is something specially good about you because you get all these remarkable enjoyments? Then let me disabuse your mind. It is your weakness which gets you these favors. When you are living in a hotel you will remark that certain persons have their dinners sent upstairs. What for? Oh, that is because they are ill. If you are well you must go down to the table d'hote with the rest; but if you are ill they

will send it upstairs, and pay you extra attention. These very comforts that God gives you ought to make you enquire whether there is not something amiss with you, and instead of thinking you are strong and well you should search and see if there is not some weakness which the Lord in his mercy intends to remove by the double comforts which he gives to you. Nothing in the world ought to be a cause of self-exaltation; nothing that our God gives us ought to make us think highly of ourselves. Lower down, brother, lower down, and so you will rise. The way to heaven is downhill, not uphill. As Christ went down to the grave that he might come up again and fill all things, so must you go to the cross, and down to the grave of self and be buried with Christ, and learn the meaning of your baptism, and make it true that you are buried with him to all the world, and to yourself also, for so only can you rise into the fullness of the new life.

III. OTHER QUESTIONS WHICH THESE QUESTIONS SUGGEST shall now, in the third place, occupy our attention. What are they?

The first is this. Have I ever given to God his due place in the matter of my salvation?—a question that I may very well put, for I recollect when I was converted to God, and truly converted too, but I did not know that it was the work of the Spirit in my heart; I did not understand that it was the result of special grace. I had heard the gospel generally preached, but I had not learned the peculiar doctrines of grace; and I recollect very well sitting down and thinking to myself, "I am renewed in my mind, I am forgiven, I am saved: how came that about?" and I traced it to this, that I had heard the gospel, but as I knew that many never had an opportunity of hearing it, I saw special grace in my having had the opportunity to hear it. But then I said, "There are others who have heard it, but it was not blessed to them: how came it to be blessed to me?" and I cogitated for awhile whether it could be something good in me that made the gospel useful to me, for if so I deserved to have the credit of it. Somehow the grace which God had given me made me fling that theory to the winds, and I came to this conclusion, "It must be God that made the difference," and having got that one thought into my mind, the doctrines of grace followed as a matter of course. Only by experimentally knowing that there has been a special work of grace in your own soul, will you be likely to

place the Lord where he should be in your creed, for some provide a very inferior place for the Lord in the matter of their salvation. With them man is very great, and God is made little of; but true theology makes God the very sun of the system, the center, the head, the first, and chief. Have you done so? If not, correct your views, and get a clearer view of the gospel of grace. May the Holy Spirit help you therein. To know the doctrines of grace will be much to your comfort, will tend to your stability, and will also lead you to seek the glory of God.

The next question is this, Have I this morning the spirit of humble gratitude? How do I feel? Do I take God's mercy as a matter of course, and view my own gifts without thankfulness? Then I act like the brutes that perish, but let me pray this morning that humble, lowly gratitude may daily rule my spirit. Such gratitude will make you cheerful, it will make you earnest, it will in fact be an atmosphere in which all Christian graces will grow by the blessing of God's Spirit.

Next, seeing I have been a receiver, what have I done towards giving out again? It cannot have been intended that I should receive and never give out, for if that be the case there is a sad lot for me. You know they used to make, and do still make, in the North of England, earthenware saving boxes for the children. You can put what you like in, but you cannot get it out any more until you break the box; and there are persons of that sort among us. Some have died lately, and their estates have been reported in the Probate Court. There was plenty put in to them, but you could never get anything out, and consequently they had to be broken up. I only hope when they were broken up the gold and silver went the right way. What a pity to be like money boxes, to be of no good until you are broken up. One would like to get and give at the same time. We ought not to be as a stagnant pond, a Dead Sea, which receives from rivers all the year round, but gives forth no stream in return, and so becomes a stagnant, putrid lake. Let us be like the great lakes of America, which receive the mighty rivers and pour them out again, and consequently keep fresh and clear.

The next question is—Since what I have had I have received by God's grace, might I not receive more? Come; brothers and sisters, with regard to gracious things I want you to be covetous. Covet earnestly the best

gifts. If you have had faith, why should you not have more? If God gave you hope, joy, experience, why not more? You are not straitened in him, you can be only straitened in yourself. Try to remove those hindrances, and ask the Lord to give you more grace.

One other question—If all that Christians have they have received, sinner, why should not you receive as well as they? If it were true that Christians got these good things out of themselves, then you, poor sinner, might despair, for you know you have no good thing in you; but if the best of saints, the best Christian in heaven, has not anything but what he received, why should not you receive? To receive, you know, is never a difficult thing. I warrant you that out of all the people in London there is not a man but what could receive. Try it on the present occasion. Let it be a thousand pounds, and see how many among us would be unable to receive. If there be a person about who would not receive, I tell you who it is—it is the man who thinks himself so rich that he does not care to have any more. Even so the proud, self-righteous Pharisee cannot receive; but you poor, good-for-nothing, empty sinners can receive; and here is the mercy—"to as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name." Open that empty hand, open that empty heart: God grant they may be opened now by his own divine Spirit, and may you receive, and then I know you will join with us in saying, "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."

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Priest And Victim

He offered up himself. - Hebrews 7:27

I do not know when I have ever felt a more decided conflict of emotions in my own heart than I do just now. Happy is the man who has such a

message as that in my text to deliver to his fellow-men; but burdened is the man who feels that the message is far too great for his lips, or, indeed, for any human tongue to convey. To be allowed to announce to men that our Lord Jesus Christ "offered up himself" on their behalf is, indeed, an errand which angels might envy, but the theme is too great for any human being to compass. I comfort myself with the reflection that it does not require any excellence of speech to tell it, the excellence lies in the truth itself; and if men's minds are in a right condition, if they are conscious of their lost state, and they really desire to know what Christ has done to save them from it, they will want no garnishing or tawdry fripperies of human eloquence; all they will want will be to hear, as plainly and as earnestly as it can be spoken, the message of reconciliation which God has sent through Jesus Christ his Son. Yet I cannot help feeling that the meaning of my text is so weighty that it may break the backs of the words that attempt to bring it to us. The axles of my human medium of conveyance are ready to snap when freighted with such a load of infinite love and wisdom as comes to us in my short, full text: "He offered up himself."

But, to begin, I would remind you, dear friends, that the idea of a sacrifice for sin is, in some sense or other, found in almost all human religions. I believe that some of the most ignorant tribes of Africa, and also Unitarians, have been found without the doctrine of an atoning sacrifice in their religion; but I do not think there are any other persons so benighted as these to be found anywhere. Go where you may, you will discover that, as soon as ever people begin to say "God," the next thing they say is "sacrifice"; and though their idea of God is often distorted, and their idea of sacrifice is distorted also, yet both ideas are there. Man, however degraded, cannot altogether forget that there is a God; and then, shrinking back from the awful majesty of the divine holiness, he at least hopes that there is a sacrifice by which his sins may be put away. He feels that there must be one if he is ever to be brought into connection with God; and so, in some form or other, the notion of sacrifice crops up wherever there is any religion at all. It may be in the ghastly form of human sacrifice, which is a hideous misinterpretation which has crept in under the darkness and gloom of heathenism or false teaching; or it may appear in the continued sacrifice of bullocks, or lambs, or other victims;

but, somehow or other, the idea is there. Man seems to know, in his inmost nature, that he must bring a sacrifice if he would appear before God; and this is, by no means, an error on his part. However erroneous may be the form it takes, in its essence there is truth in it.

Brothers and sisters, did you never know this truth in your own souls? Has not the conviction come to you, under a sense of sin, as an absolute certainty, that sin must be punished? I will not say that you have thought so when you have imagined yourself to be all right; or, at least, to be pretty nearly clear of anything wrong. No; but when conscience has been awakened, and has begun to speak; in the quiet night watches, in times of sickness, or when you have seemed to be on the brink of eternity. I ask you, has there not come the thought that sin would surely be visited with punishment? That—

"Dread of something after death,"

of which the world's poet speaks, is an indication of belief in the truth which is most sure, that the Judge of all the earth will not suffer his laws to be trampled on with impunity, but that he will certainly punish iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Then there has also come to your mind, I feel sure;—at least, I remember well when it came to mine,—the thought that God could not pardon me without punishing my sin,—or that, if he did, his moral government of the whole universe would be weakened. If he permitted the guilty to enjoy the same rewards as the righteous received, where would be his justice? An amnesty to the guilty would, practically, be an abolition of the law; it would be tantamount to saying, "It does not matter how you live, all will come right at last." There are some who teach that doctrine, nowadays; and, to state it in plain English, this is the doctrine that they teach, —that we may rebel against God, we may blaspheme God, we may despise God, —we may cheat, we may lie, we may murder, and so on; but it shall be just as well with us one day as it will be with the best man that lives. Does not the least atom of common morality that remains in man compel him to shrink back from teaching so intolerable as that? It cannot be right, we need not argue about the matter; it is impossible that it should be so, for

human society would go to pieces under such an arrangement as that, and the Judge of all the earth would have to abdicate his throne ere this could be. Many years ago, I put into words for myself, when I was under a sense of sin, a feeling which I believe others must have had under similar circumstances; and I said, "If God does not punish me for my sin, he ought to do so." I felt that, if he did not condemn me for my sin, my conscience would condemn him; and that, if he suffered me to go unpunished when I was guilty, in some way or other he would cease to be a just God, and would no longer be worthy of the respect of my own conscience.

Now, that is a truth, a great truth, a terrible truth; and hence it is that the mind of the convinced sinner is driven to the hope of an atonement, If God is to pardon sin, there must be something done by which his law can be honoured, his justice can be vindicated, and his truthfulness can be established; in fact, there must be an atonement. That is what it all comes to; or else pardon is impossible, and you and I must be lost for ever. I would to God that we all not only believed this truth,—as I suspect that the most of us do; —but that we felt it to be the case in our own personal experience, that we realized our need of an atoning sacrifice, in order that God might be just, and yet be the Justifier of the ungodly,—that the honour of his law might shine out in unsullied purity like the terrible crystal, and yet that "a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald," might be seen by the sons of men, reminding them of the covenant made between the Father and the Son concerning all who believe in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

This brings me to the blessed announcement of the text, that the atonement which men have blindly felt after has been made, that the sacrifice which the conscience longs for has been presented. Here is the best possible news in four words: "He offered up himself." Spirit of God, help us to think about this sublime truth, and to speak of it aright!

I. Here is, first, THE PRIEST: "HE offered up himself." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, and "offered up himself" as a sacrifice for sin. The great High Priest, who officiated on the occasion of that wondrous and unique sacrifice, was Jesus Christ, himself.

"He," who was of infinite dignity,—he who, in his first estate as very God of very God, was worshipped and obeyed by all the angels of heaven,—he who was with the Father when he spanned the heavens, and laid the foundations of the universe,—he it was, this Son of God, who "offered up himself." No inferior priest was there. There were wicked men, who were the instruments employed in accomplishing his death; but, after all, the great hand that presented the Lamb of God as the one sacrifice for sin was the hand of the Christ of God: "He offered up himself." Our High Priest is of such dignity that none can be compared with him. He is the Son of the Highest, the equal of the Father. I want you to think of this truth, because it may help you to see how great must have been the merit of the sacrifice when it was God himself who "offered up himself." He was no mere delegated or elected priest, but Christ Jesus himself, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"—Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, he it was who stood at the altar presenting "himself" to God as the one and only sacrifice for sin. O sinful men, come ye hither, for here is a sacrifice which may well satisfy the demands of the divine law, since Christ himself puts on the priestly garments, and offers it unto God!

"He offered up himself;" that is to say, he voluntarily agreed to be the Victim for this wondrous sacrifice. Did you not notice this truth in the chapter we read just now? "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God." Christ was not compelled to come to earth except by the sweet compulsion of his own love; but with that as his master-motive,—

"Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste he fled."

Voluntarily he took upon himself our nature, and was born at Bethlehem, and voluntarily did he tarry here for three and thirty years. He might have gone back when "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." But he had come in order that he might be a sacrifice for sin, so he remained until the hour appointed for his death; and, even then, he was not forced to die: "He offered up himself." Pilate's servants and Herod's

soldiers could not have slain him unless he had been willing to die. He had but to breathe the wish, and the legions of heaven would have burned up the legions of Herod as chaff is consumed in the furnace. Neither the Romans nor the Jews could have nailed him to the tree, nor could all their priests, nor all the ribald mob have put him to death without his own consent. When he did but speak to them in the Garden of Gethsemane, they went backward, and fell to the ground. He that made the earth to quake and open when he died could have shaken them off the earth, or buried them in it, while he lived, if he had so pleased. But he voluntarily delivered himself up to death. To the very last, there was no compulsion upon him to die, except that compulsion of love of which I have spoken. You and I must die; the infirmities of nature will compel us to give up the ghost; but he was strong and vigorous even at the moment of his death. That glorious shout, "Consummatum est,"—"It is finished,"—came from One who was still in the vigour of his strength, and just entering on his eternal victory. When he bowed his head, it was because he would do it, and willingly yielded up his soul, committing his spirit to the Father,—not under constraint, but "he offered up himself." Oh, this makes the sacrifice of Christ so blessed and glorious! They dragged the bullocks and they drove the sheep to the altar; they bound the calves with cords, even with cords to the altar's horn; but not so was it with the Christ of God. None did compel him to die; he laid down his life voluntarily, for he had power to lay it down, and to take it again. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." "He offered up himself."

From this great truth, we may learn two or three practical lessons. The first is, the blasphemy of supposing that any so-called "priest" can offer up Christ. There are men who say that, in the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, "there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead." Stand back, beloved; withdraw from the sons of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, lest the earth should again open, and swallow them up, and they should perish alive in their iniquity. "He offered up himself;" and yet these shavelings say that they offer him again. God have mercy upon them, and open their blind eyes, that they may no longer thus perpetrate an infamous blasphemy against his holy name!

But there is a lesson for us also to learn; and that is, the folly of our attempting to offer any sacrifice whatever to God in and of ourselves; for, brethren, there never was such a sacrifice as Christ on earth. It was the best sacrifice that ever could be, yet nobody offered that but Christ himself. What are your sacrifices and mine? They are very poor things, so shall we dare to offer them to God? Nay, let us ask Christ to offer all our sacrifices for us. If the best sacrifice needed Christ to present it to his Father, then our imperfect sacrifices can only be offered by Jesus Christ our great High Priest; and though we, who trust him, and love his name, are all priests, for he "hath made us kings and priests unto God," yet we are only priests in him, and our sacrifices are only presented in and through him. It must be so; for, if the chief sacrifice is offered by him, all the minor ones must also be presented by him if they are to be accepted by God.

And, dear brethren, here is one other lesson, namely, the security of those who trust in the sacrifice of Christ; for if I accept the sacrifice of Christ for me; and trust in it, if I am not saved by it,—suppose that to be possible,—then it follows that the great High Priest, when "he offered up himself," did not perform an effectual work. That would be a terrible imputation upon his honour. God forbid that we should entertain it for a single moment! Much, it is said, in the offering of the mass in the Romish Church, depends upon the intention of the priest. I should think so; but we know what the intention of our High Priest was. We dare not rely upon the intention of any human priest, but we know that our Lord Jesus Christ "offered up himself,"—not in fiction or hypocrisy, but in reality, and with his whole heart and soul; and we are certain that he offered an acceptable and an effectual sacrifice to God, and that we who trust in it must be saved. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the effect of that dread sacrifice must stand, for he who offered it is the Son of God. Fall back, my soul, on this firm rock, and there rest securely whatever doubts may come to assail thee.

II. Now, in the second place, I shall ask you carefully to look at THE SACRIFICE: "He offered up himself." That is to say, Jesus Christ did not offer lamb or ram, bird or bullock; but "himself."

That is a great word, and it means that his whole nature as man was offered up in death as an atonement for us,—his whole nature as man, perfect and sinless, and indissolubly united with his Divine nature. I do not say that God died, nor would I put it quite so; but I will say that he who died was God, though man, and that "he offered up himself,"—the whole of himself,—in sacrifice to God on our behalf. His precious body suffered pains which are indescribable, but which I pray you never to undervalue or forget. I have seen criticisms concerning what is called "the sensuousness" of certain of our hymns that speak of his wounds, and so on. Never mind the criticism,—be willing to be called sensuous, Holy Scripture might be condemned on the same ground. You will never understand the agony of Christ's soul if you despise the agony of his body; for, while the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings, yet the sufferings of his body were the body of his sufferings, and he who does not think much of the body of the sufferings is not likely to know much about the soul of them.

His body was given for you and for me; and, then, his spiritual nature—his mind, his intellect, his heart, his imagination,—every pure unspotted faculty of that blessed soul of his,—he gave up all for us. The alabaster box, his body, was broken; and the precious nard, his soul, was poured out like a divine perfume upon the head of our poor humanity. It was all given for us: "He offered up himself." Not his garments only, though he was stripped naked; —not his glory only, though he emptied himself; —not his life only, though he laid down his life for us;—but "he offered up himself." Oh, it is a great word, but it describes a great sacrifice; and it needed all that to make an atonement for our sins, and all that he gave.

"He offered up himself;" that is, he presented himself to God as a sacrifice, and he did actually die. O brothers and sisters, I cannot describe that wondrous death! You and I have never died. We have been sick, but to actual death we have never yet come. Some of us never shall know death as Christ knew it; for, remember, death was death to him; but for his saints the bitterness of death is past. Christ had to endure death in all its bitterness, but he has taken away the wormwood and the gall of death for us who believe in him. Many of those who were martyred for his

name's sake, when they burned at the stake could sing as they died, and counted the flames as though they were but beds of roses, for he was with them, and God was with them to sustain them; but, for him, there was no such succour, no Divine support. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" was the cry into which more grief was packed away than can even be found in any sufferer in hell; for, recollect, the griefs of Christ were not the griefs sufficing for one lost man, but for unnumbered myriads who would otherwise have been banished from the presence of God for ever. "He offered up himself." Oh! see him die, if you can bear the sight; his blessed soul exhaled, his body left behind to be buried in the tomb. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

I always think, with regard to that offering up of himself, that it was a very mysterious transaction, in to which you and I must not pry with any sinful curiosity. Yet, as I meditated upon this subject, it appeared to me that the cross, which seemed so small a thing out yonder on that little rising ground of Golgotha,—that one cross, standing in the centre of the three, appeared to me to be the centre of the entire universe, and so it is. If the inhabitants in all the stars did not see Christ die, if from all worlds they could not behold the dreadful sight, yet they must have heard of it in many a star by this time. Swift spirits have told, in those bright orbs where myriads of unfallen creatures dwell, the story that, on this little dusky planet, sin struggled against incarnate love, and love, to conquer it, did die, and in the dying won the victory. I cannot tell you how many races of intelligent beings there are beside the hierarchy of angels, but it is not at all improbable that there are as many worlds as there are grains of sand upon the seashore, and perhaps every one of these teems with inhabitants more than our earth does; and they have heard, and they keep on hearing, and the news keeps spreading everywhere, that the God, who made them all, took human form, and died to put away human sin.

And, supposing this is the case, what do you think all these intelligent beings say? It must be that the impression made upon them is that sin is a horrible thing, since it stabs at God himself. All intelligences must also feel that God is just, since he will sooner himself die than let sin go unpunished. It further rings throughout the spheres that God is love,—that he will sooner bleed to death than let his creatures perish; and that

here he once proved, in his death, that he was infinite both in his vengeance and his mercy. All the universe throughout eternity shall hear this wondrous story; it is so marvellous that it will never grow stale. They are telling it, to-night, to wondering assemblies, compared with which this vast congregation is but as a drop in a bucket. Standing in some central star, some mighty intelligence is proclaiming this story, perhaps to as many worlds as there are men and women in this building. Certainly, it is worthy of such an audience, for never was there such news as that the infinite, immortal, eternal, invisible, almighty, loving God did come, and take upon himself the sin of men, and at last suffered and died in the room and stead of guilty sinners.

You say, perhaps, that I am dreaming while talking to you thus. But dear friends, we sometimes learn more truth in dreams than when we are awake. At any rate, this I know. I would sooner be mistaken in enlarging too much upon the wondrous fact and efficacy of the cross than I would ever become one of those who shrivel up the atonement till there is little or nothing of it left. I believe that there was such a necessity for Christ to die as you and I have never yet imagined; that he did not die merely because his death was necessary upon this planet, but that it was necessary through every province of the infinite dominions of God, and that it was necessary to the very nature of God himself, which is saying still more. There was a supreme necessity that Christ should die; I am sure of it, for else he would not have died. The Father would never have given up his Son to the death of the cross unless it had been imperative that this sacrifice should be offered, or else that men should suffer for ever. Oh, wonder of wonders! Tell it everywhere, and never cease to tell it. "He offered up himself."

III. Now, lest I should weary you, I will, in closing, only say a little upon the third point, which is, **CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THIS TRUTH, WHICH ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US.**

The first is this. "He offered up himself;" but he did not offer up himself for himself. That is an offering which cannot be imagined. So far as Christ was himself alone concerned, there was no necessity that he should die. He was infinitely glorious and blessed. "He offered up himself," but not

for himself; then, for whom did he die? For men. We are told that he took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham, he took up sinful men. O poor sinner, I want you to think of this! Let your soul see Jesus on the cross, —bleeding, writhing, suffering, tortured, dying, dead; and then recollect that there was not one pang, or groan, or sigh for himself; it was all for others,—for his enemies. I wish we could all say, one by one, "It was for me. He loved me, and gave himself for me. He endured the cross for me, his blood was shed for me, those agonies and cries and griefs were all for me. For me the death-pang and the expiring groan; all for me, for me." If thou believest in Jesus, it is even so. There must have been something great done for thee there. Thy great sin must have been buried there. The great hell, which thou oughtest to have endured, must have been extinguished there So far as thou art concerned. The great heaven, which thou couldst never else have entered, must have been opened there, if he died there for thee. Untold blessings are insured to thee in that matchless death. Dwell on that thought, beloved. "He offered up himself;" but not for himself. It must have been, then, for the guilty. O my soul, it must have been, it was, for thee if thou believest in him!

Next, notice that this great deed of love was really done: "He offered up himself." He did really do it. I know that, when I am preaching, some of you seem to think that I am only talking about fanciful or imaginary matters. If I were to begin to speak of President Garfield and his sickness, or about the wet weather and the harvest, you would say, "These are facts." O sirs, but this also is a fact, and the greatest of all facts: "He offered up himself." It happened long ago, but it is true that he did this. That same God that painted every flower,—that spread the skies,—the God that made us,—came here in human form, and after living here a life of blessing and beneficence, he died as a sacrifice for human guilt. This is not something that is yet to be done. It is all over; Jesus himself said, "It is finished." If I had to tell you that God would come here, and become man, and die for us, you might say, "It may not be; it is too great a condescension. Do you know how great God is, and can it be imagined that he should come down to earth, and be veiled in human flesh, and in that flesh should suffer and die? It cannot be." But I have to tell you that it has been done, it is a fact accomplished. He did it: "He offered up himself." It may sometimes have been a question among believers who

lived before Christ died,—“Will he really die?” But it is no question to you and me, for he has died, his great deed of love is done.

And he so completely did this that it will never be done again. If you will not accept this Christ, there will never be another; and if you will not be saved by his redemption, you will never be redeemed at all. And there is this comfort about it,—that he only died once because there is no need that he should ever die again. His one death has slain death for all who trust him. His one bearing of sin has put their sin away for ever. God now can justly forgive the believing sinner; and he may well blot out the debt when it has been paid by his Son. Well may he remit the sentence against us now that his Son has stood in our place, and borne the penalty due to our sin. God is therefore just when he justifies those for whom Christ died; where would his justice be if he did not so? Did Christ pay my debts, and am I arrested for them? Did he die for me, and shall I perish? Where then is the atonement? Beloved, if thou believest in Jesus, be glad that he died once, and be gladder still that he cannot die again, and that there is no need that he should. The atonement is completed; thou art saved; and thou shalt never come into condemnation. How I wish that I could preach on such a theme as this as it deserves! But I do not know how it is to be done; it does not seem to me as if any human words could ever fittingly set forth such a wondrous mystery. Nay, though they were written across the face of the sky,—unless God himself wrote them with a finger of lightning,—I know of no way in which this truth could be fitly set out: “He offered up himself”

But, my dear hearers, I wish you would all lay hold of this blessed truth! When I laid hold of it, it was the crisis in my whole history; and to this hour it is the joy of my soul. I could not give up this blessed belief,—that “he offered up himself” in the room and place and stead of all his people, of all who believe in him, and that, therefore, they are safe for ever.

I must sum up, in a few words, much more that I might have said. And, first, this truth quiets the conscience. “He offered up himself.” Conscience never murmurs after the blood of Jesus has been applied to it. I say to myself, “Jesus died for me; Jesus suffered in my stead; Jesus took my guilt; Jesus bore my punishment;” and my conscience says, “That is

enough; that is all I want."

This truth also satisfies my understanding. Let those who will sneer at the simple gospel, and the doctrine of substitution; but I have no understanding that is too large to be satisfied with these things. It seems to me that, if God appointed Christ to be an atonement for sin, and if he is satisfied with his sacrifice, I may well be content. Surely, if my great Creditor and Judge is appeased by what his Son has offered on my behalf, it is not for me to begin to cavil at it. I know how some criticize the great central truth of the atonement. I care not how they criticize it so long as God has accepted it; and since he has also accepted me in Christ Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, my soul feels perfectly content, and understands why she is contented.

And, oh! how this truth also wins the affections of men! Can you help loving the Christ who offered up himself for you? And loving him, do you not desire to honour and glorify him? Do you not feel that you hate the sin that made him die? Do you not wish to be like him, and in everything to give him pleasure by a life of holiness, and self-denial, and self-sacrifice? I know you do; it must be so. Because Jesus sacrificed himself for you, you feel that you must love him with all your heart.

Does not this truth also arouse your admiration? Say, brothers and sisters, if there is anything that can move you like this glorious truth of which I have been speaking? Does it not arouse your highest admiration when you remember that the Lord Jesus Christ took your sin upon himself, and suffered in your stead? I know that there is no hand that can sweep the strings of my heart with such power as can the hand that was pierced for me. This theme enkindles my enthusiasm, and stirs my passions to a flame, and makes me wish for the tongues of men and of angels that I might be able to tell out this story of "love so amazing, so divine." I would ask no other heaven, if I might have my choice, than, having to meditate upon the passion of my Lord, and to tell it out to others, and then to fall at his dear feet, and worship him world without end, for he was slain, and has redeemed me by his precious blood. You take Christ out of the gospel, and out of your preaching, and see whether you will arouse any enthusiasm among your people. There is a cold, steely

religion, sharp and deadly, out of which the atonement has gone; but was it ever a power in this land, or any other, or will it ever be? Only preach the Christless gospel, and you shall have spiders in abundance in your places of worship, and very few men and women. They run away, if they are wise, from the place where Christ is not preached, and his atoning blood is not constantly set forth. Point that place out to me on the map of London, and I will show you the spot where there is a beggarly array of empty benches, and few hearers; for they fly, and rightly so, as hungry men flee from the place where there is no bread, and as the thirsty in the wilderness turn away from the dried-up well. They get still more thirsty as long as they stay by the empty mockery, so they hasten away from it. But preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, preach the atoning sacrifice, and see how the people flock together. Let them believe this truth, let them love it, and their whole spirit is stirred within them, and everyone becomes a soldier of the cross, a warrior for Jesus Christ. I am sure it is so; and what I feel within my own spirit I know that you all feel too, for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

And, finally, this truth that Christ offered up himself, leads us who accept it to be ready for self-sacrifice. It makes the believing man say, "As he offered himself for me, I must give myself for him." It teaches the doctrine of the self-sacrifice of men for God, and of men for men. This is the nursery of brave spirits, and the school in which true heroes are trained. None have been bolder for the truth, and for the right, and for the advancement of the ages, and for the glory of God, than those who have enshrined the blood-red cross within their hearts, and who have been prepared for love of it even to die. O Christ of God, thou who hast offered thyself for us, we offer ourselves to thee; accept us now! Amen.

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The Priest Ordained By The Oath Of God

And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) by so much Was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. - Hebrews 7:20-22

Those of you who read Scripture carefully will have noticed that the word "better" is one of the key-words of the Epistle to the Hebrews. You are constantly meeting with it. In the opening character we read that our Lord Jesus Christ is "made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Look a little further and you are taught that he is better than Moses, inasmuch as Moses was faithful as a servant in the Lord's house, but Christ as a Son over his own house. Further on we find our blessed Lord described as better than Aaron, while his blood is mentioned as speaking better things than that of Abel; and he is declared in our text to be the surety of a better covenant, of which it is said that it is established upon better promises. It would be a very delightful subject to work out the betterness of Christ, and of his blood, and of his covenant, and to show that however good other things may be they must all yield in excellence to him. It is implied in the use of the word "better" that the ordinances of the ceremonial law were good in their place, but Jesus is better than the best of all visible things: the eternal Christ is better than the best of all the temporal arrangements which God has made for the good of man. How much better what heart shall conceive? "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

It behoves us, my dear brothers and sisters, to have a firmer faith than Old Testament saints, because we see more clearly our ground of trust. Those who lived in the comparative darkness of the previous dispensation were saved by faith, and among them there were not a few eminent believers, surely we also ought to excel in our confidence in God. Let the eleventh of Hebrews stand as a triumphal arch with the names of ancient

believers recorded thereon: these all died in faith, and they were no mean men; but inasmuch as we enjoy a brighter light, and are living under a better economy, we are called upon to be their superiors in faith. Our faith should be clearer, calmer, stronger, more effectual in working; we should do greater things than these in the name of Jesus. Being endowed more richly with the Spirit of God, the modern church should attempt grander works than Israel ever thought upon, and so there should be a shining more and more unto the perfect day. If better are the promises, better and yet better should we be under accumulating obligations.

My object at this time will not be so much to enter into details of doctrine concerning our Savior's priesthood as to utter practical truths, and press them on the heart. I shall not attempt to exhaust so wonderful a subject as the parallel between Melchisedec and Christ, but I shall try to strengthen the faith of believers, and also to leave unbelievers without excuse if they will not believe in Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, confirming his mission by an oath. We want practical results this morning, and no practical result will content us but this, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. To this end were the Scriptures written, as saith the evangelist John, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." The object of the written word is also the object of the spoken word; we would have you hear, believe, and live. Vain are your reading and hearing unless they lead you up to a sincere reception of the witness of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ. Oh that you may not on this occasion hear in vain!

To our text, then, and may the Spirit of God graciously be with us in speaking upon it.

I. Men should believe in Jesus Christ with their whole heart, and rely upon him with unstaggering confidence: first, because of OUR LORD'S SPECIAL ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD. The Lord Jesus Christ was ordained to the priesthood, according to the hundred and tenth Psalm, in a manner distinct from all others. His ordination was unique, for neither Aaron, nor his sons, nor any of the priests of the tribe of Levi were ever ordained by an oath. Ceremonies most important, imposing,

instructive, and impressive were performed, but there was no oath. God gave promises to the house of Levi, but he expressly stopped short of anything like an oath to them, not because his promise can be broken, but because that promise was conditional, and must not be confirmed by an oath, as though it constituted a perpetual engagement. But our Savior is made a priest by an oath, and it is written, as if to make it exceeding sure, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent"; not because God ever can or doth repent, or run back from his oath in any case, but for the confirmation of our faith in the immutability of his word it is expressly added, "He will not repent." By an oath which standeth fast for evermore Christ is made a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

But why, my brethren, an oath for Jesus and none for other priests? First, because of the greater dignity of Christ above all other priests that ever were, for he is the Son of the Highest, as they were not. They were men that had infirmity, but he is sinless: they lived and died, and so were changed, but "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." They were ordained to be types and emblems, serving for the time of Israel's infancy, but he came as the "I am," the substance of the whole. They were mere men and nothing more, but Jesus counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though for our sakes he assumed our nature. It seemed becoming that God should settle him in the priesthood by an oath, seeing he is above all, and infinitely superior to all others that have ever exercised the priesthood. I tremble while I speak of the oath of God; for God's lifting his hand to heaven and swearing by himself, because he can swear by no greater, is something so solemn that one scarcely dares to think of it. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. The devout soul is full of awe at the bare thought of God in his most fatherly and ordinary acts, but how shall we think of the Lord girt with solemnity, resolute in purpose, stern in truth, as lifting his hand and taking an oath? Surely this is the innermost sanctuary of mystery, the holy of holies. This oath was for the honor of his dear Son as he assumed the sacred priesthood on behalf of the sons of men. The glory of his character, the dignity of his work, the certainty of its accomplishment, and the supreme excellence of his motive in entering upon it, all lift up the priesthood of Christ out of the category of all human priesthoods, and therefore the eternal Father signalises it by a special mark of distinction, and himself

makes oath that his only begotten Son is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Another reason is found in the eternal character of his work. The priesthood of Aaron and his successors was intended to be temporary. God did not confirm the priests of old in their offices, because he held in reserve the right to set them aside when he pleased, and he from the first intended that their functions should be abolished when the fullness of time should come for another and better priest to take their place. They were candles for the darkness, but the sun was to rise, and then they would not be needed: they were pictorial representations, but when the substance was come they would not be required. He allowed their priesthood to be one of imperfect men, because he intended by-and-by to supersede it by a perfect and enduring priesthood: hence no oath of God attended the ordination of the sons of Aaron. But our Lord Jesus Christ's priesthood, and all the economy which he has ushered in, was intended by God to be perpetual, therefore doth he confirm it with an oath. No end of days will ever happen to our High Priest, nor shall the economy of grace be supplanted by another and clearer revelation. It shall be developed from strength to strength, and we shall see greater things than these in the days of the personal reign and the millennial glory, but no new economy of grace shall overthrow the present. Think not, O ye ungodly, if ye reject Christ that there will yet come a Savior better than he; for you there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. I have heard men talk of "a larger hope": I believe it to be a larger lie than ordinary if it supposes more mercy than is revealed in Christ Jesus. There is no larger hope than that which Christ has revealed: if it had been so he would have told us. Stars can be excelled by other stars, but what shall outshine the sun? One human gospel can be eclipsed by another, but how can there be a more loving, tender, gracious gospel than that which is embodied in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," -- is that message of grace to be exceeded, and is greater love yet to be revealed? No; the gospel is God's ultimatum: he will go no further: we have the last proclamation of mercy to men, the last Savior, the last foundation for hopes to be built upon, the last fountain in which sin can be washed away, the last door of hope by which men shall

escape from the guilt and punishment of sin. I beseech you, avail yourselves of it, for God has confirmed it with an oath that it may stand for ever: it is your one and only hope for eternity, lay hold upon it while you may. The oath of God sets forth the dignity of our Lord's person and the eternity of his office: see that ye despise not one who is thus great and abiding.

By an oath also was our Lord set apart, because of the reality of his priesthood, and the substance that dwelt in his sacrifice. As we have already said, the Levitical priesthood dealt only with the shadows of good things to come, and not with the very substance of the things. So to speak, the sacrificial bullock was not actually a sacrifice, but the representation of the sacrifice that was to come. The morning and evening lambs did not take away sin, but only mirrored the great blood-shedding of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. In very deed and truth, the men of the house of Aaron who attended at the visible altar were not actual priests before the real altar of the Lord, but only shadows of the true. The real altar is the person of Christ, the real sacrifice is the death of Christ, and the real priest is Christ himself. The images of heavenly things were glorious, but the glory of the things themselves dwells in Christ, and we behold that glory full of grace and truth. Fly, ye shadows, since it is clear that ye were meant to be so, for God did not establish you as abiding things. You did but predict and foreshadow, but you were not the blessings which ye pictured. In Christ is the actual putting away of sin, the effectual atonement, the real and efficacious substitution for guilty men, the redemption which actually redeems, the sacrifice which reconciles. In him dwells the truth of the matter: he is not prediction but fact, not promise but fulfillment. Oh, never listen for a moment to those who would spiritualize Christ himself, sad make out even his person and work to be a shadow. Certain teachers have risen who seem to look upon our Redeemer's life as a sort of allegory, an instructive parable, or a myth, out of which eclectic minds like theirs may spell out mystic truth. It cannot be so: Christ Jesus is a fact: God was on oath in human flesh: that mysterious person the Son of God, the Son of Mary, lived and loved and died and rose again: his sacrifice once offered has for ever put away sin, and it has bestowed upon him the power by his intercession to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. If I had been sent this

day to be the preacher of the shadows of the law I would have done my best to obey my Master, but as I am commissioned to preach absolute certainties I am full of delight, and resolved to speak boldly. We preach not fictions, dreams, or parables, but literal facts. What a joy I feel; a joy as true and unfeigned as the glad tidings I deliver! For real guilt here is actual atonement, and sure forgiveness; for access to God here is an open way, and a tender hand to guide you in it. Trifle not with that which is no trifle, lest haply when you come into real straits, and the waters of death are actually around you, you shall find the lack of the only friend who can effectually help you in your hour of need. Death and judgment are no fiction; seek therefore in very deed for the substantial grace which can bear you through. God confirms the priesthood of Christ by an oath because it is a real priesthood: I pray you cast your soul upon it by true and real faith.

But perhaps to usward the main reason of Christ's being installed in the priesthood by an oath of God is this, for the strengthening our faith. Brethren, an oath for confirmation among men is the end of all strife: when an honest man has sworn to it the testimony stands in evidence, and may not be questioned. When God not only gives his promise and his word, but swears to his declaration, who shall dare to doubt? Shall blasphemy go the length of accusing him of perjury, or shall profanity give him the lie in the teeth of his oath? There was no need for God to swear if there had not been in us a fearful lack of faith, but "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie" he hath given us strong consolation by swearing by himself that it shall be so. I do beseech you, since God's design is the confirmation of your faith, pray that your faith may be confirmed by it. No measure of faith in Christ can ever be too great. If we trust him blindly, implicitly, immeasurably, with every interest for time and for eternity, we cannot have ventured too far. He that is ordained with an oath may be rested on without fear: he cannot fail, it is not possible while God's own truth is staked upon his mission, and guarantees its success.

Beloved, ought not this great truth to bring many tremblers to believe in Jesus Christ? The Christ we preach is not an enthusiastic amateur who has come among men with high purpose but without commission, with

good intentions but without authority; but God himself hath appointed him to his office and settled him in it, in the most solemn manner, swearing, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Will you not trust him with your soul since God entrusts him with his honor? Will you not accept the priest whom God himself has ordained? Will you not accept the sacrifice which he has presented, whose efficacy abides for ever before God? I beseech you, men and brethren, as many of you as have not believed in Jesus Christ, look ye well to it that ye do not reject a gospel more certain than certainty itself. I know not how else to express the sureness of that to which God hath set no less a seal than his own oath. Right joyfully do we see the whole nature of the infinite God guaranteeing the office of our glorious high priest, for by swearing by himself the great Jehovah hath made his very being a hostage for the performance of the covenant of which Jesus is the surety, and put forward his own character for truth as the pledge of Christ's eternal priesthood. May no soul among us dare to refuse a priest so surely ordained to his office, and settled in it by Jehovah himself.

II. Secondly, we ought to believe on the Lord Jesus because OF THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF HIS PRIESTHOOD. This is seen in the tenour of the divine oath, which runs thus: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Very briefly let me mention some of the respects in which our Lord Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. These ought all to be reasons for our faith, and I pray the Holy Spirit to use them for that purpose.

First, our Lord is of the order of Melchisedec as surpassing and superseding all other priests. As surpassing, -- for Melchisedec comes before human view as priest of the Most High God, blessing Abraham, "and without doubt the less is blessed of the greater." Abraham, and Levi in his loins, pay Melchisedec homage. Now, whatever may be said about the priesthood of other men, there can be no doubt about the superior priesthood of Melchisedec. Abraham acknowledged it at once, so that before there were any Aaronic priests there was a greater priest. Before the foundation of the world, when there was no word concerning a priest of the house of Levi, our Lord Jesus Christ was looked upon by God as priest and sacrifice for men. It is not said, "Thou shalt be a priest," but

"Thou, a priest for ever." The verb is left out, but the word "art," in the present tense, is correctly enough supplied by the translators. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." He was a priest before Aaron and his sons were born or thought of. Moreover, consider that the decree registered by the Psalmist in the hundred and tenth Psalm was published by revelation hundreds of years after the law had been given, so that it was not an old decree invalidated by the law of Moses, but a newly published decree abrogating in due time that which had gone before. Even while the law was in its palmy days, and the priest wore the Urim and the Thummim, there was a note struck in the Psalms of David which intimated the ending of it all, because there was another priest, not of the house of Aaron, who surpassed all of them, being made a priest by oath, even while they were priests without an oath. Whatever priesthood there may have been of God's ordaining under the Old Testament, it was evidently all subordinate to the superior Melchisedec-priesthood of Jesus Christ our Savior, and was predestinated to give place to it.

It was a priesthood which united with itself the dignity of kingship. This Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, was king even as Jesus Christ is King of kings, as well as high priest over the house of God. He is, first, Melek Zadok, king of righteousness, setting up a kingdom of righteousness, and fulfilling all righteousness himself; and then is he King of Salem, or of peace, bringing peace to those that believe in him and follow after righteousness. Now, it is a main ground of trust in Jesus that he is King as well as Priest, with power in his arm as well as merit in his blood; with power to rule and govern and protect us, as well as with an efficacious sacrifice to purge our sins. We ought to trust implicitly in one whose royal omnipotence supports his sacred merit. Double faith should be bestowed on him who exercises the double office of the kingdom and the priesthood.

Our faith should also rest on the fact that our Lord was, like Melchisedec, "without father, without mother." We find no father or mother mentioned in the case of Melchisedec, because he did not come to the priesthood by natural descent as did the sons of Aaron; and in this he is the great type of Jesus, who is not one of a line, but the sole and only priest of his order. As a priest he is "without beginning of days or end of years," neither

taking the priesthood from a predecessor, nor passing it on to a successor, nor laying it down because of old age.

There was no beginning to our Lord's priesthood, for the witness is "Thou art a priest for ever," and there will be no end to it, for even in the glory he --

"Looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still."

Our Lord has not left off being a priest to-day, poor sinner. Come to him with your sins and seek reconciliation. He is able to hear your confession and grant you absolution: he will present your praise and offer your prayer, for he ever liveth, and because of this he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Melchisedec had no predecessor, no assessor, and no successor; and so is it with our Lord. Of his order there was none before him, -- he is the only priest of his line: none stood side by side with him, for he needed none; and none can be compared with him; by his one sacrifice he hath perfected all who accept his priesthood, and what more is needed? None can follow our Lord in his office. How can there be any successor to him, since he hath an endless life, and in the power of that endless life ever liveth to make intercession for us? Listen, ye that need a priest to reconcile you to God. Here is one ordained to that office from of old, who performs his office even now, and ceases not from it for a moment; who at this moment asks no help from you, nor from priest of Rome or Canterbury, or any other place, but is able himself alone, with his own precious blood and prevalent intercession, to save you to the uttermost.

This great priest of ours is Master of all, for as Melchisedec received homage from Abraham in the form of tithes, so doth our blessed Lord receive the reverence of all who believe. The day cometh when every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Therefore come and trust him: trust the Lord of all. O ye guilty ones, who desire salvation, I beseech you repose upon him, for he must reign, and you must either kiss him with the homage of your heart, or else he will break you as with a rod of iron in, the day of his

power.

Perhaps one of the main points about Melchisedec is that he is represented as bestowing blessing. When he came to meet Abraham the chief thing he did was to bless the patriarch. The apostle does not refer to the bringing forth of bread and wine by Melchisedec, because he regarded it as a temporal blessing included in the greater spiritual one. Our Lord Jesus blesses all that trust him: blesses them with the riches of heaven and earth, with the eternal word which sustains their souls, and with supplies for this mortal life so that they live and praise him. It is inevitable that blessing should flow forth wherever he comes; he never touches without healing; he never speaks without consoling; he never comes to dwell with a man without enriching; he never belongs to a man without sanctifying and perfecting him. Oh, what a blessed priest he is! Who would refuse him, since he is all blessing? "Virtue has gone out of me," said he, and virtue is going out of him every day to the sons of men. "In him shall the families of the earth be blessed."

Once again, Christ is never to be changed or superseded. He is a priest for ever. As we read nothing of Melchisedec's having given up the priesthood, so depend upon it Christ never will lay down his office while there remains a single man to be saved. Once a priest always a priest" is true of the Lord Jesus Christ though true of nobody else. Once was be ordained, and none can put him from his priesthood as once the Father set him upon the hill of Zion as King, and the kings of the earth cannot dash him from his throne. O ye who pine for certainty and seek everlasting life, come and rest your everlasting hopes on his everlasting priesthood. That is my point all the way through. You have not to trust a mere man; you have not to rely upon one who will die, or leave his office to another who may not know you or care for you; but you are to trust one who cannot change or die. If I were called upon to be the advocate of human priests this morning, if I were ordained to tell you to trust to the shavelings of Rome, my tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth for lack of arguments: for what can there be in them that we should trust them? O sirs, the most brutish delusion in the world is to rely upon any priest of our own sinful race. I would as soon trust my salvation with the Norwood gipsy as with a Cardinal Archbishop. Her imposture is not so daring as

his. What can priests do for us? "They can give absolution." The Lord absolve them from the blasphemy of such a pretense. There is one pardoning Priest, and there is none other under heaven. He hath made all his people in another sense to be priests unto himself; but as atoning priests, or as men that offer a propitiatory sacrifice, he hath ordained none, and all who pretend to such power must answer for it before the bar of God. Think ye of Roman and Anglican priests as of priests of Baal, and have no fellowship with such deceivers. Pray God to open their eyes that they may themselves be delivered from the delusion. As, for you and for me, let us keep to the one Melchisedec priest, and yield subjection to none other. In Jesus we are complete; to look elsewhere would be to dishonor his perfection.

III. I beg you next to notice that our text speaks OF THE SUPERIORITY OF THE COVENANT UNDER WHICH OUR LORD OFFICIATES, in which, also, we shall find abundant argument for believing in Jesus. It says, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Learned men have fought each other very earnestly over the word translated "Testament." Some say that it means "testament;" others answer that in the Septuagint Greek it is used as the interpretation of the Hebrew word which signifies "covenant." I feel quite sure that the combatants are both right. I am always glad when I can conscientiously take both sides in a battle, and I do so in this instance, because it matters nothing which of the two conquers, though it would be a loss for either side to be defeated. The word means both testament and covenant. God's covenant of grace has had the conditional side of it so completely fulfilled that it has virtually become a "testament," or a deed of free gift, in which the one party is a donor and the other has become simply a receiver. Though the economy of grace is a covenant under one aspect, under another it is no covenant, now requiring something from each of two parties, but it has become a testament or will as to its practical result. The old covenant was on this wise: if the Israelitish people kept to God as their God, and if the priests obeyed his law and offered sacrifice according to divine rule, God would accept and bless them. Thus there was an "if" in the covenant. It was conditional, and therefore liable to failure. The people said, "All that thou hast spoken we will do." Eagerly, with all hands up, they cried, "We will do it. We will do it all." Within

forty days they had broken the law, and to pieces went the covenant. A man's covenant is sure to be broken if it promises holiness on the part of the sinful, and perseverance on the part of the fickle-minded. Man cannot bear the burden of the needful requirements of a covenant with God. Our great High Priest represents another and surer covenant. There is no "if" in the covenant of grace. It runs thus: "I will," and "You shall." That is the tenor of it. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Its essence lies in the supreme word, "I will." Therefore, because the conditions of the covenant of grace have been fulfilled it is in no danger of abrogation, and Christ Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant.

The first covenant was typical and shadowy: it was but a school lesson for children. Just as we give to our boys models of churches or models of ships, so was the ceremonial law a model of good things to come, but it did not contain the things themselves. Christ is no surety of a mere model or pattern of things in the heavens, but of a covenant which deals with the heavenly things themselves, with real blessings, with true boons from God. The first covenant was temporary: it was meant to be so. It was meant in part to teach the coming covenant, and in part to show the weakness of man and the necessity of divine grace, but it was never meant to stand. This covenant of which Christ is the surety standeth for ever and ever. The everlasting hills may bow, and the heavens themselves be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, but God's covenant shall stand for ever and for ever while Christ its surety liveth.

The old covenant was a covenant in which there were imperfections, as Paul saith, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I

took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." In the economy of grace of which our Lord is the surety no fault can be found, and in it there is no fuel for decay to feed upon. There is nothing about it that is weak and unprofitable, for it is "ordered in all things and sure": "he taketh away the first," not that he may set up another which shall be removed in its turn, but "that he may establish the second." In this second we have covenant purposes from eternity unalterable, love infinite and changeless, promises sure and inviolable, and pledges given that can never be withdrawn, for the Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

How earnestly do I pray that you may have a part in this covenant! It includes all believers within its lines. O that you would believe and so lay hold upon the covenant once for all. If you have already believed, I pray you to rejoice in this covenant, and bless the Lord Jesus who has made it sure for you by his blood.

IV. Now of such a covenant or testament has Jesus Christ become the priest and surety, and with that we shall close, dwelling Upon THE RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH HE STANDS TO THAT COVENANT. This is our fourth point. I am sure we did not expect as we were reading this passage that we should come upon the word "surety." The apostle was speaking of our Lord as a priest, and he puts it thus, "By so much" -- that is, by reason of his being inducted into his office by an oath -- "was Christ made a surety of a better testament." However there is the word "surety," and doubtless there is excellent reason for the unexpected turn in the sense. Testaments do not need sureties, therefore the passage should be read "covenant." But why did he turn from the idea of priesthood to that of suretyship? How is our Lord Jesus a surety?

He is so, first, because we are absolutely certain that the covenant of grace will stand because the Redeemer has come into the world and has died for us. Brethren, the gift of Christ is a pledge that the covenant, of which he is the substance, cannot be dissolved. Christ has been born into the world, God himself has become incarnate: that is done and can never be undone, how can the Lord draw back after going so far? More, Christ has died: he beareth in his flesh to-day the scars of his crucifixion: that

also is done, and can never be undone. If God had ever meant that this covenant should be temporary he would never have given his Son to bleed and die as the substance of that covenant. It cannot be that so vast an expense should be laid out upon a transient business. Moreover, Jesus lives, and as long as he lives the covenant must be regarded as a reality. It cannot possibly be that a work should be regarded as a fiction when it has been wrought out by such an one as he is. The ever-living Son of God did not die to perform a mere representation: the abiding essence of the matter is in his work, and he lives to prove that it is so. The priests of the house of Aaron were poor sureties of the former covenant, for they could not keep it themselves, but Christ has kept the covenant of grace; he has fulfilled all that was conditional in it, and carried out all that was demanded on man's part. It was conditional that Christ should present a perfect righteousness and a perfect atonement: he has effected this to the fall, and now there is no "if" in it. The covenant now reads as a legacy, or a will, the will of God. the New Testament of the Most High. Christ has made it so, and the very fact that there is such a person as Jesus Christ the Son of man living, bleeding, dying, risen, reigning, is the proof that this covenant stands secure though earth's old columns bow.

But next, Christ is a surety on God's part. I know that divines say that God does not need any surety, that he is to be trusted without it. This is true, and he is to be relied upon without an oath, but even as he takes an oath for our sake, so he provides a surety for our sake that we may believe with stronger confidence. Christ is the bondsman of God on the Father's behalf, that the covenant shall be fulfilled. "Look," says the Father, "have you ever doubted me? Believe my Son. Have I not given him to you? Is he not one with you in your nature? Has he not died for you? Surely, if I seem too great, and therefore too terrible for the grip of your faith, you may lay hold on the Well-beloved, your friend and kinsman; and you may see that I give him to be for me the pledge that I intend to keep the covenant of grace." Now, as long, as there is a Christ, God's covenant evidently stands fast, for all the promises are "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us"; and until it can be proven that Christ has ceased to be, no man that believes in him is in any mortal danger. Hath he not said it, "Because I live ye shall live also"? The life of every believing man and woman is bound up with the very existence of Christ, as the gift

of God, and that existence is divine as well as human; and unless he can cease to be he cannot cease to love, and bless, and keep his people, and be for them all that a high priest and surety can be. He is God's pledge to us that every word of promise shall stand.

But then mainly he is a surety of the new covenant on our behalf. Adam entered into a covenant with God for us, but that covenant went to pieces in a very short time. Then the second Adam became our covenant head and surety, and represented us before God. "Lo, I come," saith he -- this is the brief of it -- "to stand in their stead, to roll away the reproach of thy law, and so to save that which is lost." Now, the sinner is not saved in a way which casts a slight on justice, for Jesus has honored the law, and borne its penalty on the behalf of the men whom the Father gave him. It was a wonderful act of grace on Christ's part thus to become our surety before the throne of justice, but he did, it and smarted for it, and fulfilled all that it involved. Beloved, I would not like to have gone to heaven over a broken law: no right-minded man could be eternally happy and yet know that the law of God had to be dishonored before he could be rescued from hell. What would the universe say but that God was unrighteous, for he had saved the ungodly, and tarnished the honor of his justice by allowing sin to go unpunished: thus proving that the law was needless, and the punishment superfluous. But now they cannot thus speak concerning any one of us who are saved in Christ Jesus. The saved one's sins have been punished: every believer has borne the punishment of his guilt in the person of his great Substitute. The law is satisfied; we owe it nothing, for we have obeyed it actively and passively in the person of our surety. Even the infinite holiness of God can demand nothing of any believer but what the Lord beholds and accepts on the believer's behalf in Christ Jesus our representative. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God that justifieth? "No, the very act of justifying proves that he cannot lay anything to our charge, for that would be to nullify his own act. "Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died?" What, condemn those for whom he has shed his atoning blood? Yea rather, Christ has risen again. Shall he condemn those whom he has justified by his resurrection? If so, he rose in vain. "Who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Shall he condemn those for whom he has taken possession of heaven, and for

whom he offers perpetual intercession? Impossible! impossible! Our Surety then has rendered to the law the full of all its demands. Sing, O Zion; rejoice, O ye people of God, for God hath rendered unto you double for all your sins. In the person of your Substitute all that the law could demand has been exacted, and you are free. O blessed Melchisedec, high priest for ever living, we rejoice in thee as the surety of the covenant itself, and also the surety for both parties of that covenant, the guarantee on both sides, surety for God as thou art God, surety for man as thou art man, surety of the covenant as God-man in one divinely blessed person!

It comes to this, that we must believe in Jesus Christ and take him to be our priest, or be out of the covenant of grace. God will not deal with us without a Mediator, and "there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Will you have him? Will you have him, or for ever be excluded from the covenant of grace, and consequently condemned under the covenant of works, and cast away for ever and ever? Will you, O unbelievers, will you despise the oath of God? I spoke of it with trembling just now, feeling a solemn awe at the very mention of the oath of God. Will you give the lie to that oath? Will you say, "Thou hast sworn to Christ that he shall be priest, but he shall never be mine"? This would be the honest expression of what your heart feels if you refuse Jesus: will you venture so to speak? Will you reject heaven's own appointed Savior, and deny the witness of the Lord? See that ye do not this, for the Lord your God is a jealous God; and if you touch his dignity, so far as to strike at his oath, what more atrocious crime can you commit? "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Will you refuse the ever-living Savior? Is there one here so foolish as to be trusting to another priest? Oh, can it be that you are so far gone as to look to a man instead of looking to the Son of God?

Dear friends, if Christ deigns to be priest for us we ought gladly to accept him: there ought to be a rash at him. We are bound to cry, "Great priest, intercede for me; let thy sacrifice avail for me; wash me in the cleansing blood." It ought to be a joy to all mankind to accept this heaven-sent Priest and Surety. Will you refuse him? Will you neglect his salvation? If you do so, remember you shut yourselves out from the better hope, and the better covenant, and the better promises: you are barring the door of

heaven against yourselves. He who rejects the Savior commits eternal suicide: his blood shall be upon his own head. This shall be the hell of his hell, the very center of its fire, the worm that never dieth, that he himself put from him everlasting life, and counted himself unworthy of the kingdom, and would not have Christ whom with an oath God had set up, that whosoever believeth in him might live. God bless these all-important truths to every heart for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A Private Enquiry

What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? - 1 Samuel 3:17

The Lord would not speak directly to Eli, although he was the High Priest. In ordinary circumstances it would have been so; but Eli had grieved the Lord, and thus had lost his honorable standing. God had not cast him off; but he viewed him with such displeasure that he would only speak to him through another person: even as great kings, if they are offended with their courtiers, send them messages by other hands. The Lord sent, first, a man of God to warn Eli of what would be the sure result of his want of firmness with his sons; and when he gave him a second warning, it was sent through one who was a little underling in his family.

O ye saints, who live upon familiar terms with the Lord, take heed of sin, lest you lose your close communion, your favored fellowship, and stand in a second place! God will speak to you; but it will be in warning, and in a roundabout way, and not face to face, with his lip to your ear, as he has been wont to do while you have pleased him. God will not cast you off; but he may set you aside for a time. You may still hear his message through others; but he will be silent to you personally. You may have to live in the frigid zone of doubt and anxiety, instead of sunning yourselves in the full blaze of divine love. It was so with Eli: he had forborne to

rebuke sin in his own house, and had brought the anger of God upon himself; and therefore he had no comfortable intercourse, and no honor with Jehovah, but must be schooled by a child.

Further, when God had sent a man of God to Eli, and the message did not arouse him to a sense of his sin in over-indulgence of his sons, and toleration of evil in those under him, the Lord sends him a word of threatening by a child; for God has many messengers. The sending of the child Samuel to bear the terrible tidings to the aged priest, was a sweet but stern rebuke of Eli. The child is awake, while the old man is locked in the slumber which comes of a seared conscience. Experience must now be admonished by childhood, and wisdom by simplicity. Grey hairs, in this case, yield not a crown of glory to the erring ruler; but he must bow his head in sorrow at a rebuke brought to him by a lowly boy. The child is evidently more trusted of God than the venerable priest. It was the beginning of the divine chastisement that his honor should pass away, and an aged priest should stand reproved by a youthful prophet. There was much mercy in it; yet we clearly see the Lord stripping his servant of his decorations, and setting him in a lower place—making the Urim and the Thummim which he wore upon his breast to be of secondary power for showing the future, while the Spirit rested more fully on a holy boy. He, whose talk was still that of childhood, becomes a mouth for God, while the venerable ruler of his people has nothing to say but to submit to his inevitable punishment. Eli was a man of God, and, notwithstanding his great chastisement and his mournful death, I doubt not that he died in the Lord; but he brought dishonor on his own name, and he was condemned to know that his holy office would not be continued in his line, and that none of his descendants should live to old age. He had not duly honored the Lord, and therefore he heard the sentence pronounced on him and on his race. "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." He had spared the rod of rebuke, and therefore the axe of judgment fell on his house, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." O brethren, let us beware of sin, of allowing sin in those under our charge, lest the Lord lay us low, and send an affliction upon us, which shall cleave to our race for ever.

We will now use his question, by which he extracted from Samuel the message of God, and we will view it in three lights; first, as put to Samuel; secondly, as coming from Eli; and, thirdly, as capable of being turned upon ourselves. We will ask it of ourselves, as another might ask it; and we will answer it to our own hearts, that so we may by a rehearsal become ready to give an answer to him that shall ask us in days to come. Come, my heart, answer to thyself, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?" May the Holy Spirit help thee, by bringing all things to thy remembrance, whatsoever he hath said unto thee!

I. First, let us view this question as addressed TO SAMUEL.

The first remark which we shall make upon it is that God does speak to men. Otherwise this would be a senseless question: "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?" God does communicate with mortals. He is not shut up all alone by himself in sublime solitude. He has not placed his creatures at an immeasurable distance, with an impassable abyss between their littleness and his own grandeur. It is not true that he cannot hear their cries, nor respond to them in tones of love. In ways suitable to their feeble nature the Lord has spoken to men.

He has done so in the inspired volume of his sacred Word. Every line in this priceless volume was dictated by the Spirit, and is a message from God to men. This book is to be read as the record of Jehovah's voice. It is the phonograph of our Father's speech in days gone by. What he has spoken aforetime by his voice, he continues to speak to us by his written Word. He spake through prophets and seers, evangelists and apostles; and here we have it—even all that is of abiding significance to us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

God, in a renewed manner, speaks to us by his Word when his Spirit applies it to us individually. We never truly hear the voice of God in Scripture until the truth is spoken home to each heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost. Revelation must be revealed to each one; other wise it soon comes to be a veiling of truth, rather than a discovering of the Lord's mind. The revelation is clear enough in itself; but we have not the opened eye till grace bestows it. If we have not the Spirit of God, the letter may

actually become a veil to hide the spirit of truth; this, indeed, it should not be, neither is it according to its natural intent and tendency; but our depravity makes it so, turning even light itself into a thing which blinds. Do you know what it is to have a text leap out of the Scriptures upon you, and carry you away? This special energy and flash of truth is always memorable. How often have the waves of this sea of truth been phosphorescent before my eyes—a sea of glass mingled with fire, of which the spray has dashed over me and set my soul on flame! As surely as the Lord spake these words to Moses, or to David, or to Isaiah, or to John, or to Paul, so surely does he speak them to our souls by his Spirit. Understand you what I say?

Moreover, our God has ways of communicating his mind to his children by those of his servants who speak in his name. He directs the thoughts of his ministers, and suggests their words, so that they speak to the cases of those who are led to hear the Word of God.

By our own thoughts, also, the Lord communes with us. If we will be still before him, he will prepare our hearts, and in silence we shall hear his voice. It would be a strange thing if God could not, and did not, communicate with his own children; and it is still more strange and sad that, though he does speak, his people are slow of heart and dull of hearing.

Our God speaks to us also in providence. In choice favors we hear his soft and tender tones; in chastisement and rebukes we hear the sterner notes; but every sound is full of love. The Lord has ways of taking his children apart and speaking to them upon their beds. In the wilderness he speaks to the heart. He can talk with us in nature; have you not heard him in the thunder? in the roaring of the sea? Yes, we hear him, not only in the dash of Niagara, but in the ripple of the brook, and the smiling of a primrose on its bank; the Lord is never voiceless except to the earless soul. He speaks: let us hear.

Here we make a further remark: God regards not age in his speaking, but he condescends to speak with young children. Samuel was the Lord's in his long-clothes, and served the Lord while a boy; and the Lord did not

disdain to come to his little cot at night and call him by his name. We often talk as if it could not be possible that the Lord should speak with boys and girls; and yet, my brethren, there is not much more of a stoop in God's talking with a child than in his speaking to a man. Indeed, the man has more of sin, and thus he is often farther off from God than the child. If the children here present are, by God's grace, made willing to hear God's voice—if they are obedient to the Lord, and have open hearts and attentive minds towards his Word—the great God will not pass them by. The Lord stoops to the lowliness of a child, and smiles at its simplicity. If young people are prayerful, thoughtful, reverent, believing, and obedient, the fact that, like Samuel, they are small in stature and young in years, shall be no detriment to them. The Lord will speak, and call them by their names. My observation leads me to believe that many children have heard more of God than persons who are grown up. They may not find willing ears to hear what the Lord has said to them; but if they did, they could tell us marvellous things. Some of us remember how in our own childhood the Lord dealt wonderfully with us; and there were "prophecies which went before" concerning us, whose meaning we can now read, though at the time we did not understand them. I think that young Samuel was one of the fittest persons in the world for the Lord to choose as his messenger; and so far from its being unusual for young ears to hear the voice from heaven, I think they are the best prepared to do so. Four times the Lord said, "Samuel, Samuel"; and the child responded and said at last, when he knew who it was that called him, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Anyone here who can say from his heart, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth," will not be long without a word from the Invisible. Oh, that our ears may be opened to heavenly tidings—may be wakened, morning by morning, by the voice of the Lord! May we often hear it as the morning song and the evening hymn! May the Lord also hear our voices in prayer and praise and meditation, till our lives shall be a holy dialogue between our souls and our God, never dying down into silence, but lasting on until we behold him face to face!

Our next observation is, that when we do hear the voice of God we should be deeply impressed by it. Young Samuel gave evidence that he deeply felt the responsibility of having heard the voice of God. We read that "Samuel lay till morning": he did not go to sleep, but he did not leave his bed. He

laid still, and thought. After hearing that terrible word which made his heart heavy, and caused his ears to tingle, like a wise child, he lay still, and pondered it in his soul. He did not rush in upon Eli, for the news was hard to tell; neither did he seek out another confidant. He had been called to be the Lord's prophet, he was conscious of his commission, and he became sober beyond his years. "He lay till morning." What thoughts passed through his mind on his lone bed! He had been a child when he went to rest last night, and now he had suddenly become a man, with a dread secret entrusted to him. A pressing anxiety was on him as to how he should speak to Eli, and a battle raged within his heart between a fear of grieving the good old man by the message, and the greater fear of grieving God by keeping any of it back. He remained still upon his bed, quietly meditating and turning over what he had heard, and thinking of what he should do. I would to God that, after every sermon, all my hearers, young and old, had a quarter of an hour alone! A night of wakeful thought over it would be better still. I am sure that what is wanted with our religious reading is time for private thought. We put into the mill more than it grinds. Some people imagine that, if they read so many chapters of the Bible every day, it will be much to their profit; but it is not so if the reading is a mere mechanical exercise. It will be far better to read a tenth as much, and weigh it, and let it take possession of brain and heart. A little food cooked is better for dinner than a great joint raw. A man who wants to see a country must not hurry through it by express train, but he must stop in the towns and villages, and see what is to be seen. He will know more about the land and its people if he walks the highways, climbs the mountains, stays in the homes, and visits the workshops, than if he does so many miles in the day, and hurries through picture-galleries as if death were pursuing him. Don't hurry through Scripture, but pause for the Lord to speak to you. Oh, for more meditation! Samuel "lay till morning." Wise child that! With such work before him for his head and his heart, he did well to lie quiet, take breath, and collect his strength.

Next, the heavenly voice made such an impression on his mind that he feared to tell it to Eli. The message was so dreadful to him that he dreaded to repeat it to him whom it most concerned. When you and I know God's word, and hear God's voice in it, it will often strike us with a

solemn awe which will quite overpower us. Jacob, when he saw the ladder and the angels, did not say in the morning, "How delightful was the vision! How happy was my dream!" That would have been like the language of shallow, superficial minds. But he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." I know that God's revelation of himself to us is calculated to fill us with intense joy; but it is even more likely to cast us down upon our faces, prostrate before his divine majesty, in solemn awe of the Lord of hosts. Remember how John puts it. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." He was the best beloved of the Lord; and yet, at the sight of our glorious Well-beloved, he had no life left in him, but he swooned at his feet. Marvel not that "the child Samuel feared"; and especially feared to show Eli the vision. I say that, when you and I hear the voice of the Lord our God, it will create in us deep emotions of fear, of joy, and of holy reverence, and we shall know of a surety that it is no little thing to hear the word of the Most High. We shall tremble at his word, yet we shall rejoice to hear it.

I would say, next, that we should store up in our memories whatever God says to us. These are not things which we can safely allow to slip. What is written in this book should be transferred to our memories. It is a good thing to learn passages of Scripture by heart, even as classical scholars treasure up the words of their favourite authors. It is a good thing to have texts of Scripture used from day to day to sweeten the breath, and then laid by in the heart to perfume the character. A mind well stored with Biblical lore will be a great cheer to us, should we live, like Eli, till our eyes are dim, and we cannot see to read. The Bible in the memory is better than the Bible in the bookcase. All that this child heard from the Lord he kept in his recollection, so that, when the time came, he could produce it "every whit"; and in after days could write it down in this his history. Oh, that you and I were able to produce "every whit" of what God has spoken to us! Alas! too often the Word has come, and it has gone, and it has left small trace behind. We have heard, and we have forgotten. God grant that, after this, whenever we hear what God the Lord shall speak, we may mark, learn, and inwardly digest the same! and then it will not depart from us, but will remain for our growth, strength, and upbuilding.

One more remark. Looking at the text in its light toward Samuel, we learn that we should be able to tell what we hear from God. We find Eli saying to Samuel, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?" If God has spoken to us, somebody or other will need to know, and will have a right to be informed. It may be that many whom we esteem will wish to know what God has spoken to us; and we must be prepared, even though it be with a measure of fear and trembling, to tell them the solemn tidings. What is whispered in our ear in the closet we may have to speak on the housetops.

Samuel did this very solemnly, with a deep sense of its weight. Children are generally eager to tell a story: they do not always consider what effect its repetition may produce. They are not able to keep a secret, but feel a pleasure in communicating what they know; but this child was now upraised by the spirit of prophecy, and became tender and thoughtful; and as it would cause Eli great anguish, he was very slow to speak. He did not open his mouth on the matter till he was adjured by Eli, and then he did it as a sacred duty. Young Christians should speak much of their Lord and his gospel. God forbid that I should hinder them! but it will be well for them to speak, not because it is pleasant, but because they must. We must tell out the divine Word because there is a woe upon us if we withhold it. We must not be flippant; but solemnly under constraint. Much zeal is very natural, but very worthless, because its source is not divine. That zeal which is kindled and sustained by a heavenly power, which makes us feel that we must speak or the very stones would cry out against us—this zeal, I say, is of an effectual kind, and the more of it the better. If I only feel that I may, or may not, tell what I think I have heard from the Lord, the probability is that I had better be silent. The true prophetic word is as fire in the bones, and it must come out; and yet when it is spoken it is with lips which a live altar-coal has blistered.

Samuel did his work very carefully and completely. We read, "and Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." He said nothing more and nothing less than God had spoken. You know how difficult it is to repeat a story correctly. You may try it at your own table, with all the good people around it. Whisper a story into the ear of the next person to you, and let it be repeated in the same fashion from one to another, and

by the time it comes round the small circle it will be quite a fresh affair. Additions and subtractions are weeds which it is hard to keep out of the garden of conversation. Alas! this holds good even of the Word of the Lord: how many add to it or take from it! But the child Samuel repeated his story correctly, because the fear of the Lord was upon him. When you do tell the gospel, tell it correctly; for it is wonderfully easy to make another gospel of it; and the tendency to do so is very powerful in these days. How many are proclaiming a mutilated gospel, and are not telling "every whit!" Some part of revelation they think too high, or too dry or too orthodox, or too something or other; and so their overweening conceit induces them to leave it out. Oh, do not so, I pray you! Samuel is to be commended that, when he had to tell Eli what God had spoken, he bated nothing. Tell out the gospel, ye ministers of Christ! Give Christ his due. Give fair proportion to each truth. Do not magnify one doctrine to the exclusion of another; but endeavor to paint the portrait of revelation with every feature in its place, and in due proportion to the rest. It is great wisdom to be able to repeat fully and faithfully what God has spoken to us. May the Holy Spirit aid us herein!

It was a very painful duty, which the holy child was called upon to perform. Samuel loved his foster father, and for him to mention the tremendous doom pronounced upon Eli's house must have caused him great grief of spirit. But he bravely repeated the dread words of the Most High. There are certain truths in God's word which we tremble to think upon. Do you dream that we have any pleasure in the doctrine of eternal punishment? We speak of the wrath to come, and the everlasting punishment which God apportions to the impenitent, with fear and trembling; but we speak of it because we cannot escape from the conviction that it is taught in the word of God. As Samuel was compelled to tell Eli of the unalterable curse that God had pronounced upon his household, so must God's faithful servants, in the discharge of their duty, speak of the doom of the wicked, and never flinch from warning them. O my hearers, He that believeth not shall be damned," is as true as that He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." We must speak all the gospel, or else the blood of souls will stain our skirts at the last great day. However painful a duty it may be, it is none the less binding upon us. But then, in Samuel's case, it was an obvious duty. It must have been clear to

the young prophet that he must tell Eli what so much concerned him. This conclusion would be reached without much reasoning. If God had spoken to Samuel, it could only be that he might tell Eli. My hearer, if the Lord has told you anything about eternal things, he has revealed it that you may hand it on. The truth is no man's private property, to be kept under lock and key, as a secret hoard for personal enrichment. Whatever thou knowest about Christ, tell it. Whatever thou knowest about salvation and sovereign grace, tell it. It is revealed to thee that thou mayest bear it aloft like a flaming torch, for the enlightening of others. God will not speak again to the man who does not spread the truth. Samuel perceived his duty clearly.

And, dear friends, to communicate the message of God was a very weighty duty to the child Samuel. Read what Eli said to him. "I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he said unto thee." My brother in the gospel, what if you and I should keep back some painful part of God's message, and God should do so to us, and more also? I cannot bear to be lost; and yet I shall be lost if I decline to warn others of their danger, and of the doom of unbelief. I cannot bear to be cast away for ever from the presence of God; yet this woe will be unto me if I preach not the gospel, and do not declare the whole counsel of God. The result of unbelief and sin in others will fall on us if we do not warn them. O sirs, if we are unfaithful, God will deal with us at the day of judgment, as he will deal with the wicked; this is an awful outlook for us. May we never dare to tone down the more severe parts of the story, and flatter men in their sins; for if we do this, God will mete out to us a portion with the condemned! If we have sown pillows for their armholes, and rocked their cradles by our smooth speech, their eternal ruin shall lie at our door. How shall we bear it when God shall "do so to us, and more also," because we kept back his message from the sons of men who so much needed it? Let us resolve, that come what will, we will keep back nothing of the truth which the Lord has entrusted to us. A false witness for God, a liar to men's souls, what sentence can be greater than his deserts? Is it possible for us to be too earnest here?

I have said enough upon the text in its first light, and I pray for practical

result from it. The Lord does speak to men; and it behoves them to hear with reverence, and make known his word with solemn fidelity and earnestness.

II. Let us now view the question as it comes FROM ELI.

I understand from Eli's question, first, that we should willingly learn, even from a child. "What! shall I, a man of seventy or eighty, learn from a child?" says one. Yes, unless you are more foolish than Eli, you may do so. Eli, with all his faults, was willing to hear what God might speak, even if he heard it from the lips of the child Samuel. How unwise people are when they will not hear a man, but make up their mind that he knows nothing! Some would not hear the most precious truth from the lips of a man whom they despise. Certain of the friars in Luther's day confessed that much of what Luther said was very true, and a reformation was certainly very much needed; but then, they would not have it from such a fellow as Luther—a renegade monk, too, who spoke so rudely! Erasmus could be endured, but Luther made such a noise about it. Teaching is often judged, not by its own value, but by the prejudices which people may happen to have concerning the source from which it comes. "I do not like him," says one. Well, what does it matter whether you like him or not? What does he say? If a thing is true, never mind who says it. Believe it. If a babe could be put into the pulpit, and it lisped out the precious gospel of Christ, its lispings would be more worth hearing than all the eloquence of men of years and name, whose object might be to overthrow men's faith. Let truth come from where it may, welcome it. If God has spoken, though it be but to a boy in knickerbockers, be ready to ask him, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said to thee?"

Next, learn from Eli that we should be willing to know the very worst of our case. Let me repeat that word: we should be willing to know the very worst of our case. I have used this expression in my own prayers many a time:—"Lord, let me know the worst of my case." I suggest it as a very excellent petition. Surely, we do not wish to be left in a fool's paradise, pleased with the idea that we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, when all the while we are naked, and poor, and miserable. We desire to be informed as to our own condition. We would

know even the frightful truth, the humbling truth, what some would even call the degrading truth—if indeed it be truth. We wish to be degraded, if to know the truth would make us feel degraded. Better in the abyss of a truth than on the summit of a falsehood. We wish to be in our own sight what we are in the sight of God. We would not be shams, hypocrites, veneered pretenders; but we would be good men and true. Dear friend, for this reason do not be angry with the minister if, when you go to hear him on the Lord's-day, his text is not a promise, or a sweet bit of doctrine, but a warning, and an exhortation, or a condemnation. Bare your back to the whip, and take your share of the lashes. If the Lord's servant has nothing to give but what comes from the bitter box, do not make wry faces over it. If he be the Lord's steward, and deals out God's truth, quarrel not with him, lest you be found contending with your Maker. Take the portion, or I might say the potion: it may be the very thing you need. If God has sent you a bitter potion, it will be better for you than the sweetest dainties the smooth-tongued flatterer could prepare. Cry to God to search you, and to make you to know your true condition as before his face.

Next, we should desire to hear the whole of God's word. We should say to our minister, "I pray thee hide it not from me. What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?" Oh, that our hearers would desire this at our hands! Ask us, yea, plead with us, to tell you all that we know of the truth; and when you have heard all that we know of the truth, search the Scriptures and find out somewhat more, that you may be well instructed in the things which make for your peace. Be like Eli, afraid to have anything kept from you, and anxious to have full information. Like Eli, we should demand faithfulness. We should say to the teacher, to the friend who is dealing with our soul, I pray thee hide it not from me; but be faithful to me." You do not go to a surgeon that he may falsely assure you that you have no wound; and I hope you do not come here that I may give you unsafe comfort, and make you feel content in sin. No, beloved, if you come aright, you say, "I go to hear the word as I go to a physician, that I may have my case truthfully described and honestly treated, by one who takes his Master's medicines out of his Master's treasures." Hear not that which makes you contented with self, but that which leads you to seek higher and better things. Let those who are foolish desire to be lulled into

the deadly slumber of delusion, but for yourselves seek after the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and love that which humbles you, and draws you nearer to your Lord.

Dear hearers, pray for us who are preachers of the gospel, that we maybe made faithful, and kept so. You know the prevailing currents of these times are toward flesh-pleasing teachings. Men aspire to be clever, and to that end they must appear to be bold thinkers, highly cultured, and far removed from the old worn-out notions of orthodoxy. Many are the floral displays in sermons! Sheaves of corn are too plain and rustic. This is the age of bouquets and wreaths of rare flowers. Paul must give way to Browning, and David to Tennyson. Brethren, there are enough in the novelty business without us; and we have something better to do. We have to give an account unto our God of what we do and say; and if we have been murderers of souls, it will be no excuse that we flourished the dagger well, or that, when we gave them poison, we mixed the draught cleverly, and presented it with poetical phrases. Pray for us that we may be clear of the blood of all men. Keep us right by saying to us, What is the thing the Lord hath said to thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me!"

III. And now, we conclude by considering the question, TO AND FROM OURSELVES. I want to put a series of questions very briefly, and with great solemnity.

Have we ever asked the Lord to speak to us? Yes, yes, my sister, I know you have; and you, my brother, you have done still more, for God has already spoken to you. But here, on Thursday evenings, are many unconverted people, and I am much rejoiced that you care to come on a week-night to such a place as this. I do not attribute your presence in every case to the highest motive, for you come to hear a preacher, of whom you have heard much talk; and at another time you will go to hear some noted orator in another place. Did you ever say to yourself, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak"? This would be a far better object than listening to human rhetoric. Have you shut yourself up in your room, or have you gone into a wood, or climbed a hill-top, or sat down by the sea, and said, "Speak to me, Lord! If there be voices out of the eternal and the unseen, here am I to hear them. In mercy speak to me"? My dear

hearer, are you God's creature, and have you never heard the voice of your Creator? Do you think yourself God's child, and do you live by the month together and never hear your Father's voice? This is pitiable—alas! it is blameworthy. I press the question home. Have you ever asked the Lord to speak to you?

Next, have we all regard what God has spoken? When we were young, on a Sabbath-day, we heard a word from the pulpit which seemed to go right through us; and there and then we wished that we could go home to our chamber to pray; and when we got home we shut our room door, and we cried out in our anxiety, because all was not right between God and our souls. But what came of it? The tears we shed, were they the tokens of coming conversion? Is it not sadly true that Monday found us at our old tricks? We had forgotten what manner of men we were. Was it not so? Is it so still with some of you? Has God spoken, and spoken, and spoken, and spoken again, and do you still act like the adder, that will not hear, though the charmer charm most wisely? Are you as the ass and as the mule which have no understanding, and need bit and bridle before you will obey your Master? The Lord have mercy upon you if it be so! If you have been brutish and obstinate, may grace subdue you.

A further question is this: Have we shaped our lives by what God has said? I know many people who read their Bibles and know what the Scripture means, but they never practice what God says to them. Among the rest they neglect that great gospel promise—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." They have neither believed nor been baptized. They are bidden to do this and that as believers; and, avowing themselves to be believers, they yet refuse to their Lord the obedience which he claims. O my hearers, to know the word of God and not to put it in practice, is to make rods for your own backs; for he that knew his Master's will and did it not, was beaten with many stripes. The more you know the more stripes will come upon you, if you have knowledge only, and not obedience. Does not this truthful word come home to some who are sitting here at this time? It ought to do so. God grant that it may lead the "hearers only" to become "doers of the word"!

Next, brethren, have we told what we know? That is a practical point. I

speak to quite a number of Christian men and women who would have to confess, "No; I am like Samuel, so far that I fear to tell Eli the vision." You were going to speak to the person who sat in the pew with you the other Sunday, and you almost got a word out, but it died on your lips. For idle words you will have to give an account. You did mean to pray with your child, mother, but you have not done it yet. What if she dies before you have done so? Good friend, you meant to speak to the man at the next bench in your workshop. Ah, you have meant to do it so many times! I had a friend, a dear friend, who is now I trust in heaven, and there was a man who used to take orders from him for goods, and bring them to him when finished. He was a good and punctual workman, but not a Christian man. Well, my friend intended—ah! he intended for years—to have a quiet conversation with that workman about his soul. One day the goods came in, but a woman brought them. She said, "I am So-and-so's wife. He finished these goods; but he is dead." My friend said that the words were like a bullet to his heart; for he had so often thought of the man, and often said to himself, "I must and will speak to him the next time he calls;" but somehow, when he came into the shop, business was brisk, and he looked over the goods and paid for them as quickly as he could, and never began a conversation. Now the man was beyond the reach of warning or instruction. Do not let it be so with any person with whom you come in contact. Do as Samuel did: tell the whole of it if they ask you to tell them, or if they do not ask you to tell them. Those who do not ask you are probably those who have the most need of your efforts. There is an art in private conversation, I believe. Certain of our dear friends are always telling out the gospel on all sides, and they seem to do it with much ease. I speak of my Lord also to individuals, but I must confess that it does not come so easy to me to speak to an individual as to preach to thousands. We must school ourselves to it. That art of buttonholing, and coming into close contact with individuals, is one that we must cultivate, and we must not be satisfied until we become expert in it; for it is one of the chief ways in which men are saved.

Lastly, there is one question which I would like to ask, and I have done. Do our children ever rebuke us? Perhaps we have no children now: they are all grown up; but possibly we have grandchildren. This Samuel was to Eli like a grandchild. His sons were grown up, and had left him; but here

was this little one brought into the temple to minister there, and the old man came to be rebuked by this little child. I have known some—perhaps they are even now present—who are godless fathers, drunken fathers; and their grandchildren are members of the church, and good, gracious, amiable, lovely, useful children, too. Grandfathers, are you going down to hell while your grandchildren are going to heaven? I charge you by the living God, before whose bar you must surely stand, look at your little ones, and hear their prayers, and hear their hymns; could you bear to be everlastingly separated from them? And, fathers, this should come home closely to you. You know that girl of yours; how you love her! and well you may. Your heart is bound up in your little daughter. She is everything a child can be to a father; but she often weeps because she tries to get you to hear the gospel, and you will not come. Sunday to you is not what it is to her; and that grieves her. You were making a rabbit-hutch last Sunday, were you not? And your child said, "Father, do come to the house of God"; but you would not come; and you pained your child. Will you bear in mind a solemn truth? If your daughter goes to the right, and you go to the left, you are probably parting for ever. It is not possible that the way of sin should end where the way of righteousness will end. Do not choose eternal separation from your dear ones who love the Lord. Do think these things over; because, on a Sabbath-day, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, some of you have to go away, and leave a wife or a dear child behind to commune at the sacred feast. Many thoughts are stirred at that dividing time. I wish that such searching of heart might arise to-night in downright earnest. There will be weeping—there will be weeping, at the judgment-seat of Christ; and if children now rebuke their Christless friends, what will be the thunder of that rebuke when they shall be caught up to the throne of the highest, and their ungodly relatives are cast out for ever into the pit prepared for the wicked? God bless you all richly, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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The Private Thoughts And Words Of Jesus

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. - Matthew 20:17-19

You have this same story in Matthew and Mark and Luke, a little differently told; as would naturally be the case when the information came from three different observers. It will be to our edification to put the three accounts together, so as to get a complete view of the incident; for each evangelist mentions something omitted by the others.

Our Lord firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem, about a fortnight before the Passover, with the view of becoming himself the Lamb of God's Passover. He had frequently quitted Jerusalem when his life had been in danger there, because his time was not yet come, and he thus set us the example of not wilfully running into danger, or braving it with foolhardiness; but now that he felt that the hour of his sacrifice was near at hand, he did not hesitate, or seek to avoid it; but he resolutely set out to meet his sufferings and his death. When he was in the highway that led to Jerusalem, he marched in front of the little band of his disciples with so vigorous and bold a step, and with such a calm, determined air of heroism upon him, that his followers were filled with astonishment (Mark 10:52). Here are the very words: "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." Knowing that, according to his own account, he was going to suffering and death; and being well assured, from their own observation, that he was about to encounter the most furious opposition, they were amazed at the dauntless courage of his mien, and wondered what made him so resolved. We read also that "they

were afraid", afraid for themselves, in a measure, but most of all afraid for him. Would not his daring lead to conflict with the powers then in authority, and might not terrible things happen both to him and to them? It was not altogether timidity, but awe which came over them: his manner was so majestic and sublime. That lowly man had a something about him which commanded the trembling reverence of his disciples. After all, meekness is imperial, and commands far more reverence than anger or pride. His followers felt that great events were about to transpire, and they were deeply sobered and filled with awe-struck apprehension. In the presence of their Lord, who seemed to be leading a forlorn hope to a fierce battle, they were afraid. They were amazed at his courage, and afraid for the consequences. They were also amazed at him, and afraid because of their own unfitness to stand in his presence. Do we not know what this feeling is? Then it was that he took the twelve aside, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him. The conversation was private. We will go aside with the chosen apostles for a little while at this time, and hear what their Lord would say to us, even as he aforetime said it to them. May the good Spirit bless our meditation!

I shall have three things to speak of; and the first will be our Lord's private communings. This will give us an insight, secondly, into our Lord's private thoughts; and when we have looked into these a little, as far as our dim eyes are able, we will then notice, in the third place, our Lord's dwelling on the details of his passion; for into those details he went with singular impressiveness. Let us not forget our need of the Holy Spirit's illumination while we come near to a place so holy as this of "The Revelation of the Passion."

I. First, then, OUR LORD'S PRIVATE COMMUNINGS. He did not say all things to all men. He spoke certain matters to his disciples only. To the outside world it was given to hear the parable; but to the disciples alone was it given to know the explanation. Not even to all the disciples did our Lord make known the whole of his teachings. He had an elect out of the elect. First came twelve out of the many and then came three out of the twelve. These three were admitted to special manifestations, which the other nine did not share. As if to carry the principle of election to the utmost extent, one was chosen out of the three, who enjoyed a peculiar

personal love, and leaned his head upon his Lord's bosom, as the other two never did. We are happy to be admitted, by the key of inspiration, into the inner chamber of our Lord's private conferences.

On this occasion, our Lord's communings were with the leaders of his band. Those who have to lead others need more instruction than the rest. It needs more grace to lead than to follow. No man can give out what he has not received. If you are to be a fountain of living waters to others, you must be filled yourself from the fullness of God. Dear brethren and sisters, you whom the Lord has chosen to be vessels of mercy to others, take care that you wait much upon him yourselves, and are much with him in secret retirement. Live near to God, that you may bring others near. I remember sitting, one rainy day, in an inn, at Cologne, looking out of a window upon a square. There was not much to see, but what was to see I did see, as I occasionally looked up from my writing. I saw a man coming to a pump that stood in the middle of the square, and from that pump he filled a vessel. A little while after, I saw the same man again filling his buckets. All that morning I saw no one else, but only that one water-loving individual man, filling his buckets again and again. I thought to myself, "What can he be? Why is he always drawing water?" Then I perceived that he was a water-carrier, a bearer of water to families in the adjoining streets. Well might he often come to the fountain himself, since he was supplying others. You that are water-carriers for thirsty souls must needs come often to the living water yourselves, and be thankful that your Master is always willing to meet you, and give you rich supplies. He graciously waits to take you apart in the way, and speak to you things which you need to hear and tell. Take care that you hear well that which you are commissioned to publish to all the world. Take good note of this, ye who instruct others: neglect not the yielding of your ear to your Lord quite as completely as your tongue. Hear him that you may speak of him. Be ye sure that ye are much with your Lord alone, that you may have him much with you in public.

When our Lord, on this occasion, spoke to the twelve, the time was significant: it was on the way to a great trial. To him his coming suffering was the sum of all trial. He was about to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our

peace was about to fall upon him, that with his stripes we might be healed. But it was to be a time of great trial to the disciples also. Inasmuch as they loved their Lord, they would sympathize with his sufferings and death. Inasmuch as they trusted in him, it would be a sharp trial to their faith to see him dying on the cross, vanquished by his remorseless enemies. Inasmuch as they loved his company, they would weep and lament, and feel like orphaned children when he was taken from them. Therefore they must be favored with a special private interview, to prepare them for the coming ordeal. Have you never noticed how our Lord, before the coming to us of a great tribulation, strengthens our hearts by some heavenly visitation? Either before or after affliction, it has happened to me to enjoy very special manifestations of the Well-Beloved. At such junctures he brings us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us is love, that we may go down to the battle like men refreshed by a feast. He gives us a joyful bracing up, that we may be ready for to-morrow's stern service. I feel that it is so; and I pray that each of you may know, by personal experience, how wise is your Redeemer's foresight; and how, by the communion apart, he prepares us for that which we are to meet at the end of the way. A drink from the brook of fellowship by the way will make you ready for the heat of the conflict. A word from his myrrh-dropping lips will perfume the air, even of the valley of death-shade. Speak to us, Lord, and we will not heed the howlings of the dog of hell.

When our Master thus took the twelve apart, we may say of his conversation, that it was upon choice themes. Our Lord's converse is always holy and suitable for the occasion. He spoke to them of the Scriptures. Luke says, "He took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." Blessed theme—the Word of the Lord by his prophets and the fulfillment thereof. Have you never noticed how our divine Lord delights to speak upon the Scriptures? How often does he enforce his teaching by "as the scripture hath said"! If he has only two of them, and they are walking on the road, we read, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Communion with Christ Jesus must be based on the Word of the Lord. If you speak

half a word derogatory of holy Scripture, your fellowship will evaporate. Men talk about building upon Christ, and not upon the Scriptures; but they know not what they say; for our Lord continually established his own claims by appealing to Moses and the prophets. They would be Christocentric, they say: I only wish they would. But if they take Christ for a center, they will inevitably have the Scriptures for a center too; and these men neither want the one nor the other. They care nothing for the center; they only want to do away with the circumference, that they may roam at their own proud wills. Our Lord made the written Word to be the reason for many of his acts: he did this, and he did not do that, because of what the Scriptures had said. He comes not to take away the law and the prophets, yea, not a jot or a tittle does he destroy, so careful is he of the Scriptures of truth. We learn from him to believe not only in inspired words, but in inspired jots and tittles. They that have been much with Christ always show a profound reverence for the Word of God. I have never yet met with a person worthy to be called a saint who did not love and revere the inspired Book. I have heard in the last days the newly-coined word "bibliolatry", which is meant to set forth the imaginary crime of worshipping the Bible. I know not who may be guilty of the offense: I have never met with such idolaters. When I do, I will try to show them their error; at present I am too much occupied with the enemies of the Bible to think much of its too ardent friends, if such there be. While the word may be used in an accusation against us, it most surely is a confession on the part of those who use it that they see nothing special about the Scriptures, and are angry with those who do. Let them speak as they will, O Lord, "my heart standeth in awe of thy Word." I would be numbered with the men who tremble at thy Word. The words of the Holy Ghost are more than words to me. I tremble lest I should sin against him by sinning against them. I would not take away a word from the Book of this prophecy, nor add thereunto; but let it stand as it is; for here it is that Jesus meets us and communes with us. He opens the Scriptures to our understanding, and then he opens our understanding to receive the Scriptures. He makes us hear his voice in these chapters; yea, we see himself in them.

"Here I behold my Savior's face
Almost in every page."

We cannot look up to heaven and see Jesus amid the celestial splendours; but he lovingly looks down from the throne of his glory into the looking-glass of the Word, and when we look into it we see the sweet reflection of his face. As in a mirror, his countenance is displayed by Scripture. O believers, love the Word of God! Prize every letter of it, and be prepared to answer the cold, carping words of critics, who know nothing of the benediction which comes to us through every line of inspiration. These are they who would cruelly divide the living child, for it does not belong to them; but we will have no sword come near it, for it is our love: it is life and bliss to us. Our Lord, in his most private intercourse with our souls, speaks in, and by, and through the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Ghost.

But the chief theme that our Lord dwelt upon was his own suffering even unto death. Beloved, our Lord Jesus has said many delightful things; and let him say what he will, his voice is as angels' music to our ear; but from the cross his voice is richest in consolation. We never come so near to Jesus—at least, such is my experience—as when we gaze upon his bloody sweat, or see him robed in shame, crowned with thorns, and enthroned upon the cross. Our Lord's incomparable beauties are most visible amid his griefs. When I see him on the cross I feel that I must borrow Pilate's words, and cry, "Behold the man!" Covered with his own blood from the scourging, and about to be led away to be crucified between two thieves, you look into his inmost heart, and behold what manner of love he bore towards guilty men. We know not Christ till he putteth on his crimson garments. I know not my beloved when he is only to me as the snow-white lily for purity; but when, in his wounding, he is red as the rose, then I perceive him. "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." A suffering Savior bears the palm for me: a wounded Savior is my Lord and my God. The lower he went for my redemption, the higher does he rise in my soul's loving esteem. He saw this when he said, "I, if I be lifted up"; for indeed it was a lifting up for him to die upon the cruel gibbet. To the wondering universe the Son of God is lifted to a height of wondering admiration, by his becoming obedient unto death, out of love to his chosen. He is lifted up in every grateful heart, and shall be lifted up for ever. Our fellowship with Jesus largely flows along the great deep of

his suffering; and to me, at least, it is then deepest, truest, and sweetest.

Our Lord talked to the twelve of his sufferings in great detail, of which we will speak further on; but he did not shrink from dwelling upon his death, nor did he stop there, but foretold his rising again. In each of the three accounts he appears to end the story of his passion by saying that on the third day he would rise again from the dead. That was a glorious climax—"The third day he shall rise again." Oh, that blessed doctrine of the resurrection! If our Lord's record ended at the cross, it might drive us to despair; but he is declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. That he was raised from the dead makes us see the merit, the power, the great reward of his death. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, even he will make us perfect in every good work to do his will. Whenever the Master comes very near to us in his gracious condescension, he shows us not only that he shed his blood for us, but that he rose again, and ever liveth to carry on our cause. When you worship most closely, you will worship him that lived, and died, and rose again, and now liveth for ever and ever. This is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not a teacher only, or a bright example merely; but one whose death is the source of our salvation, and whose resurrection and eternal glory are the guarantee and foretaste of our everlasting bliss. A living, dying, risen Christ is one with whom we have joyful fellowship; and if we know him not in this character, we do not know him at all.

Furthermore, he conversed with them upon their share in all this. They were one with him in that which would befall him. He says, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem." True, they would have no share in the scourging, and the spitting, and the crucifixion. He must tread that winepress alone. But yet they would with him carry the cross in the near future, and with him deny themselves during the rest of their lives. Henceforward, it would not be only Jesus the Lord who would bear witness for God and righteousness, but the followers of the Crucified One would unite in testimony to the same truth, for the same great purpose. It was well for him to speak to them on such a practical theme: they would be cheered and comforted on after days when they remembered that he had told them of these things. He will draw us into very intimate communion if we

are willing to take up his cross and bear his reproach. We lose much when we quit the separated path because it is rough, for we lose our Lord's sweet company. Oh, for grace to love the rough paths, because we see his footprints upon them!

They listened to this private talk, but we are told by Luke that it was very much lost upon them, because they did not understand him. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Yet, say you, "it was very simple." Possibly that is why they did not understand it. Numbers of people imagine that they understand mysteries, and yet the simplicities of the faith are hid from their eyes because they are gazing after abstruse doctrines. They search after difficult things and miss the plain truth. We groan as we wantonly dive into a profound abyss; and yet we stand confounded over a little transparent stream, which, to wade through, would bring us bliss. When our Lord told the twelve that he would die, they imagined that it was a parable, concealing some deep mystery. They looked at one another, and they tried to fathom where there was no depth, but where the truth lay on the surface. The deep things of God thousands will pry into; but yet these are not saving matters, nor are they of any great practical value. Fixed fate, free-will, predestination, prophecy, and the like, these have small bearings upon our salvation from sin; but in the death of our Lord lies the kernel of the matter. Beloved, when we try to commune with Jesus, let us wear the garments of simplicity. It is the serpent who trades in subtlety, but I would have you remember "the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus." There is in him a depth which we cannot fathom; but his every word is pure truth, and those things which are necessary are made so plain that he who runs may read, and he who reads may run. Believe him to mean what he says, and take his promises as they stand, and his precepts in their plain meaning; and, oh, if we do this, we shall be made greatly wise! Do not confuse your minds with doctrinal riddles nor amuse your souls with spiritual conundrums; but believe in him who is Jesus, the faithful and true, who makes known to us the heart of the Father. Believe that he died in our stead. Believe that he took our sin upon him, and carried it all away. Believe that we are justified through his resurrection, and are made to live because he lives. Hypotheses and critical doubts we may leave to the

dogs that first sniffed them out; but as for us, we will be as children who eat the bread their Father gives them, and ask no questions as to the field in which the wheat was reaped, and raise no debates as to the mill at which the corn was ground.

Thus, you see, the private conversations of our Lord with the twelve dealt with his sufferings and death, and his communications come home to our hearts in proportion as we are prepared to receive them in childlike simplicity.

II. Secondly, we will now turn our minds to THE PRIVATE THOUGHTS OF OUR LORD JESUS. We shall not be presumptuous if we humbly enquire—What were the thoughts of our Lord at the time? When he had called them quite apart, and spoken to them, we may be quite sure that what he said to them was the outcome of his innermost meditations.

Our Lord was forecasting his death in all its mournful details. Do you not know that frequently it is more painful to anticipate death than it is actually to die? Yet our Lord dwelt upon his sufferings, even to their minutiae. A person was speaking to me the other day of a painful operation which he was bound to undergo. There was no probability that he could get into the hospital for another month or two, and he remarked that he greatly wished that the operation could have been performed sooner; "for", said he, "it is so painful to be looking forward to a matter so distressing. Let it be soon", was his cry. Our Lord was like a grain of wheat which is cast into the ground, and lies there awhile before it dies. He was buried, as it were, in prospective agony; immersed in suffering, which he foresaw. In the thought of the cross he endured it before he felt the nails. The shadow of his death was upon him before he reached the tree of doom. Yet he did not put away the thought, but dwelt upon it as one who tastes a cup before he drinks it to the dregs. After so deliberate a testing, is it not all the more marvellous that he did not refuse the draught?

Did he not remember his engagement to go through with our redemption? "Lo, I come", said he: "in the volume of the Book it is written of me." He had pledged himself by solemn covenant, and in the

Book it was written that he would stand in our stead, and give his life an offering for sin. From this suretiship he never departed. He knew that the Father would bruise him and put him to grief in the approaching day of his anger. He knew that the wicked would pierce his hands and his feet. He knew all that would occur, and he started not back from the pledge which he had given in the council chamber of eternity that his life should be rendered up as a ransom for many. It were well if we also remembered our vows to God, and the obligations under which we are placed by his great love.

Our Lord's thoughts took the form of a resolution to do the Father's will to the end. He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Nothing could make him look aside. He had undertaken, and he would go through with it. Unless it should prove possible for us to be saved otherwise, he would not set aside that cup which his Father had given him to drink. The thought of our perishing he could not bear: that was not to be tolerated. He would suffer all imaginable and unimaginable woe sooner than desert the cause he had espoused. He was straitened—so he described it—straitened till his labor was accomplished. He was like a man pent up against his will: he longed to be discharging his tremendous task. He had an awful work to do, an agonizing suffering to bear, and he felt fettered until he could be at it: "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He was as a hostage bound for others, longing to be set free. He longed to be bearing the penalty to which he had voluntarily subjected himself by his covenant suretiship. He therefore thought upon that "obedience unto death" which he was determined and resolved to render.

He had an eye all the while to you and to me. While he was thinking of death he was chiefly regarding those for whom he would suffer. I doubt not that there flashed before that mighty mind the individuals who make up the vast host of his redeemed; and among them there were insignificant individuals, such as we are. Out of his strong love to us, even to us, he determined to pay our ransom price in death: it was part of his solace that he would deliver you and me. "He loved me, and gave himself for me." He made a voluntary offering of himself for me, before he actually died; often and often surrendering himself in purpose, before the cross was reared for the actual offering up of his body once for all.

Then there came into his mind, also, the thought of the grand sequel of it all. He should rise again. On the third day, it would all be over, and the recompense would begin. A few hours of bitter grief; a night of bloody sweat, a night and a morning of mockery, when he should be flouted by the abjects, and made nothing of by the profane; a direful afternoon of deadly anguish on the cross, and of dark desertion by Jehovah; and then the bowing of the head, and a little rest in the grave for his body; and on the third day the light would break upon mankind, for the Sun of righteousness would arise with healing in his wings. The light that would come when he should rise would lighten the Gentiles, and be the glory of his people Israel. He would then have said, "It is finished", and he would shortly afterward ascend to reap his reward in personal glorification, and in receiving gifts for men—yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Surely our Lord's thoughts were all the while upon his Father! He remembered ever the beloved Father to whom he was to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That twenty-second psalm, which might well be our Lord's on the Cross, is full of God: it is an appeal to God. As our Lord went on his way with the twelve, conversing upon the road, they must have seen that he was in close communion with God. There was about him a deep solemnity of spirit a rapt communion with the Unseen, a heavenly walking with God, even beyond his usual wont. This, mixed with his deeply-fixed resolve, and that stern joy which only they can feel who are resolved to accomplish a great purpose through bowing to the divine will, let it cost what it may. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus was everything to him, and in all his acts his heart was set upon Jehovah's glory.

I wish that I had time for my subject, but it is overwhelming me. I can only open the door, and bid you look into the private thoughts of him whose thoughts are priceless gems, whereas yours and mine are as the pebbles of the brook. What meditations were his! How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O Christ! How great is the sum of them! Wonderful things didst thou ponder in thy soul on those days of thy nearing passion!

III. Now we will have a few moments as to OUR LORD'S DWELLING ON DETAILS. I do not want to preach. I wish to be a kind of fugleman for your thoughts, just setting the example by thinking first that you may follow. May the sacred Spirit now lead you quietly into the points upon which our Lord so calmly enlarged!

Note well what our Lord said about his sufferings. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed." Stop there: "Betrayed"! It is as though I heard the deep boom of a death-knell. "Betrayed"! "Betrayed"! To die, ay, that is not a word with a sting in it to him! But "Betrayed"!—that means sold by cruel treachery. It means that one who ate bread with him lifted up his heel against him. It means that a man who was his familiar acquaintance, with whom he walked to the house of God in company, sold him for a paltry bribe. "Betrayed, for thirty pieces of silver! A goodly price, indeed, for the blood of such a friend! "Betrayed"! Hear how he cries: "If it was an enemy, then I could have borne it." "Betrayed"! It was no stranger; it was no bloodhound of the Pharisees who scented him out in the garden; but "Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place." Betrayed with a kiss, and with a friendly word! Handed over to them who sought his blood by one who ought to have defended him to the death. "Betrayed"! It is a dreadful word to be set here before the passion, and it throws a lurid light over it all. We read—"The same night in which he was betrayed he took bread." This was the bitterest drop in his cup, that he was betrayed.

And still is he betrayed! If the gospel dies in England, write on its tomb, "Betrayed." If our churches lose their holy influence among men, write on them, "Betrayed." What care we for infidels? What care we for those who curse and blaspheme? They cannot hurt the Christ. His wounds are those which he receives in the house of his friends. "Betrayed"! O Savior, some of us have been betrayed; but ours was a small sorrow compared with thine; for thou wast betrayed into the hands of sinners by one who claimed to be thy friend, by one who was bound by every tie to have been thy faithful follower. "Betrayed"! Beloved, I cannot bear the word. It falls like a flake of fire into my bosom, and burns its way into my inmost soul. "Betrayed"! And such a faithful friend as he! So full of love; and yet

betrayed!

Read on. "The Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes." The chief priests ought to have been his best defenders always. They were the leaders of the religion of the day: these chief priests were the guides of Israel. When Israel bowed before the Lord, the chief priests presented the sacrifice. Yet these were our Lord's most bitter enemies: by their malice he was condemned, and crucified. It is hard to have the professed servants of God against you. The scribes, too, those Bible writers and Bible interpreters; these also were fierce against him. From the hands of scribes he would have less mercy than from soldiers. I said, the other Sabbath-day, what I now repeat: I would rather be bitten by wolves than by sheep. It is wretched work to have those against you who are reckoned to be the best men of the time. It was little to him to have Herod against him, or Pilate, and the Romans as his foes, for they knew no better; but it was heartrending work to see the men of the Sanhedrim, the men of prayers and phylacteries, the men of the temple and of the synagogue, arrayed against him. Yet into their hands he falls! Good Master, thou art delivered into the hands of men who know no mercy, for they hate thee for thy faithful words! They can compromise, and thou canst not; they can trifle with language, and thou canst not; they can play the hypocrite, and that thou canst not do!

Read on: "and they shall condemn him to death." They did not leave the sentence of condemnation to the Romans, but themselves passed sentence upon their victim. The priests, whose office made them types of himself, and the scribes, who were the official interpreters of his Father's Book, these condemned the holy One and the just. They count him worthy of death: nothing less will serve their turn. This the Christ could plainly see; and it was no small trial to come under the censure of his country's governors. They could not put him to death themselves. If they dared they would have stoned him, and that would have broken the prophecy, which declared that in death his enemies must pierce his hands and his feet. They can condemn him to death, but they cannot execute the sentence. Yet none the less this iron entered into his soul, that those who were professedly the servants of God condemned him to die. If you have ever tasted of this cup you know that it has wormwood in it.

Notice, further: "and shall deliver him to the Gentiles." In our Master's death all men conspired: not half the world, but all of it, must have a hand in the tragedy of Calvary. The Gentile must come in. He takes his share in this iniquity, for Pilate condemns him to the cross. The chief priests hand him over to Pilate, and he commits him to the Roman soldiery, that they may do the cruel deed. They "delivered him to the Gentiles." The Master dwells on this. It opens another gate through which his sorrows poured. At the hands of the Gentiles he dies, and for Gentiles he suffered. Beloved, I like to see how the Master notes this point. He makes distinctions; he does not say that he should be condemned by Pilate; but he is condemned to die by the chief priests, and then he is delivered to the Gentiles. He sees it all, and dwells upon the points of special interest. O believer, behold thy Lord bound and taken away to the hall of Pilate. See him delivered to the Gentiles, while his fellow-countrymen cry, "We have no king but Caesar"! They shout, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and the Gentiles carry out their cruel demand. Unanimity among our persecutors must add greatly to the sting of their unkindness.

These three words follow—"To mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him." Mark puts in, "To spit upon him." That was a sad part of the mockery. What dreadful scorning he endured! from the Jews when they blindfolded him, and buffeted him; and from the Gentiles when they put on him a purple robe, and thrust a reed into his hand, and bowed the knee, and cried before him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They plucked his hair, they smote his cheeks, they spat in his face. Mockery could go no farther. It was cruel, cutting, cursed scorn. Ridicule sometimes breaks hearts that are hardened against pain; and the Christ had to bear all the ridicule that human minds could invent. They were maliciously witty. They jested at his person; they jested at his prayers. They mocked him when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Herein is grief immeasurable, and the Savior foresaw it, and spoke about it.

That was not all: they scourged him. I will not harrow your hearts by trying to describe scourging as it existed among the Romans. The scourge was an infamous instrument of torture. It is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen, intertwined with the hucklebones of sheep, and slivers of

bone; so that every time the lashes fell, they ploughed the back, and laid bare the white bones of the shoulders. It was an anguish more cruel than the grave; but our Lord endured it to the full. They mocked him and they scourged him; he dwells upon each separate item. Some of our most touching hymns upon our Lord's passion are spoken of by the cold-blooded critics of to-day as sensuous. "I cannot bear", says one, "to hear so much about the physical agonies of Christ." Beloved, we must preach the physical agonies of Christ more than ever, because this is an age of affectation, in which his mental and spiritual griefs are no more apprehended than those of his body. The device is to be rid of his sufferings altogether. This age is as fond of physical pleasure as any that has gone before it, and it must be made to know that physical pain was a great ingredient in the cup which our Lord drank for man's redemption. Very many are so unspiritual, that they will never be reached by high-soaring language, appealing to a delicacy which they do not possess. We must exhibit the bleeding Savior, if we would make men's hearts bleed for sin. The cries of his great grief must ring in their ears, or they will remain deaf. Let us not be ashamed to dwell upon points upon which the Lord himself dwelt.

Then he adds, "to crucify him." Here I will come to a pause. Behold him! Behold him! His hands are extended and cruelly nailed to the wood. His feet are fastened to the tree, and he himself is left to bear the weight of his body upon his hand and feet. See how the nails tear through the flesh as the weight drags the body down and enlarges the wounds! See, he is in a fever! His mouth is dried up and has become like an oven, and his tongue cleaves to the roof thereof! Crucifixion was an inhuman death, and the Savior was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The wonder is, that he could foresee this, and speak of it so calmly. He meditates upon it, and speaks to choice familiar friends about it. Oh, the mastery of love, strong as death! He contemplates the cross, and despises its shame.

Thus he dwells on it all, and then closes by saying, "and the third day he shall rise again." We must never forget that, for he never forgets it. Ah! you may think as much as ever you will of Calvary, and let your tears flow like rivers. You may sit at Gethsemane, and say, "Oh, that my head were

waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for my Lord!" But, after all, you must wipe those tears away, for he is not in the grave; he rose again on the third day. O blessed morning! not to be celebrated by an Easter once in the year; but to be commemorated on every first day of the week, more than fifty times in each year. Every seven days that the sun shines upon us brings us a new record of his resurrection. We may sing every Lord's-day morning—

"To-day he rose and left the dead,
And Satan's empire fell:
To-day the saints his triumph spread,
And all his wonders tell."

The first day of the week stands for ever the remembrance of our risen Lord, and on that day he renews his special communings with his people. We believe in him; we rise in him; we triumph in him; and "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Thus, you see, I have not preached my own thoughts, but I have set you thinking. Treasure these thoughts in your minds. All this week sweeten your souls with the sacred spices of our Lord's thoughts and words when near his death. God bless this meditation to you by his Holy Spirit!

If you have never believed in him, may you believe in him at once! Why delay? He is able to save unto the uttermost, believe in him just now. And if you have believed, keep on believing, and let your believing grow more intense. Think more of Jesus, and love him more, and serve him more, and grow more like him. Peace be unto you for his dear sake! Amen.

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Prodigal Love For The Prodigal Son

And kissed him. - Luke 15:20

In the Revised Version, if you will kindly look at the margin, you will find that the text there reads, "And kissed him much." This is a very good translation of the Greek, which might bear the meaning, "Kissed him earnestly," or "Kissed him eagerly," or "Kissed him often." I prefer to have it in very plain language, and therefore adopt the marginal reading of the Revised Version, "Kissed him much," as the text of my sermon, the subject of which will be, the overflowing love of God toward the returning sinner.

The first word "and" links us on to all that had gone before. The parable is a very familiar one, yet it is so full of sacred meaning that it always has some fresh lesson for us. Let us, then, consider the preliminaries to this kissing. On the son's side there was something, and on the father's side much more. Before the prodigal son received these kisses of love, he had said in the far country, "I will arise and go to my father." He had, however, done more than that, else his father's kiss would never have been upon his cheek. The resolve had become a deed: "He arose, and came to his father." A bushful of resolutions is of small value; a single grain of practice is worth the whole. The determination to return home is good; but it is when the wandering boy begins the business of really carrying out the good resolve, that he draws near the blessing. If any of you here present have long been saying, "I will repent; I will turn to God"; leave off resolving, and come to practicing; and may God in His mercy lead you both to repent and to believe in Christ!

Before the kisses of love were given, this young man was on his way to his father; but he would not have reached him unless his father had come the major part of the way. When you give God an inch, He will give you an ell. If you come a little way to Him, when you are "yet a great way off" He will run to meet you. I do not know that the prodigal saw his father, but his father saw him. The eyes of mercy are quicker than the eyes of repentance. Even the eyes of our faith is dim compared with the eye of God's love. He sees a sinner long before a sinner sees Him.

I do not suppose that the prodigal travelled very fast. I should imagine that he came very slowly—

"With heavy heart and downcast eye,
With many a sob and many a sigh."

He was resolve to come, yet he was half afraid. But we read that his father ran. Slow are the steps of repentance, but swift are the feet of forgiveness. God can run where we scarcely limp, and if we are limping towards Him, He will run towards us. These kisses were given in a hurry; the story is narrated in a way that almost makes us realize that such was the case: there is a sense of haste in the very wording of it. His father "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him"—kissed him eagerly. He did not delay a moment; for though he was out of breath, he was not out of love. "He fell on his neck, and kissed him much." There stood his son ready to confess his sin; therefore did his father kiss him all the more. The more willing thou art to own thy sin, the more willing is God to forgive thee. When thou dost make a clean breast of it, God will soon make a clear record of it. He will wipe out the sin that thou dost willingly acknowledge and humbly confess before Him. He that was willing to use his lips for confession, found that his father was willing to use his lips for kissing him.

See the contrast. There is the son, scarcely daring to think of embracing his father, yet his father has scarcely seen him before he has fallen on his neck. The condescension of God towards penitent sinners is very great. He seems to stoop from His throne of glory to fall upon the neck of a repentant sinner. God on the neck of a sinner! What a wonderful picture! Can you conceive it? I do not think you can; but if you cannot imagine it, I hope that you will realize it. When God's arm is about our neck, and His lips are on our cheek, kissing us much, then we understand more than preachers or books can ever tell us of His condescending love.

The father "saw" his son. There is a great deal in that word, "saw." He saw who it was; saw where he had come from; saw the swineherd's dress; saw the filth upon his hands and feet; saw his rags; saw his penitent look; saw what he had been; saw what he was; and saw what he would soon be. "His father saw him." God has a way of seeing men and women that you and I cannot understand. He sees right through us at a glance, as if we were made of glass; He sees all our past, present and future.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." It was not with icy eyes that the father looked on his returning son. Love leaped into them, and as he beheld him, he "had compassion on him"; that is, he felt for him. There was no anger in his heart toward his son; he had nothing but pity for his poor boy, who had got into such a pitiable condition. It was true that it was all his own fault, but that did not come before his father's mind. It was the state that he was in, his poverty, his degradation, that pale face of his so wan with hunger, that touched his father to the quick. And God has compassion on the woes and miseries of men. They may have brought their troubles on themselves, and they have indeed done so; but nevertheless God has compassion upon them. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."

We read that the father "ran." The compassion of God is followed by swift movements. He is slow to anger, but He is quick to bless. He does not take any time to consider how He shall show His love to penitent prodigals; that was all done long ago in the eternal covenant. He has no need to prepare for their return to Him; that was done on Calvary. God comes flying in the greatness of His compassion to help every poor penitent soul.

"On cherub and on cherubim,
Full royalty He rode;
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."

And when He comes, He comes to kiss. Master Trapp says that, if we had read that the father had kicked his prodigal son, we should not have been very much astonished. Well, I should have been very greatly astonished, seeing that the father in the parable was to represent God. But still, his son deserved all the rough treatment that some heartless men might have given; and had the story been that of a selfish human father only, it might have been written that "as he was coming near, his father ran at him, and kicked him." There are such fathers in the world, who seem as if they cannot forgive. If he had kicked him, it would have been no more than he had deserved. But no, what is written in the Book stands true for all time,

and for every sinner,—"He fell on his neck, and kissed him"; kissed him eagerly, kissed him much.

What does this much kissing mean? It signifies that, when sinners come to God, He gives them a loving reception, and a hearty welcome. If any one of you, while I am speaking, shall come to God, expecting mercy because of the great sacrifice of Christ, this shall be true of you as it has been true of many of us: "He kissed him much."

I. First, this much kissing means MUCH LOVE. It means much love truly felt; for God never gives an expression of love without feeling it in His infinite heart. God will never give a Judas-kiss, and betray those whom He embraces. There is no hypocrisy with God; He never kisses those for whom He has no love. Oh, how God loves sinner! You who repent, and come to Him, will discover how greatly He loves you. There is no measuring the love He bears towards you. He has loved you before the foundation of the world, and He will love you when time shall be no more. Oh, the immeasurable love of God to sinners who come and cast themselves upon His mercy!

This much kissing also means much love manifested. God's people do not always know the greatness of His love to them. Sometimes, however, it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Some of us know at times what it is to be almost too happy to live! The love of God has been so overpoweringly experienced by us on some occasions, that we have almost had to ask for a stay of the delight because we could not endure any more. If the glory had not been veiled a little, we should have died of excess of rapture, or happiness. Beloved, God has wondrous ways of opening His people's hearts to the manifestation of His grace. He can pour in, not now and then a drop of His love, but great and mighty streams. Madame Guyon used to speak of the torrents of love that come sweeping through the spirit, bearing all before them. The poor prodigal in the parable had so much love manifested to him, that he might have sung of the torrents of his father's affection. That is the way God receives those whom He saves, giving them not a meagre measure of grace, but manifesting an overflowing love.

This much kissing means, further, much love perceived. When his father kissed him much, the poor prodigal knew, if never before, that his father loved him. He had no doubt about it; he had a clear perception of it. It is very frequently the case that the first moment a sinner believes in Jesus, he gets this "much" love. God reveals it to him, and he perceives it and enjoys it at the very beginning. Think not that God always keeps the best wine to the last; He gives us some of the richest dainties of His table the first moment we sit there. I recollect the joy that I had when first I believed in Jesus; and, even now, in looking back upon it, the memory of it is as fresh as if it were but yesterday. Oh, I could not have believed that a mortal could be so happy after having been so long burdened, and so terribly cast down! I did but look to Jesus on the cross, and the crushing load was immediately gone; and the heart which could only sigh and cry by reason of its burden, began to leap and dance and sing for joy. I had found in Christ all that I wanted, and rested in the love of God at once. So may it be with you also, if you will but return to God through Christ. It shall be said of you as of this prodigal, "The father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him in much love."

II. Secondly, this much kissing meant MUCH FORGIVENESS. The prodigal had many sins to confess; but before he came to the details of them, his father had forgiven him. I love confession of sin after forgiveness. Some suppose that after we are forgiven we are never to confess; but, oh, beloved, it is then that we confess most truly, because we know the guilt of sin most really! Then do we plaintively sing—

"My sins, my sins, my Saviour,
How sad on Thee they fall!
Seen through Thy gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all,
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."

To think that Christ should have washed me from my sins in His own blood, makes me feel my sin the more keenly, and confess it the more

humbly before God. The picture of this prodigal is marvelously true to the experience of those who return to God. His father kissed him with the kiss of forgiveness; and yet, after that, the young man went on to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Do not hesitate, then, to acknowledge your sin to God, even though you know that in Christ it is all put away.

From this point of view, those kisses meant, first, "Your sin is all gone, and will never be mentioned any more. Come to my heart, my son! Thou hast grieved me sore, and angered me; but, as a thick cloud, I have blotted out thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."

As the father looked upon him, and kissed him much, there probably came another kiss, which seemed to say, "There is no soreness left: I have not only forgiven, but I have forgotten too. It is all gone, clean gone. I will never accuse you of it any more. I will never love you any the less. I will never treat you as though you were still an unworthy and untrustworthy person." Probably at that there came another kiss; for do not forget that his father forgave him "and kissed him much," to show that the sin was all forgiven.

There stood the prodigal, overwhelmed by his father's goodness, yet remembering his past life. As he looked on himself, and thought, "I have these old rags on still, and I have just come from feeding the swine," I can imagine that his father would give him another kiss, as much as to say, "My boy, I do not recollect the past; I am so glad to see you that I do not see any filth on you, or any rags on you either. I am so delighted to have you with me once more that, as I would pick up a diamond out of the mire, and be glad to get the diamond again, so do I pick you up, you are so precious to me." This is the gracious and glorious way in which God treats those who return to Him. As for their sin, He has put it away so that He will not remember it. He forgives like a God. Well may we adore and magnify His matchless mercy as we sing—

"In wonder lost, with trembling joy
We take the pardon of our God;
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye;

A pardon bought with Jesus' blood;
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

"Well," says one, "can such a wonderful change ever take place with me?" By the grace of God it may be experienced by every man who is willing to return to God. I pray God that it may happen now, and that you may get such assurance of it from the Word of God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, and from a sight of the precious blood of Christ shed for your redemption, that you may be able to say, "I understand it now; I see how He kisses all my sin away; and when it rises, He kisses it away again; and when I think of it with shame, He gives me another kiss; and when I blush all over at the remembrance of my evil deeds, he kisses me again and again, to assure me that I am fully and freely forgiven." Thus the many kisses from the prodigal's father combined to make his wayward son feel that his sin was indeed all gone. They revealed much love and much forgiveness.

III. These repeated kisses meant, next, FULL RESTORATION. The prodigal was going to say to his father, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." In the far country he had resolved to make that request, but his father with a kiss, stopped him. By that kiss, his sonship was owned; by it the father said to the wretched wanderer, "You are my son." He gave him such a kiss as he would only give to his own son. I wonder how many here have ever given such a kiss to anyone. There sits one who knows something of such kisses as the prodigal received. That father's girl went astray, and, after years of sin, she came back worn out, to die at home. He received her, found her penitent, and gladly welcomed her to his house. Ah, my dear friend, you know something about such kisses as these! And you, good woman, whose boy ran away, you can understand something about these kisses, too. He left you, and you did not hear of him for years, and he went on in a very vicious course of life. When you did hear of him, it well-nigh broke your heart, and when he came back, you hardly knew him. Do you recollect how you took him in? You felt that you wished that he was the little boy you used to press to your bosom; but now he was grown up to be a big man and a great sinner, yet you gave him such a kiss, and repeated your welcome so often, that he will never forget it, nor will

you forget it either. You can understand that this overwhelming greeting was like the father saying, "My boy, you are my son. Despite all that you have done, you belong to me; however far you have gone in vice and folly, I own you. You are bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." In this parable Christ would have you know, poor sinner, that God will own you, if you come to Him confessing your sin through Jesus Christ. He will gladly receive you; for all things are ready against the day you return.

"Spread for thee the festal board,
See with richest dainties stored,
To thy Father's bosom pressed,
Yet again a child confessed;
Never from his house to roam,
Come and welcome, sinner, come."

The father received his son with many kisses and so proved that his prayer was answered. Indeed, his father heard his prayer before he offered it. He was going to say, "Father, I have sinned," and to ask for forgiveness; but he got the mercy, and a kiss to seal it, before the prayer was presented. This also shall be true of thee, O sinner, who art returning to thy God, through Jesus Christ! You shall be permitted to pray, and God will answer you. Hear it, poor, despairing sinner, whose prayer has seemed to be shut out from heaven! Come to your Father's bosom now, and He will hear your prayers; and, before many days are over, you shall have the clearest proofs that you are fully restored to the divine favour by answers to your intercessions that shall make you marvel at the Lord's loving-kindness to you.

Further than this, you shall have all your privileges restored, even as this wandering young man was put among the children when he returned. As you see him now in the father's house, where he was received with the many kisses, he wears a son's robe, the family ring is on his finger, and the shoes of the home are on his feet. He eats no longer swine's food, but children's bread. Even thus shall it be with you if you return to God. Though you look so foul and so vile, and really are even more defiled than you look; and though you smell so strongly of the hogs among which you have been living that some people's nostrils would turn up at you, your

Father will not notice these marks of your occupation in the far country with all its horrible defilement. See how this father treats his boy. He kisses him, and kisses him again, because he knows his own child, and, recognizing him as his child, and feeling his fatherly heart yearning over him, he gives him kiss after kiss. He kisses him much, to make him know that he has full restoration.

In this repeated kissing we see, then, these three things: much love, much forgiveness, and full restoration.

IV. But these many kisses meant even more than this. They revealed his father's EXCEEDING JOY. The father's heart is overflowing with gladness, and he cannot restrain his delight. I think he must have shown his joy by a repeated look. I will tell you the way I think the father behaved towards his son who had been dead, but was alive again, who had been lost, but was found. Let me try to describe the scene. The father has kissed the son, and he bids him sit down; then he comes in front of him, and looks at him, and feels so happy that he says, "I must give you another kiss," then he walks away a minute; but he is back again before long, saying to himself, "Oh, I must give him another kiss!" He gives him another, for he is so happy. His heart beats fast; he feels very joyful; the old man would like the music to strike up; he wants to be at the dancing; but meanwhile he satisfies himself by a repeated look at his long-lost child. Oh, I believe that God looks at the sinner, and looks at him again, and keeps on looking at him, all the while delighting in the very sight of him, when he is truly repentant, and comes back to his Father's house.

The repeated kiss meant, also, a repeated blessing, for every time he put his arms round him, and kissed him, he kept saying, "Bless you; oh, bless you, my boy!" He felt that his son had brought a blessing to him by coming back, and he invoked fresh blessings upon his head. Oh sinner! If you did but know how God would welcome you, and how He would look at you, and how He would bless you, surely you would at once repent, and come to His arms and heart, and find yourself happy in His love.

The many kisses meant, also, repeated delight. It is a very wonderful thing that it should be in the power of a sinner to make God glad. He is

the happy God, the source and spring of all happiness; what can we add to His blessedness? And yet, speaking after the manner of men, God's highest joy lies in clasping His wilful Ephraims to His breast, when He has heard them bemoaning themselves and has seen them arising and returning to their home. God grant that He may see that sight even now, and have delight because of sinners returning to Himself! Yea, we believe it shall be even so, because of His presence with us, and because of the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. Surely that is the teaching of the prophet's words: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." Think of the eternal God singing, and remember that it is because a wandering sinner has returned to Him that He sings. He joys in the return of the prodigal, and all heaven shares in His joy.

V. I have not got through my subject yet. As we take a fifth look, we find that these many kisses mean **OVERFLOWING COMFORT**. This poor young man, in his hungry, faint, and wretched state, having come a very long way, had not much heart in him. His hunger had taken all energy out of him, and he was so conscious of his guilt that he had hardly the courage to face his father; so his father gives him a kiss, as much as to say, "Come, boy, do not be cast down; I love you."

"Oh, the past, the past, my father!" he might moan, as he thought of his wasted years; but he had no sooner said that than he received another kiss, as if his father said, "Never mind the past; I have forgotten all about that." This is the Lord's way with His saved ones. Their past lies hidden under the blood of atonement. The Lord saith by His servant Jeremiah, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

But then, perhaps, the young man looked down on his foul garments, and said, "The present, my father, the present, what a dreadful state I am in!" And with another kiss would come the answer, "Never mind the present, my boy. I am content to have thee as thou art. I love thee." This, too, is God's word to those who are "accepted in the Beloved." In spite of all

their vileness, they are pure and spotless in Christ, and God says of each one of them, "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee. Therefore, though in thyself thou art unworthy, through My dear Son thou art welcome to My home."

"Oh, but," the boy might have said, "the future, my father, the future! What would you think if I should ever go astray again?" Then would come another holy kiss, and his father would say, "I will see to the future, my boy; I will make home so bright for you that you will never want to go away again." But God does more than that for us when we return to Him. He not only surrounds us with tokens of His love, but He says concerning us, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Furthermore, He says to each returning one, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them."

Whatever there was to trouble the son, the father gave him a kiss to set it all right; and, in like manner, our God has a love-token for every time of doubt and dismay which may come to His reconciled sons. Perhaps one whom I am addressing says, "Even though I confess my sin, and seek God's mercy, I shall still be in sore trouble, for through my sin, I have brought myself down to poverty." "There is a kiss for you," says the Lord: "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." "But I have even brought disease upon myself by sin," says another. "There is a kiss for you, for I am Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that healeth thee, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thine diseases." "But I am dreadfully down at the heel," says another. The Lord gives you also a kiss, and says, "I will lift you up, and provide for all your needs. No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." All the promises in this Book belong to every repentant sinner, who returns to God believing in Jesus Christ, His Son.

The father of the prodigal kissed his son much, and thus made him feel happy there and then. Poor souls, when they come to Christ, are in a dreadful plight, and some of them hardly know where they are I have known them talk a lot of nonsense in their despair, and say hard and wicked things of God in their dreadful doubt. The Lord gives no answer to all that, except a kiss, and then another kiss. Nothings puts the penitent so much at rest as the Lord's repeated assurance of His unchanging love. Such a one the Lord has often received, "and kissed him much," that He might fetch him up even from the horrible pit, and set his feet upon a rock, and establish his goings. The Lord grant that many whom I am addressing may understand what I am talking about!

VI. And now for our sixth head, though you will think I am getting to be like the old Puritans with these many heads. But I cannot help it, for these many kisses had many meanings: love, forgiveness, restoration, joy, and comfort were in them, and also **STRONG ASSURANCE**.

The father kissed his son much to make him quite certain that it was all real. The prodigal, in receiving these many kisses, might say to himself, "All this love must be true, for a little while ago I heard the hogs grunt, and now I hear nothing but the kisses from my dear father's lips." So his father gave him another kiss, for there was no way of convincing him that the first was real like repeating it; and if there lingered any doubt about the second, the father gave him yet a third. If, when the dream of old was doubled, the interpretation was sure, these repeated kisses left no room for doubt. The father renewed the tokens of his love that his son might be fully assured of his reality.

He did it that in the future it might never be questioned. Some of us were brought so low before we were converted, that God gave us an excess of joy when He saved us, that we might never forget it. Sometimes the devil says to me, "You are no child of God." I have long ago given up answering him, for I found that it is a waste of time to argue with such a crafty old liar as he is; he knows too much for me. But if I must answer him, I say, "Why, I remember when I was saved by the Lord! I can never forget even the very spot of ground where first I saw my Saviour; there and then my

joy rolled in like some great Atlantic billow, and burst in a mighty foam of bliss, covering all things. I cannot forget it." That is an argument which even the devil cannot answer, for he cannot make me believe that such a thing never happened. The Father kissed me much, and I remember it full well. The Lord gives to some of us a clear deliverance such a bright, sunshiny day at our conversion, that henceforth we cannot question our state before Him, but must believe that we are eternally saved.

The father put the assurance of this poor returning prodigal beyond all doubt. If the first kisses were given privately, when only the father and son were present, it is quite certain that, afterwards, he kissed him before men, where others could see him. He kissed him much in the presence of the household, that they also might not be calling in question that he was his father's child. It was a pity that the elder brother was not there also. You see he was away in the field. He was much more interested in the crops than in the reception of his brother. I have known such a one in modern days. He was a man who did not come out to week-evening services. He was such a man of business that he did not come out on a Thursday night, and the prodigal came home at such a time, and so the elder brother did not see the father receive him. If he lived now, he would probably not come to the church-meetings; he would be too busy. So he would not get to know about the reception of penitent sinners. But the father, when he received that son of his, intended all to know, once for all, that he was indeed his child. Oh, that you might get these many kisses even now! If they are given to you, you will have, for the rest of your life, strong assurance derived from the happiness of your first days.

VII. I have done when I have said that I think that here we have a specimen of the INTIMATE COMMUNION which the Lord often gives to sinners when first they come to Him. "His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him much."

You see, this was before the family fellowship. Before the servants had prepared the meal, before there had been any music or dancing in the family, his father kissed him. He would have cared little for all their songs, and have valued but slightly his reception by the servants, if, first of all, he had not been welcomed to his father's heart. So it is with us; we need

first to have fellowship with God before we think much of union with His people. Before I go to join a church, I want my Father's kiss. Before the pastor gives me the right hand of fellowship, I want my heavenly Father's right hand to welcome me. Before I become recognized by God's people here below, I want a private recognition from the great Father above; and that He gives to all who come to Him as the prodigal came to his father. May He give to some of you now!

This kissing, also, was before the table communion. You know the prodigal was afterwards to sit at his father's table, and to eat of the fatted calf; but before that, his father kissed him. He would scarcely have been able to sit easily at the feast without the previous kisses of love. The table communion, to which we are invited, is very sweet. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, in symbol, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is, indeed, a blessed thing; but I want to have communion with God by way of the love-kiss before I come there. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." This is something private, ravishing, and sweet. God give it to many of you! May you get the many kisses of your Father's mouth before you come into the church, or to the communion table!

These many kisses likewise came before the public rejoicing. The friends and neighbors were invited to share in the feast. But think how shamefaced the son would have been in their presence, if, first of all, he had not found a place in his father's love or had not been quite sure of it. He would almost have been inclined to run away again. But the father had kissed him much, and so he could meet the curious gaze of his old friends with a smiling face, until any unkind remarks they might have thought of making died away, killed by his evident joy in his father. It is a hard thing for a man to confess Christ if he has not had an overwhelming sense of communion with Him. But when we are lifted to the skies in the rapture God gives to us, it becomes easy, not only to face the world, but to win the sympathy of even those who might have opposed themselves. This is why young converts are frequently used to lead others into the light; the Lord's many kisses of forgiveness have so recently been given to them, that their words catch the fragrance of divine love as they pass the lips just touched by the Lord. Alas, that any should ever lose their first love, and forget the many kisses they have received from their heavenly

Father!

Lastly, all this was given before the meeting with the elder brother. If the prodigal son had known what the elder brother thought and said, I should not have wondered at all if he had run off, and never come back at all. He might have come near home, and then, hearing what his brother said, have stolen away again. Yes, but before that could happen, his father had given him the many kisses. Poor sinner! You have come in here, and perhaps you have found the Saviour. It may be that you will go and speak to some Christian man, and he will be afraid to say much to you. I do not wonder that he should doubt you, for you are not, in yourself, as yet a particularly nice sort of person to talk to. But, if you get your Father's many kisses, you will not mind your elder being a little hard upon you. Occasionally I hear of one, who wishes to join church, saying "I came to see the elders, and one of them was rather rough with me. I shall never come again." What a stupid man you must be! Is it not their duty to be a little rough with some of you, lest you should deceive yourselves, and be mistaken about your true state? We desire lovingly to bring you to Christ, and if we are afraid that you really have not yet come back to God, with penitence and faith, should we not tell you so, like honest men? But suppose that you have really come, and your brother is mistaken; go and get a kiss from your Father, and never mind your brother. He may remind you how you have squandered your living, painting the picture even blacker than it ought to be; but your Father's kisses will make you forget your brother's frowns. If you think that in a household of faith you will find everybody amiable, and everyone willing to help you, you will be greatly mistaken. Young Christians are often frightened when they come across some who, from frequent disappointment of their hopes, or from a natural spirit of caution or perhaps from a lack of spiritual life, receive but coldly those upon whom the Father has lavished much love. If that is your case, never mind these cross-grained elder brethren; get another kiss from your Father. Perhaps the reason it is written, "He kissed him much," was because the elder brother when he came near him, would treat him so coldly, and so angrily refuse to join in the feast.

Lord, give to many poor trembling souls the will to come to Thee! Bring many sinners to Thy blessed feet, and while they are yet a great way off,

run and meet them; fall on their neck, give them many kisses of love, and fill them to the full with heavenly delight, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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The Prodigal's Return

But when he was yet a great way off; his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. - Luke 15:20

All persons engaged in education will tell you that they find it far more difficult to make the mind unlearn its errors than to make it receive truth. If we could suppose a man totally ignorant of anything, we should have a fairer chance of instructing him quickly and effectually than we should have had if his mind had been previously stored with falsehood. I have no doubt you, each of you, find it harder to unlearn than to learn. To get rid of old prejudices and preconceived notions is a very hard struggle indeed. It has been well said, that those few words, "I am mistaken," are the hardest in all the English language to pronounce, and certainly it takes very much force to compel us to pronounce them: and after having done so, it is even then difficult to wipe away the slime which an old serpentine error has left upon the heart. Better for us not to have known at all than to have known the wrong thing. Now, I am sure that this truth is never more true than when it applies to God. If I had been let alone to form my notion of God, entirely from Holy Scripture, I feel, that with the assistance of his Holy Spirit it would have been far more easy for me to understand what he is, and how he governs the world, than to learn even the truths of his own Word, after the mind had become perverted by the opinions of others. Why, brethren, who is it that gives a fair representation of God? The Arminian slanders God by accusing him (not in his own intention, but really so) of unfaithfulness; for he teaches that God may promise what he never performs; that he may give eternal life, and promise that those who have it shall never perish, and yet they may

perish after all. He speaks of God as if he were a mutable being, for he talks of his loving men one day, and hating them the next; of his writing their names in the Book of Life one hour, and then erasing their names in the next. And the influence of such an error as that, is very baneful. Many children of God, who have imbibed these errors in early youth, have had to drag along their poor wearied and broken frames for many a day, whereas they might have walked joyfully to heaven if they had known the truth from the beginning. On the other hand, those who hear the Calvinistic preacher, are very apt to misinterpret God. Although we trust we would never speak of God in any other sense than that in which we find him represented in sacred Scripture, yet are we well aware that many of our hearers, even through our assertions, when most guarded, are apt to get rather a caricature of God, than a true picture of him. They imagine that God is a severe being, angry and fierce, very easily to be moved to wrath, but not so easily to be induced to love; they are apt to think of him as one who sits in supreme and lofty state, either totally indifferent to the wishes of his creatures, or else determined to have his own way with them, as an arbitrary Sovereign, never listening to their desires, or compassionating their woes. O that we could unlearn all these fallacies, and believe God to be what he is! O that we could come to Scripture, and there look into that glass which reflects his sacred image, and then receive him as he is, the all-Wise, the all-Just, and yet the all-Gracious, and all-Loving Jehovah! I shall endeavor this morning, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to represent the lovely character of Christ; and if I shall be happy enough to have some in my audience who are in the position of the prodigal son in the parable - coming to Christ, and yet a great way off from him - I shall trust that they will be led by the same Divine Spirit, to believe in the loving kindness of Jehovah, and so may find peace with God now, ere they leave this house of prayer.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." First, I shall notice the *position* intended in the words, "a great way off;" secondly, I shall notice the *peculiar troubles* which agitate the minds of those, who are in this condition; and then, thirdly, I shall endeavor to teach *the great loving-kindness of our own adorable God*, inasmuch as when we are "a great way off," he runs to us, and embraces us in the arms of his love.

I. First, then, what is the POSITION signified by being "a great way off?" I must just notice what is *not* that position. It is not the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God; for you notice that the prodigal is represented now as having come to himself, and as returning to his father's house. Though it be true that all sinners are a great way off from God, whether they know it or not, yet in this particular instance, the position of the poor prodigal is intended to signify the character of one, who has been aroused by conviction, who has been led to abhor his former life, and who sincerely desires to return to God. I shall not, then, this morning, specially address the blasphemer, and the profane. To him, there may be some incidental warning heard, but I shall not specially address such a character. It is another person for whom this text is intended: the man who has been a blasphemer, if you please, who may have been a drunkard, and a swearer, and what not, but who has now renounced these things, and is steadfastly seeking after Christ, that he may obtain eternal life. That is the man who is here said to be, though coming to the Lord, "a great way off."

Once again, there is another person who is not intended by this description, namely, the very great man, the Pharisee who thinks himself extremely righteous, and has never learned to confess his sin. You, sir, in your apprehension, are not a great way off. You are so really in the sight of God; you are as far from him as light from darkness, as the east is from the west; but you are not spoken of here. You are like the prodigal son, only that instead of spending your life righteously, you have run away from your Father, and hidden in the earth the gold which he gave you, and are able to feed upon the husks which swine do eat, whilst by a miserable economy of good works you are hoping to save enough of your fortune to support yourself here and in eternity. Your hope of self-salvation is a fallacy, and you are not addressed in the words of the text. It is the man who knows himself lost, but desires to be saved, who is here declared to be met by God, and received with affectionate embraces.

And now we come to the question, Who is the man, and why is he said to be a great way off? For he seems to be very near the kingdom, now that he knows his need and is seeking the Saviour. I reply, in the first place, he is

a great way off in his own apprehensions. You are here this morning, and you have an idea that never was man so far from God as you are. You look back upon your past life, and you recollect how you have slighted God, despised his Sabbath, neglected his Book, trampled upon the blood of sprinkling, and rejected all the invitations of his mercy. You turn over the pages of your history, and you remember the sins which you have committed - the sins of your youth and your former transgressions, the crimes of your manhood, and the riper sins of your older years; like black waves dashing upon a dark shore, they roll in wave upon wave, upon your poor troubled memory. There comes a little wave of your childish folly, and over that there leaps one of your youthful transgressions, and over the head of this there comes a very Atlantic billow of your manhood's transgressions. At the sight of them you stand astonished and amazed. "O Lord my God, how deep is the gulf which divides me from thyself, and where is the power that can bridge it? I am separated from thee by leagues of sin, whole mountains of my guilt are piled upward between me and thyself. O God, shouldest thou destroy me now, thou wouldest be just; and if thou dost ever bring me to thyself, it must be nothing less than a power as Omnipotent as that which made the world, which can ever do it. O! how far am I from God!" Some of you would be startled this morning, if your neighbors were to give you revelations of their own feelings. If yonder man standing there in the crowd could come into this pulpit, and tell you what he now feels, you might perhaps be horrified at his description of his own heart. How many of you have no notion of the way in which a soul is cut and hacked about, when it is under the convictions of the law! If you should hear the man tell out what he feels, you would say, "Ah! he is a poor deluded enthusiast; men are not so bad as that;" or else you would be apt to think he had committed some nameless crime which he dare not mention. that was preying on his conscience. Nay, sir, he has been as moral and upright as you have been; but should he describe himself as he now discovers himself to be, he would shock you utterly. And yet you are the same, though you feel it not, and would indignantly deny it. When the light of God's grace comes into your heart, it is something like the opening of the windows of an old cellar that has been shut up for many days. Down in that cellar, which has not been opened for many months, are all kinds of loathsome creatures, and a few sickly plants blanched by the darkness. The walls are dark and

damp with the trail of reptiles; it is a horrid filthy place, in which no one would willingly enter. You may walk there in the dark very securely, and except now and then for the touch of some slimy creature, you would not believe the place was so bad and filthy. Open those shutters, clean a pane of glass, let a little light in, and now see how a thousand noxious things have made this place their habitation. Sure, twas not the light that made this place so horrible, but it was the light that showed how horrible it was before. So let God's grace just open a window and let the light into a man's soul, and he will stand astonished to see at what a distance he is from God. Yes, sir, to-day you think yourself second to none but the Eternal; you fancy that you can approach his throne with steady step; it is but a little that you have to do to be saved; you imagine that you can accomplish it at any hour, and save yourself upon your dying bed as well as now. Ah! sir, if you could but be touched by Ithuriel's wand, and made to be in appearance what you are in reality, then you would see that you are far enough from God even now, and so far from him that unless the arms of his grace were stretched out to bring you to himself, you must perish in your sin. Now I turn my eye again with hope, and trust I leave not a few in this large assembly who can say, "Sir, I feel I am far from God, and sometimes I fear I am so far from him that he will never have mercy upon me; I dare not lift so much as my eyes towards heaven; I smite on my breast, and say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner'" Oh! poor heart; here is a comforting passage for thee: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him."

But again, there is a second sense in which some now present may feel themselves to be far off from God. Conscience tells every man that if he would be saved he must get rid of his sin. The Antinomian may possibly pretend to believe that men can be saved while they live in sin; but conscience will never allow any man to swallow so egregious a lie as that. I have not one person in this congregation who is not perfectly assured that if he is to be saved he must leave off his drunkenness and his vices. Sure there is not one here so stupefied with the laudanum of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts, and afterwards wear the white robe of the redeemed in paradise. If ye imagine ye can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if ye imagine that ye can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the

same time, ye have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right arms must be cut off, and right eyes plucked out - that the most darling sins must be renounced, if ye would enter into the kingdom of God. And I have a man here who is convinced of the unholiness of his life, and he has striven to reform, not because he thinks reformation would save him, for he knows better than that, but because he knows that this is one of the first-fruits of grace - reformation from sin. Well, poor man, he has for many years been an inveterate drunkard, and he struggles now to overcome the passion. He has almost effected it; but he never had such an Herculean labor to attempt before; for now some temptation comes upon him so strongly that it is as much as he can do to stand against it; and perhaps sometimes since his first conviction of sin he has even fallen into it. Or perhaps it is another vice, and you, my brother, have set your face against it; but there are many bonds and fetters that bind us to our vices, and you find that though it was easy enough to spin the warp and woof sin together, it is not so easy to unravel that which you have spun. You can not purge your house of your idols; you do not yet know how to give up all your lustful pleasures. Not yet can you renounce the company of the ungodly. You have cut off one by one your most intimate acquaintances, but it is very hard to do it completely, and you are struggling to accomplish it, and you often fall on your knees and cry, "O, Lord, how far I am from thee! what high steps these are which I have to climb! Oh! how can I be saved? Sure, if I can not purge myself from my old sins, I shall never be able to hold on my way; and even should I get rid of them, I should plunge into them once more." You are crying out, "Oh, how great my distance from God! Lord, bring me near!"

Let me present you with one other aspect of our distance from God. You have read your Bibles, and you believe that faith alone can unite the soul to Christ. You feel that unless you can believe in him who died upon the cross for your sins, you can never see the kingdom of God; but you can say this morning, "Sir, I have striven to believe; I have searched the Scriptures, not hours, but days together, to find a promise on which my weary foot might rest; I have been upon my knees many and many a time, earnestly supplicating a Divine blessing; but though I have pleaded, all in vain I have urged my plea, for until now no whisper have I had of grace,

no token for good, no sign of mercy. Sir, I have striven to believe, and I have said,

"O could I but believe
Then all would easy be;
I would, but can not - Lord, relieve,
My help must come from thee!"

I have used all the power I have, and have desperately striven to cast myself at the Saviour's feet and see my sins washed away in his blood. I have not been indifferent to the story of the cross; I have read it a hundred times, and even wept over it; but when I strive to put my hand upon the scape-goat's head, and labor to believe that my sins are transferred to him, some demon seems to stop the breath that would breathe itself forth in adoration, and something checks the hand that would lay itself upon the head that died for me. Well, poor soul, thou art indeed far from God. I will repeat the words of the text to thee. May the Holy Spirit repeat them in thine ear! "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." So shall it be with thee if thou hast come thus far, though great may be the distance, thy feet shall not have to travel it, but God, the Eternal One, shall from his throne look down and visit thy poor heart, though now thou tarriest by the way, afraid to approach him.

II. Our second point is the PECULIAR TROUBLES which agitate the breasts of those who are in this position. Let us introduce to you the poor ragged prodigal. After a life of ease, he is, by his own vice, plunged into penury and labor. After feeding swine for a time, and being almost starved, he sets about returning to his father's house. It is a long and weary journey. He walks many a mile, until his feet are sore, and at last, from the summit of a mountain, he views his father's house far away in the plain. There are yet many miles between him and his father whom he has neglected. Can you conceive his emotions when, for the first time after so long an absence, he sees the old house at home? He remembers it well in the distance, for though it is long since he trod its floors, he has never ceased to recollect it; and the remembrance of his father's kindness, and of his own prosperity when he was with him, has never yet been

erased from his consciousness. You would imagine that for one moment he feels a flash of joy, like some flash of lightning in the midst of the tempest, but anon a black darkness comes over his spirit. In the first place, it is probable he will think, "Oh! suppose I could reach my home, will my father receive me? Will he not shut the door in my face and tell me begone and spend the rest of my life where I have been spending the first of it?" Then another suggestion might arise: "Surely, the demon that led me first astray may lead me back again, before I salute my parent." "Or mayhap," thought he, "I may even die upon the road, and so, before I have received my father's blessing, my soul may stand before its God." I doubt not each of these three thoughts has crossed your mind if you are now in the position of one who is seeking Christ, but mourns to feel himself far away from him.

First, you have been afraid lest you should die before Christ has appeared to you. You have been for months seeking the Saviour without finding him, and now the black thought comes, "And what if I should die with all these prayers unanswered? Oh! if he would but hear me ere I departed this world I would be content, though he should keep me waiting in anguish for many years. But what, if before tomorrow morning I should be a corpse? At my bed I kneel to-night and cry for mercy. Oh! if he should not send the pardon before to-morrow morning, and in the night my spirit should stand before his bar! - What then?" It is singular that other men think they shall live for ever, but men convinced of sin, who seek a Saviour, are afraid they shall not live another moment. You have known the time, dear Christian brethren, when you dared not shut your eyes for fear you should not open them again on earth; when you dreaded the shadows of the night lest they should darken for ever the light of the sun, and you should dwell in outer darkness throughout eternity. You have mourned as each day has entered, and you have wept as it has departed, because you fancied that your next step might precipitate you into your eternal doom. I have known what it is to tread the earth and fear lest every tuft of grass should but cover a door to hell; trembling, lest every particle, and every atom, and every stone, should be solar league with God against me, as to destroy me. John Bunyan says, that at one time in his experience, he felt that he had rather have been born a dog or a toad than a man; he felt so unutterably wretched on account of sin; and

his great point of wretchedness was the fact, that though he had been three years seeking Christ, he might after all die without finding him. And in truth, this is no needless alarm. It may be perhaps too alarming to some who already feel their need of Christ, but the mass of us need perpetually to be startled with the thought of death. How few of you ever indulge that thought! Because ye live and are in health, and eat, and drink, and sleep, ye think ye shall not die. Do ye ever soberly look at your last end? Do ye ever, when ye come to your beds at night, think how one day ye shall undress for the last slumber? And when ye wake in the morning, do ye never think that the trump of the archangel shall startle you to appear before God in the last day of the great assize, wherein an universe shall stand before the Judge? No. "All men think all men mortal but themselves;" and thoughts of death we still push off, until at last we shall find ourselves waking up in torment, where to wake is to wake too late. But thou to whom I specially speak this morning, thou who feelest that thou art a great way off from Christ, thou shalt never die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; if thou hast really sought him, thou shalt never die until thou hast found him. There was never a soul yet, that sincerely sought the Saviour, who perished before he found him. No; the gates of death shall never shut on thee till the gates of grace have opened for thee; till Christ has washed thy sins away thou shalt never be baptized in Jordan's flood. Thy life is secure, for this is God's constant plan - he keeps his own elect alive till the day of his grace, and then he takes them to himself. And inasmuch as thou knowest thy need of a Saviour, thou art one of his, and thou shalt never die until thou hast found him.

Your second fear is, "Ah, sir! I am not afraid of dying before I find Christ, I have a worse fear than that; I have had convictions before, and they have often passed away; my greatest fear to-day is, that these will be the same." I have heard of a poor collier, who on one occasion, having been deeply impressed under a sermon, was led to repent of sin and forsake his former life; but he felt so great horror of ever returning to his former conversation, that one day he knelt down and cried thus unto God, "O Lord, let me die on this spot, rather than ever deny the religion which I have espoused, and turn back to my former conversation:" and we are credibly told, that he died on that very spot, and so his prayer was answered. God had rather take him home to heaven than suffer him to

bear the brunt of temptation on earth. Now, when men come to Christ, they feel that they had rather suffer anything than lose their convictions. Scores of times have you and I been drawn to Christ under the preaching of the Word. We can look back upon dozens of occasions on which it seemed just the turning point with us. Something said in our hearts, "Now, believe in Christ, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But we said, "To-morrow, to-morrow ;" and when to-morrow came our convictions were gone. We thought what we said yesterday would be the deed of to-day; but instead of it, the procrastination of yesterday became the hardened wickedness of to-day: we wandered farther from God and forgot him. Now you are crying to him for fear, lest he should give you up again. You have this morning prayed before you came here, and you said, "Father, suffer not my companions to laugh me out of my religion; let not my worldly business so engross my thoughts, as to prevent my due attention to the matters of another world. Oh, let not the trifles of to-day so absorb my thoughts that I may not be preparing myself to meet my God -

'Deeply on my thoughtful heart,
Eternal things impress,'

and make this a real saving work that shall never die out, nor be taken from me." Is that your earnest prayer? O poor prodigal, it shall be heard, it shall be answered. Thou shalt not have time to go back. To-day thy Father views thee from his throne in heaven; to-day he runs to thee in the message of his gospel; today he falls upon thy neck and weeps for joy; to-day he says to thee, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven ;" to-day, by the preaching of the Word, he bids thee come and reason with him, "for though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow."

But the last and the most prominent thought which I suppose the prodigal would have, would be, that when he did get to his father, he would say to him, "Get along with you, I will have nothing more to do with you." "Ah!" thought he to himself, "I recollect the morning, when I rose up before day-break, because I knew I could not stand my mothers tears; I remember how I crept down the back staircase and took all the

money with me, how I stole down the yard and ran away into the land where I spent my all. Oh! what will the old gentlemen say of me when I come back? Why, there he is! he is running to me. But he has got a horsewhip with him, to be sure, to whip me away. It is not at all possible that if he comes he will have a kind word for me. The most I can expect is that he will say, 'Well John, you have wasted all your money, you can not expect me to do anything for you again. I won't let you starve; you shall be one of my servants: there, come, I will take you as footman;' and if he will do that I will be obliged to him; nay, that is the very thing I will ask of him; I will say, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants.'" "Oh," said the devil within him, "your father will never speak comfortably to you: you had better run away again. I tell you if he gets near you, you will have such a dressing as you never received in your life. You will die with a broken heart; you will very likely fall dead here; the old man will never bury you; the carrion crows will eat you. There is no hope for you: see how you have treated him. Put yourself in his place: what would you do if you had a son that had run away with half your living, and spent it upon harlots?" And the son thought if he were in his father's place he should be very harsh and severe; and possibly, he almost turned upon his heel to run away. But he had not time to do that. When he was just thinking about running away, on a sudden his father's arms were about his neck, and he had received the paternal kiss. Nay, before he could get his whole prayer finished, he was arrayed in a white robe, the best in the house; and they had brought him to the table, and the fatted calf was being killed for his repast. And poor soul, it shall be so with you. Thou sayest, "If I go to God, he will never receive me. I am too vile and wretched: others he may have pressed to his heart, but he will not me. If my brother should go, he might be saved; but there are such aggravations in my crime; I have grown so old since; I have done such a deal of mischief; I have so often blasphemed him, so frequently broken his Sabbaths; ah! and I have so often deceived him; I have promised I would repent, and when I got well I have lied to God, and gone back to my old sin. Oh, if he would but let me creep inside the door of heaven! I will not ask to be one of his children; I will only ask that he will let me be where the Syro-Phoenician woman desired to be - to be a dog, to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. That is all I ask; and oh! if he will but grant it to me, he shall never hear the last of it, for as long as I live I will sing his praise; and when the

world doth fade away, and the sun grow dim with age, my gratitude, immortal as my soul, shall never cease to sing his love, who pardoned my grossest sins and washed me in his blood." It shad be so. Come and try. Now, sinners, dry your tears; let hopeless sorrows cease; look to the wounds of Christ, who died; let all your griefs now be removed, there is no further cause for them; your Father loves you; he accepts and receives you to his heart.

III. Now, in conclusion, I may notice HOW THESE FEARS WERE MET IN THE PRODIGAL'S CASE, and how they shall be met in ours if we are in the same condition.

The text says, "The Father saw him." Yes, and God saw thee just now. That tear which was wiped away so hastily - as if thou wast ashamed of it - God saw it, and he stored it in his bottle. That prayer which thou didst breathe just a few moments ago, so faintly, and with such little faith - God heard it. The other day thou wast in thy chamber, where no ear heard thee; but God was there. Sinner, let this be thy comfort, that God sees thee when thou beginnest to repent. He does not see thee with his usual gaze, with which he looks on all men; but he sees thee with an eye of intense interest. He has been looking on thee in an thy sin, and in all thy sorrow, hoping that thou wouldst repent; and now he sees the first gleam of grace, and he beholds it with joy. Never warder on the lonely castle top saw the first grey light of morning with more joy than that with which God beholds the first desire in thy heart. Never physician rejoiced more when he saw the first heaving of the lungs in one that was supposed to be dead, than God doth rejoice over thee, now that he sees the first token for good. Think not that thou art despised and unknown, and forgotten. He is marking thee from his high throne in glory, and rejoicing in what he sees. He saw thee pray, he heard thee groan; he marked thy tear; he looked upon thee and rejoiced to see that these were the first seeds of grace in thine heart.

And then, the text says, "he had compassion on him." He did not merely see him, but he wept within himself to think he should be in such a condition. The old father had a very long range of eye-sight; and though the prodigal could not see him in the distance, he could see the prodigal.

And the fathers first thought when he saw him was this - "O my poor son, O my poor boy! that ever he should have brought himself into such a state as this!" He looked through his telescope of love, and he saw him, and said, "Ah! he did not go out of my house in such trim as that. Poor creature, his feet are bleeding; he has come a long way, I'll be bound. Look at his face, he doesn't look like the same boy he was when he left me. His eye that was so bright, is now sunken in its socket; his cheeks that once stood out with fatness, have now become hollow with famine. Poor wretch, I can tell all his bones, he is so emaciated." Instead of feeling any anger in his heart, he felt just the contrary; he felt such pity for his poor son. And so the Lord feels for you - you that are groaning and moaning on account of sin. He forgets your sins; he only weeps to think you should have brought yourself to be what you are: "Why didst thou rebel against me, and bring thyself into such a state as this?" It was just like that day when Adam sinned. God walked in the garden, and he missed Adam. He did not cry out, "Adam, come here and be judged!" No; with a soft, sorrowful, and plaintive voice, he said, "Adam, where art thou? Oh, my fair Adam, thou whom I made so happy, where art thou now? Oh, Adam! thou didst think to become a God; where art thou now? Thou hast walked with me: dost thou hide thyself from thy friend? Little dost thou know, O Adam, what woes thou hast brought on thyself, and thine offspring. Adam, where art thou?" And Jehovah bowels yearn to-day over you. He is not angry with you; his anger is passed away, and his hands are stretched out still. Inasmuch as he has brought you to feel that you have sinned against him, and to desire reconciliation with him, there is no wrath in his heart. The only sorrow that he feels is sorrow that you should have brought yourself into a state so mournful as that in which you now are found.

But he did not stop in mere compassion. Having had compassion, "he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This you do not understand yet; but you shall. As sure as God is God, if you this day are seeking him aright through Christ, the day shall come when the kiss of full assurance shall be on your lip, when the arms of sovereign love shall embrace you, and you shall know it to be so. Thou mayest have despised him, but thou shalt know him yet to be thy Father and thy Friend. Thou mayest have scoffed his name: thou shalt one day come to rejoice in it as better than

pure gold. Thou mayest have broken his Sabbaths and despised his Word; the day is coming when the Sabbath shall be thy delight, and his Word thy treasure. Yes, marvel not; thou mayest have plunged into the kennel of sin, and made thy clothes black with iniquity; but thou shalt one day stand before his throne white as the angels be; and that tongue that once cursed him shall yet sing his praise. If thou be a real seeker, the hands that have been stained with lust shall one day grasp the harp of gold, and the head that has plotted against the Most High shall yet be girt with gold. Seemeth it not a strange thing that God should do so much for sinners? But strange though it seem, it shall be strangely true. Look at the staggering drunkard in the ale-house. Is there a possibility that one day he shall stand among the fairest sons of light? Possibility! ay, certainty, if he repents and turns from the error of his ways. Hear you yon curser and swearer? See you the man who labels himself as a servant of hell, and is not ashamed to do so? Is it possible that he shall one day share the bliss of the redeemed? Possible! ay, more, it is sure, if he turneth from his evil ways. O sovereign grace, turn men that they may repent! "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

"Lord, do thou the sinner turn,
For thy tender mercy's sake."

One word or so, and I have done. If any of you to-day are under conviction of sin, let me solemnly warn you not to frequent places where those convictions are likely too be destroyed.

A correspondent of the *New York Christian Advocate* furnishes the following affecting narrative: -

"When I was travelling in the state of Massachusetts, twenty-six years ago, after preaching one evening in the town of _____, a very serious-looking young man arose, and wished to address the assembly. After obtaining leave, he spoke as follows: - 'My friends, about one year ago, I set out in company with a young man of my intimate acquaintance, to seek the salvation of my soul. For several weeks we went on together, we laboured together, and often renewed our covenant not to give over seeking till we obtained the religion of Jesus. But, all at once, the young

man neglected attending meeting, appeared to turn his back on all the means of grace, and grew so shy of me, that I could scarcely get an opportunity to speak with him. His strange conduct gave me much painful anxiety of mind; but still I felt resolved to obtain the salvation of my soul, or perish, making the publican's plea. After a few days, a friend informed me that my young companion had received an invitation to a ball, and was determined to go. I went immediately to him, and, with tears in my eyes, endeavoured to persuade him to change his purpose, and to go with me on that evening to a prayer-meeting. I pleaded with him in vain. He told me, when we parted, that I must not give him up as lost, for after he had attended that ball, he intended to make a business of seeking religion. The appointed evening came, and he went to the ball, and I went to the prayer-meeting. Soon after the meeting opened, it pleased God, in answer to my prayer, to turn my spiritual captivity, and make my soul rejoice in his justifying love. Soon after the ball opened, my young friend was standing at the head of the ball-room, with the hand of a young lady in his hand, preparing to lead down the dance; and, while the musician was turning his violin,, without one moment's warning, the young man sallied back, and fell dead on the floor. I was immediately sent for, to assist in devising means to convey his remains to his father's house. You will be better able to judge what were the emotions of my heart, when I tell you that that young man was my own brother."

Trifle not, then, with thy convictions, for eternity shall be too short for thee to utter thy lamentations over such trifling.

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Profit And Loss

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? - Mark 8:36

Many men have been made bankrupts through inattention to their books.

No man ever loses anything by counting the cost, knowing his own expenditure, and keeping his debtor and creditor pretty closely up; but many men have been ruined by attempts which have been suggested by a spirit of speculation, and fostered by a negligence of their own concerns, combined with absolute ignorance of their real financial position. Spiritually man is a great trader - he is trading for his own welfare; he is trading for time and for eternity; he keeps two shops: one shop is kept by an apprentice of his, a rough unseemly hand, of clayey mould, called the body; the other business, which is an infinitely more vast concern, is kept by one that is called "the soul" a spiritual being, who does not traffic upon little things, but who deals with hell or heaven, and trades with the mighty realities of eternity. Now, a merchant would be very unwise who should pay all attention to some small off-hand shop of his, and take no account whatever of a large establishment. And he would, indeed, be negligent, who should very carefully jot down every trifle of the expenditure of his own household, but should never think of reckoning the expenses of some vast concern that may be hanging on his hands. But the most of men are just as foolish - they estimate the profits (as they conceive them to be) which are gained in that small corner shop called the body, but they too seldom reckon up the awful loss which is brought about by a negligence of the soul's concerns in the great matters of eternity. Let me beseech you, my brethren, while you are not careless of the body, as, indeed, you ought not to be, seeing that it is, in the case of believers, the temple of the Holy Ghost, to take more especial care of your souls. Decorate the tenement, but suffer not the inhabitant to die of starvation; paint not the ship while you are letting the crew perish for want of stores on board. Look to your soul, as well as to your body; to the life, as well as to that by which you live. Oh that men would take account of the soul's vast concerns, and know their own standing before God. Oh that ye would examine yourselves. It men would do so, if all of you would now search within, how many of you would be bankrupts? You are making a pretty little fortune with regard to the body; you are doing tolerably well and comfortable; you are providing for yourselves things as you would desire them. Your mortal body, perhaps, if even pampered, and has no fault to find with its owner; but as your poor soul how that is getting on, and you will find it not a gainer, but in many instances, I fear, a loser. Let me solemnly tell you, that if your soul be a loser, however

much your body may be a gainer, you have not profited in the least degree. Let me ask you all this question in the name of Jesus Christ, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

We shall divide our text, and consider, in the first place, *the gain a man would get* if he gained the whole world; in the second place, *the fearful loss* if a man should lose his soul; and then, afterwards, we will try to finish up by some *practical lesson*.

1. In the first place, WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED IF HE SHOULD GAIN THE WHOLE WORD? Many Christian people, who do not exactly talk common sense, sum this all up by saying, that to gain the whole world is to gain nothing at all. Perhaps they are right, but I question if they believe what they assert. They sing just as we have been singing -

"Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust."

And so they are compared with Christ; but there are some who find unnecessary and absurd fault with the things of this world, and call jewels "gaudy toys," and gold "sordid dust." I have often admired some of my friends, when I have heard them talking about gold as sordid dust; for I wonder why they did not give it to the dustman the next time he came round. If they were to do that, I would not mind going round myself for once with the bell, particularly as it might be rather convenient to us, seeing that we want some of that sordid dust to erect a tabernacle for the Most High. Many who affect to despise wealth are the greatest hoarders of it. I suppose they are afraid it might injure other people's hearts, and, therefore, they put it away very carefully, so that others may not touch the dangerous thing. That may be all very kind of them; but we do not exactly appreciate their benevolent intention, and should think it fully as kind if they were every now and then to distribute some of it. You hear them saying, very often, that "money is the root of all evil." Now, I should like to find that text. But it is not to be found anywhere, from Genesis to Revelation. I found a text once, which said, "*The love of money is the root of all evil;*" but as for the money itself, I can see very little evil in it. If a

man will but rightly use it, I conceive that it is a talent sent from heaven, bestowed by God for holy purposes, and I am quite sure God's talents are not bad ones. My brethren, it is all cant for a man to say that he does not really care for these things, because every one does in some degree; every one wishes to have some of this world; and there really is, in possessing a competency in this world, something considerable with regard to profit; and I am not going to deceive you, by striking off all the profits, and saying you are losers on every point. No, I will go the whole length which any of you like to go, with regard to the profit of this world; if it be considerable. I will admit its greatness; if you think it possible to make a fine thing of this world, I will grant it, if you like; and after having admitted that, I will ask you. "Will it answer your purpose to gain the whole world, in the largest sense of that word, and yet lose your own soul?"

Now, I will try, if I can, to add your bills up for you, and strike a balance. We will suppose a case which must very seldom occur, in fact, which never has occurred. There never was a man who gained the whole world. Some have been monarchs of almost all the known globe; but it is remarkable, if you look at a map of the ancient world, how little their territories were, compared with the whole globe, indeed they have not much greater than those of modern monarchs. It is but a small portion of the world that was known to the ancients; and even then no man possessed it all. But to put this question somewhat in a point of view, wherein the thing might be possible; I think there are three or four cases in which a man may be said, with some reservation, to have gained the whole world.

1. In the first place, a man who has *power over extensive empires* may be supposed, in some measure, to have gained the whole world. Take, for instance, ALEXANDER; I cannot bring you a fairer specimen of a man having possession of the whole world than he. He could say of his dominions, that although they had their limits, he did not know the nations who were able to bound his territories. He could travel thousands of miles without arriving at the boundaries; he had at his foot millions of armed men, ready to avenge his quarrels, and uphold his banner; when he rose to fight, he was invincible; when he stood in his council chamber,

his will was law; in his service thousands were slain, but at his summons, an equal number gathered round his standard. Alexander, I summon thee! What thinkest thou: is it worth much to gain the world? Is its sceptre the wand of happiness? Is its crown the security of joy? See Alexander's tears! he weeps! Yes, he weeps for another world to conquer! Ambition is insatiable! the gain of the whole world is not enough. Surely to become a universal monarch, is to make one's self universally miserable.

Perhaps you think there is very much pleasure in having power. I believe there is. I do not think any man who has any power over his fellow-creatures will deny that it is gratifying to his fallen nature; or else, why is it that the politician seeks for it so continually, and toils for it days without number, and wastes the sap of his life in midnight debate? There is a pleasure in it. But mark you, that pleasure is counter-balanced by its anxiety. Popularity has its head in the clouds, but its feet are in the sands; and while the man's head is among the stars he trembles for his feet. There is an anxiety to increase his power, or else to maintain it; and that anxiety takes away much of the enjoyment of it. Lord Bacon has justly compared those who move in higher spheres to those heavenly bodies in the firmament which have much admiration but little rest. And it is not necessary to invest a wise man with power, to convince him that it is a garment bedizened with gold, which dazzles the beholder with its splendour, but oppresses the wearer with its weight. I do verily believe, that the winning of the whole world of power, is in itself so slight a gain, that it were fair to strike the balance, and say there is little left; for even Alexander, himself, envied the peasant in his cottage, and thought there was more happiness on the plains among the shepherds, than in his palace amongst his gold and silver. Oh! my friends, if I were to compare all this with the loss of the soul, indeed you might be startled. But I leave it to strike its own balance. I say, that to gain the whole world is but little, and especially when we are sinners against God. And, moreover, if an empire over the world entails that fearful responsibility which will not allow the eyes to slumber, or the heart to cease its throbbings; if it puts into the hand the power of committing gigantic crimes, and if those gigantic crimes like ghosts haunt men's midnight slumbers, the gaining of power over the whole world is a loss instead of a gain, even considered in

itself.

2. There is another way of gaining the whole world, not so much by power, but by something next door to it, namely - *riches*. CROESUS shall be my specimen here. He amassed a world of riches, for his wealth was beyond estimation. As for his gold and his silver, he kept little account of them, and his precious stones were without number. He was rich, immensely rich; he could buy an empire, and after that, could spend another empire's worth. Perhaps you think that to be immensely rich is a great gain; but I believe that to be enormously rich is in itself far from desirable. Ask CROESUS. Dying, he exclaimed, "O! Solon, Solon." And when they asked him what he meant, he replied, that Solon had once told him that no man could be pronounced happy until death; and, therefore, he cried "O! Solon, Solon," for the misery of his death had swept away the joys of his life. Such is the slavery of great riches; such are its anxieties; and such, too often, is that miserly avarice which wealth doth beget, that the rich man is often a loser by his wealth, even apart from the loss of his soul. Many a man would be happier if he had walked the pavement in rags, than if he rode through the streets in his chariot. "Many a heavy heart rides in a carriage," is an old saying, but a marvellously true one. Well said the poet,

"If thou art rich, thou art poor;
For like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloads thee."

Suppose a man's wealth to have been gained dishonestly, then I pronounce it a terrible and infallible curse to him; in itself it constitutes a plague apart from a world to come. My friends, estimate that gold at what price you like, I say, if you were to put the soul as a debt against it, you would find that there would be a fearful loss. But even apart from that, I believe that to gain a world of riches would be a loss in itself, at least to most men; there would be few men living who would be able to steer the boat of pleasure through a sea so thick with weeds. The less a man has the better, so that he comes within the moderate competence which every man may desire. Agur was right, when he said, "Give me neither poverty

nor riches." Great wealth is certainly no great gain.

3. But there was another man who gained the world in a higher sense; his name was SOLOMON. His treasures were not so much those of wealth or power, (though he had both,) as the treasures of wisdom and the pleasures of the body. Solomon had all things that could delight the mind, please the eye, and charm the body; he had but to speak, and music chanted the sweetest air that Israel's psalmody could give; he had but to lift his finger, and noble armies followed him, and treasures were spread beneath his feet. The wines of every vintage were quaffed from his bowl, and maidens gathered from every clime awaited his command; he was master over men - he was lord. He enjoyed all kinds of delight, every sort of pleasure; he mingled in his cup all that flesh calls paradise, all that men dream of happiness. There was nothing which Solomon did not try; he ransacked the world to find joys. He was a wise man: he knew where to search for earth's happiness, and he found it. Solomon, what didst thou find? O! thou preacher, open thy lips, and tell us. "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;*" thus saith the preacher. Oh! my friends, if we could have all the pleasures of the flesh we desire, I question whether they would be, in themselves, a profit; but of this I am certain, that compared with the loss of our soul, it would, indeed, be a dreadful loss. I think that if many of us could indulge all the pleasure of the body we desire, we should destroy our bodies, and actually waste our happiness. Many a man has hunted his pleasures too fast to win them; many a racer has lost the prize by overstraining in the contest; and many a man might have had more pleasure, even to the body, if he had been more moderate in seeking it. He is a fool who grills a pound of butter; the rake does that; he grills himself away by too fast pleasures, and wastes his life till it is gone, and there is nothing left of it. Ah! if ye could have all the world of sensual delights, and if ye had all the wisdom of men, apart from the grace of God to restrain your pleasures, I believe you would find it then to be a dead loss. And I will affirm the words of the text, "It would not profit you if you had the whole world, and should lose your own soul."

Even in this world, you see, these great winnings are but little gains. They are great to look at, but they are very small when you get hold of them. This world is like the boy's butterfly - it is pretty sport to chase it; but

bruise its wings by an over-earnest grasp, and it is nothing but a disappointment.

But, my friends, if there is little profit in this world by these magnificent gains I have mentioned, and in these extreme cases, what shall it profit a man, if he does *not* gain the world, and should lose his soul? Put the question in this way: - What shall it profit a man, if he lose this present world, and the next too? What shall it profit a man, if he gain but a small portion of this world - and this is the most that we may expect - and yet loses his soul? I have sometimes thought, with regard to the rich man, "Well, such a man has a portion in this life; but with regard to the poor man, I cannot see what there is to make him happy if he has not something better to look to when he dies." I have seen the weary horny-handed sons of toil, often oppressed and down trodden as they are by their masters, and I have thought, "Oh! poor souls, if you cannot look to another world, you are of all men most miserable; for you do not get either world; you go fagging along, just like a pack-horse, without the hope of a secure place in which you may rest at last." The rich man, at least, makes as much as can be made of this world, little as that is, apart from grace; but the poor man makes the least of this world, and then he goes from poverty to damnation, from his squalor to perdition, and from his poorhouse and his rags to the flames of hell. What a horrid state to have such an existence; to live in this world a life of misery, and to find a starving existence to be only the preface and the prelude of a more doleful and fearful life hereafter. Oh, what shall it profit you, if you gain a little of this world, and lose your own soul?

Now, I have only cast up accounts for this life; but what will it profit a man, *when he comes to die*, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? There he lies dying: he has no God to console him. Bring to him his heaps of gold. What! do they not still the throbbings of thy heart? What! cannot thy bags of gold ferry thee across the Jordan? What, man! thou hast lived for thy heaps of glittering wealth; will they not live with thee? Wilt thou not take them with thee to heaven? No, he shakes his head; for hoarded wealth is but of little use to help a man to die. You have heard of a sailor, who, when the ship was sinking, rushed into the cabin, broke open the captain's chest, extracted all the money he could - tied it in a

belt round his waist - leaped into the sea, and sank, thus hurrying himself before his Creator with the witness of his sins about his loins. Oh! it were a bad thing to die with gold so gained. And do you think gold will do you much good, however you may have come by it, when you lie on your last couch? No; you must bow to inevitable death, in spite of all your riches; and if you gain the whole world's applause or fame, can that help you on your dying bed?

"*Jesus* can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

But how little will the applause of man seem, when you come to die? Oh! I sometimes think, what poor fools we are to value ourselves by what our fellow-creatures think of us; but oh! when we come to die, we shall not care about the din and noise which have followed us all our lives. What will fame and honour be, when we are in the last article? Bubbles! Can souls feed on bubbles? No, we shall then despise such vanities. We shall say, "Fame! cease thy trump; let me die alone; for alone must I hear the trump of the archangel. Thou babbling fame, I hate thee, for thou dost but disturb my slumbers, and wake me in my bed." Oh! there will be no gain in wealth, or power, or pomp, or fame, when we come to die, they will profit a man nothing, if he lose his own soul.

And what will it profit a man in *the day of judgment*, if he has gained the whole world? Suppose he comes before God's bar clothed in purple, with a crown upon his brow, for there the diadem attracts no attention. I see whole hosts of men gathered before God's white throne; but monarchs and their slaves are mixed indiscriminately; princes and peasants stand upon a level there, and I see no distinction. God says, "Depart, ye cursed," and the monarch is damned; or he pronounces, "Come, ye blessed," and the monarch is saved. But the same voice speaks to each alike. If they be saints, there is a voice of joy, lifting them to their home; and if they be lost, the voice of denunciation sending them to their appointed doom. Ah! there will be no profit to man, in all he has achieved, when he comes before God's judgment bar. Suppose him standing up to tell his Maker, "Lord, I had a deal of fame on earth, they stuck me up on the top of a column, to bear all weathers, and they called that glory, to be gazed at by

fools, or to be admired by the populace; and, O Lord, wilt thou send such a man as I am to perdition?" "Oh," says Justice, "what care I for thy statute? what care I for thy fame? If thy soul be not saved, if thou art not in Christ - with all thy statues and all thy fame - thou shalt sink to perdition." For these things avail not in the day of judgment; men shall stand alike there; all shall be on a level. If Christ hath saved us, we shall be saved; but if we are out of Christ, great and mighty may we be, but the sentence shall be as impartial to the rich as to the poor.

Once more: what will it profit a man, *when he gets to hell*, if he has gained the whole world? Profit him, sir! profit him! It will be the other way. In ages long ago a monarch went to hell; whenever he had entered a city, nobles saluted him, and monarchs did him reverence; when he went to hell, it was known he was come; there, in their dungeons, lay the monarchs whom he had chained and dragged at his chariot wheels; there were the men whom he had slaughtered, and whose nations he had cut up, root and branch; and when he entered into hell, lying on their beds of fire, and looking on him with scorn, a thousand voices shouted, "Aha! aha! art thou become like one of us?" Then he found that by so much the more glory he had on earth, by so much the more hot was hell; and while, as a common sinner, he had received a hell, he found that as an extraordinary sinner, and a great one, hells rolled on hells, like waves of the ocean o'er his guilty head. He found himself the worse for all his greatness. Go, wicked, rich man; heap up thy gold; mayhap it shall be turned to brimstone one day, and thou shalt swallow it. Go, man of fame; blow the trump, or bid others blow it; the breath of fame shall fan the coals of God Almighty's vengeance. Go, thou man of power, and get to thy dignity: the higher thy flight, the greater thy fall, when thou shalt be cast down from thy loftiness, and shalt lie for ever to howl in perdition; because having gained all this, thou hast gained nothing at all.

II. We have summed up, then, the first point: it is but little to gain the whole world; apart from religion there is very little in it. But now we come to the contrast: that is, **THE LOSING THE SOUL**.

I shall request your attention for a brief period, while I endeavour to dilate on that. To lose the soul, my friends, to lose the soul! how shall we

tell what it is to lose the soul? You can conceive how fearful is the loss of the soul in three ways. First, from its intrinsic value; secondly, from its capabilities; and thirdly, from its doom, if it be lost.

1. You may tell how serious it is to lose the soul, from *its intrinsic value*. The soul is a thing worth ten thousand worlds; in fact, a thing which worlds on worlds heaped together, like sand upon the sea shore, could not buy. It is more precious than if the ocean had each drop of itself turned into a golden globe, for all that wealth could not buy a soul. Consider! The soul is made in the image of its Maker; "God made man," it is said, "in his own image." The soul is an everlasting thing like God; God has gifted it with immortality; and hence it is precious. To lose it, then, how fearful! Consider how precious a soul must be, when both God and the devil are after it. You never heard that the devil was after a kingdom, did you? No, he is not so foolish; he knows it would not be worth his winning; he is never after that; but he is always after souls. You never heard that God was seeking after a crown, did you! No, he thinketh little of dominions; but he is after souls every day; his Holy Spirit is seeking his children; and Christ came to save souls. Do you think that which hell craves for, and that which God seeks for, is not precious?

The soul is precious again, we know, by the price Christ paid for it. "Not with silver and gold," but with his own flesh and blood did he redeem it. Ah! it must be precious, if he gave his heart's core to purchase it. What must it be to lose your soul?

2. But it is precious, because it is everlasting; and that brings me to note - (I am running over these points; you can enlarge upon them at home) - that the soul is precious, on account of *its capabilities*. Do you see, up there, yon starry crown? Do you mark there that throne, with the palm branch at its foot? Do you see that pearly-gated city, with its light brighter than the sun? Do you mark its golden streets, and its thrice happy inhabitants? There is a paradise which eye has not seen, which outvieth dreams, and which imagination could not picture; but if the soul be lost, that is lost. We see many lost things advertised. Now, if a man's soul be lost, let me advertise what he has lost. He has lost a crown, he has lost a harp, he has lost a throne, he has lost a heaven, he has lost an eternity.

When I consider how happy a soul may be, it appears to me to be a tremendous thing for it to be lost, even thou it should gain the world; in fact, I cannot set the world in contrast; it is as though I should measure the Alps by a mole-hill. I cannot tell you what size the world is, if you give me for its standard a grain of dust; nor can I tell you heaven's worth, if you only allow me to value it by a world. Oh! sirs, because the soul is capable of heaven, its loss is a dreadful and terrific thing.

3. But consider, lastly, *where the soul must go to that is lost*. There is a place, as much beneath imagination as heaven is above it; a place of murky darkness, where only lurid flames make darkness visible; a place where beds of flame are the fearful couches upon which spirits groan; a place where God Almighty from his mouth pours a stream of brimstone, kindling that "pile of fire and of much wood," which God has prepared of old as a Tophet for the lost and ruined. There is a spot, whose only sights are scenes are fearful woe; there is a place - I do not know where it is; it is somewhere, not in the bowels of this earth, I trust, for that were a sad thing for this world to have hell within its bowels - but somewhere, in a far-off world there is a place where the only music is the mournful symphony of damned spirits; where howling, groaning, moaning, wailing and gnashing of teeth, make up the horrid concert. There is a place where demons fly, swift as air, with whips of knotted burning wire, torturing poor souls; where tongues, on fire with agony, burn the roofs of mouths that shriek for drops of water - that water all denied. There is a place where soul and body endure as much of infinite wrath as the finite can bear; where the inflictions of justice crush the soul, where the continual flagellations of vengeance beat the flesh; where the perpetual pourings out of the vials of eternal wrath scald the spirit, and where the cuttings of the sword strike deep into the inner man. AH! sirs, I cannot picture this; within an hour some of you may know it. If you curtain of life be rent in twain, some of you may soon find yourselves face to face with lost souls. Then, sirs, you will know what it is to lose your souls; but you will never know it till then, nor can I hope to set it forth to you. Vain are these words; light are the things I utter. They are but the daubings of a painter who cannot pourtray a scene so dreadful, for earth hath not colours black enough or fiery enough to depict it. Ah! sinners, if you knew what hell meant, then might ye tell what it is to lose your own souls.

III. What, then, is THE PRACTICAL LESSON with which we finish? If, as most certainly is the case in the most favorable circumstances, a sinner loses fearfully by the gain of the world - if he loses his soul - then how absurd it is for a man at any time to sell his soul for a little! *There* is a man who has sold his soul for half-a-sovereign. "Where?" say you. Ah! let him answer himself; many a man has done that. Says one, "I think I should earn two shillings on Sunday by keeping one of my shutters down in my shop and selling a little." Ay, fine pay that, to damn your souls for two shillings a week! Another man says, "I think I should get a good situation if I was not one of those Calvinists;" and he leaves off going to the house of God, and begins to be a more fashionable religionist. A fine thing that - to ruin your everlasting interest for a good situation! It will bring you into a bad situation one day. It is astonishing for how little a man will sell his soul. I remember an anecdote - I believe it is true; I had almost said I hope it is. A minister, going across some fields, met a countryman, and said to him. "Well, friend, it is a most delightful day." "Yes, sir, it is." And having spoken to him about the beauties of the scenery, and so forth, he said, "How thankful we ought to be for our mercies! I hope you never come out without praying." "Pray, sir!" said he, "why, I never pray; I have got nothing to pray for." "What a strange man," said the minister; "don't your wife pray?" "If she likes," "Don't your children pray?" "If they like, they do." "Well, you mean to say you do not pray," said the minister, (as I think, not very rightly; no doubt he saw that the man was superstitious,) "now, I will give you half-a-crown if you will promise me not to pray as long as you live." "Very well," said the man, "I don't see what I have got to pray for;" and he took the half-crown. When he went home, the thought struck him, "What have I done?" And something said to him, "Well, John, you will die soon, and you will want to pray then; you will have to stand before your Judge, and it will be a sad thing not to have prayed." Thoughts of this kind came over him, and he felt dreadfully miserable; and the more he thought the more miserable he felt. His wife asked him what was the matter; he could hardly tell her for some time; and last he confessed he had taken half-a-crown never to pray again, and that was preying on his mind. The poor ignorant soul thought it was the evil one that had appeared to him. "Ay, John," said she, "sure enough it was the devil, and you have sold your sold to him for that half-

crown." The poor creature could not work for several days, and he became perfectly miserable, from the conviction that he had sold himself to the evil one. However, the minister knew what he was about, and there was a barn close by, and he was going to preach there; he guessed the man would be there to ease his terror of mind, and sure enough he was there one Sabbath evening, and he heard the same man who gave him the half-crown take for his text these words, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "Ay," said he, "what will it profit a man, who sold his soul for half-a-crown?" Up gets the man, crying out, "Sir, take it back! take it back!" "Why," said the minister, "you want the half-crown, and you said you did not need to pray." "But, sir," he said, "I must pray; if I do not pray, I am lost;" and after some testing by parleying, the half-crown was returned, and the man was on his knees, praying to God. And it came to pass that that very circumstance was the means of saving his soul, and making him a changed man. Now, I cannot do anything so eccentric as that; but I send some of you away with this in your mind, that though you think you could not do so, yet actually, there are many of those whom I have here who have sold themselves to Satan, by doing something for their worldly profit, which, in the end, must lead to the loss of their souls. Do any of you desire to know how your souls may be saved? Here is the answer; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and ye shall be saved." And whosoever among you knoweth himself to be a sinner, let him take this for his consolation, - "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Go away with that, thou chief of sinners, and rejoice, for Jesus Christ came to save thee. May God add his blessing for Christ's sake! Amen.

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God's Providence

Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and

their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. - Ezekiel 1:15-19

While reading the scriptures, we tried to hint at the practical benefits of the doctrine of Providence. We attempted to explain that portion of Scripture which teaches us to "take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself." Our blessed Lord had there uttered very precious words to drive away our fears, to keep us from distrust and from distress, and to enable us so to rely upon Providence that we may say, he that feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies, will never suffer me to famish nor to be naked. Having shown you from our Lord's own words the practical benefits of the doctrine of Providence, I thought I would endeavor to explain that doctrine more fully this morning. I am constantly talking about providence in my preaching, and I thought it quite as well to devote a whole sermon to explain what I believe are God's great wonder-working processes which we call Providence. In looking for a text I found this, These "wheels" signify divine Providence; and I trust, while explaining them, I may be so assisted by God's Spirit that I may say many things to you concerning God's government which may rejoice any who are desponding, and lift up the souls of many who are distressed.

I. Going at once to my divisions, my first remark will be that PROVIDENCE IS HERE COMPARED TO A "WHEEL."

When the prophet had seen the "living creatures," which I take it were angels, he opened his eyes again, and he saw a wonderful illustration of the divine Providence, and this exhibition was in the figure of a wheel. You must know that this is not the only place where the comparison is to be found; for among the classics, the Romans and the Greeks were accustomed to compare the wondrous works of God in Providence to a wheel. The story goes, that a certain king being taken prisoner, was

bound in chains, and dragged along at the chariot wheels of his conqueror. As he went along, he kept looking at the wheel, and shedding tears—looking at the wheel again, and lifting up his eyes and smiling. The conqueror turned and said, "Wherefore art thou looking at that wheel?" He said, "I was thinking, such is the lot of man; just now I was here; now I am there; but soon I may be here again at the top of the wheel, and thou mayest be grinding the dust." This was well for a heathen. The prophet had the very same idea. He was permitted by God to see that the wheel is a very beautiful figure of divine Providence. Let us show you that it is.

I have just hinted at the reason why Providence is like a wheel; *because sometimes one part of the wheel is at the top, and then it is at the bottom*. Sometimes this part is exalted, and anon it sinks down to the dust. Then it is lifted to the air, and then again by a single revolution it is brought down again to the earth. Just as our poet sings -

"Here he exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
And there the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down."

So it is with our life. Sometimes we are in humble poverty, and hardly know what we shall do for bread; anon the wheel revolves, and we are brought into the comfort of wealth; our feet stand in a spacious room; we are fed with corn and wine; we drink of a cup overflowing its brim. Again we are brought low through affliction and famine. A little while and another page is turned, and we are exalted to the heavens, and can sing and rejoice in the Lord our God. I have no doubt many of you here have experienced a far more checkered life than I have, and therefore you can feel that your life has been as a "wheel." Ah! man, thou art strong, and great, and rich; thou mayest stand now as the uppermost part of it; but it is a wheel, and you may yet be brought low. And you, poor, who are depressed and downcast, who are weeping because you know not where you shall lay your heads—that wheel may revolve and you may be lifted up. Our own experience is never a stable thing; it is always changing, always turning round. The fly that sits now on the edge of the wheel may be crushed by its next revolution, and be brought to the dust of death the

next day. The world may cry "Hosannah" to its minister to-day and the next day may say, "Crucify him, crucify him." Such is the state of man. Providence is like a wheel.

You know that, *in a wheel there is one portion that never turns round, that stands steadfast; and that is the axle.* So in God's Providence, there is an axle which never moves. Christian, here is a sweet thought for thee! Thy state is ever changing; sometimes thou art exalted, and sometimes depressed; yet there is an unmoving point in thy state. What is that axle? What is the pivot upon which all the machinery revolves? It is the axle of God's everlasting love toward his covenant people. The exterior of the wheel is changing, but the center stands forever fixed. Other things may move; but God's love never moves: it is the axle of the wheel; and this is another reason why Providence should be compared to a wheel.

Yet further. You observe, *when the wheel moves very rapidly you can discern nothing but the circumference—nothing but the exterior circle.* So, if you look back to history, and read the story of a thousand years, you just set the wheel of Providence revolving rapidly; you lose sight of all the little things that are within the circle; you see only one great thing, and that is, that God is working through the world his everlasting purposes. You sit down and take a book of history—say the History of England—and you will say of one event, "Now that seems to be out of place;" of another, "That seems to be out of time;" of another, "That seems to be adverse to the cause of liberty;" but look through a thousand years, and those things which seemed as if they would crush liberty in her germ; those things which seemed as if they would destroy this our commonwealth in our very rising, have been those which have caused the sturdy oak of liberty to take deeper root. Take the whole together, instead of the things one by one; look at a thousand years, and you will see nothing but one round ring of symmetry, teaching you that God is wise, and God is just. So let it be with you in your lives. Here you are fretting about troubles today. Think also of the past; put all your troubles together, and they are no troubles at all. You will see that one counteracts the other. If you take your life—not today, but look back on forty years of it—you will be obliged, instead of lamenting and mourning, to bless God for his mercies toward you. Let the wheel go round, and you will see nothing but a ring of

everlasting wisdom revolving.

I trust I have made the first part intelligible—that the Providence of God is here compared to a wheel.

II. The second thought is that THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS IN SOME MYSTERIOUS WAY connected WITH ANGELS.

Look at verse 15: "Now as I beheld the living creatures." Then turn to the 19th verse: "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." These living creatures I believe to be angels; and the text teaches us that there is a connection between Providence and angelic agency. I do not know how to explain it; I cannot tell how it is; but I believe angels have a great deal to do with the business of this world. In times of miracles and wondrous things, there was an angel that came down and slew the firstborn of Egypt; and an angel cut off the hosts of Sennacherib. Angels did mighty things in those ancient days. My firm belief is, that angels are sent forth somehow or other to bring about the great purposes of God. The great wheel of Providence is turned by an angel. When there is some trouble which seems to stop that wheel, some mighty cherub puts his shoulder to it, and hurls it around, and makes the chariot of God's Providence still go on. Angels have much more to do with us than we imagine. I do not know but that spirits sometimes come down and whisper thoughts into our ears. I have strange thoughts sometimes, that seem to come from a land of dreams; and fiery visions that make my soul hot within me. Sometimes I have thoughts which I know come from God's Spirit; some which are glorious, and some that are not so good as those which the Spirit would have put there, but still holy thoughts; and I often attribute them to angels. I have sometimes a thought which cheers me in distress; and was not an angel sent to strengthen Christ in the garden? How do you think the angel strengthened him? Why, by putting thoughts into Christ's mind. He could not in any other way: he could not strengthen him by a plaster, or by any physical means; but by injecting thoughts. And so with us. There was a temptation which might have led you astray; but God said, "Gabriel, fly! there is a danger to one of my people; go and put such a thought into his soul, that when the danger

comes he will say, Get thee behind me, Satan, I will have nothing to do with sin."

We have each of us a guardian angel to attend us; and if there be any meaning in the passage, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," it means that every person has a guardian spirit, and every Christian has some angel who flies about him, and holds the shield of God over his brow; keeps his foot, lest he should dash it against a stone; guards him, controls him, manages him; injects thoughts, restrains evil desires, and is the minister and servant of the Holy Ghost to keep us from sin, and lead us to righteousness. Whether I am right or wrong, I leave you to judge; but perhaps I have more angelology in me than most people. I know my imagination sometimes has been so powerful that I could almost, when I have been alone at night, fancy I saw an angel fly by me, and hear the horse-hoofs of the cherubim as they dashed along the stony road when I have been out preaching the word. However, I take it that the text teaches us that angels have very much to do with God's Providence. For it says, "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." Let us bless God that he has made angels ministering spirits to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation.

III. Our third remark shall be, that PROVIDENCE IS UNIVERSAL.

That you will see by the text: "Behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces." The wheel had "four faces." I think that means one face to the north, another to the south, another to the east, and another to the west. There is a face to every quarter. Providence is universal, looking to every quarter of the globe. Have you ever been in a house where there was an old picture hanging? I have sometimes stood in a picture-gallery, and there has been some old warrior: he has looked at me. If I have gone to the other end of the room, he has still looked at me; wherever you are in the room, a well-painted portrait will be looking at you. Such is the Providence of God; wherever you are, the eye of God will be upon you—as much upon you as if there were not another person in the whole world. If there were only one, you might think how much God

would look upon that one, but he looks on each one of us as if there were no other created being, and nothing else in the whole world. His eye is fixed upon us at every hour, and at every moment. Wherever we may be, we shall have one face of the wheel turned upon us.

You cannot banish me from my Lord. Send me to the snows of Siberia or Lapland, I shall have the eyes of God there; send me to Australia, and let me toil at the gold diggings, there will he visit me. If you send me to the utmost verge of the round globe, I shall still have the eye of God upon me. Put me in the desert where there is not one single blade of grass growing, and his presence shall cheer me. Or let me go to sea, amid the howlings of the tempest and the shrieking wind, where the mad waves lift up their hands to the skies as if they would pluck the stars from their cloudy thrones, and I shall have the eye of God there. Let me sink, and let my gurgling voice be heard among the waves—let my body lie down in the caverns of the sea, and the eye of God shall be on every bone, and in the day of the resurrection shall my every atom be tracked in its wanderings. Yes, the eye of God is everywhere; Providence is universal.

Now there may be some here who have friends far away—let me comfort them. The eye of God is looking on them. There may be some here who are about to part with beloved ones who are going to distant countries. Wherever they are, they will be as much in the keeping of God as though they were here. If one part of the world is not as near the sun's light as another, yet they are all equally near the eye of our God. Transport me where you please—wherever the cloudy pillar of Providence shall guide me—and I shall have God with me. That thought comforted the great traveler, Mungo Park, when he was in the desert of Sahara. He had been robbed and stripped of every thing, and was left naked. He suddenly saw a little piece of moss, and taking it up, he saw how beautiful it was. He said: "Then the hand of God is here—here is one of his works; though I call loudly none can hear me, for there is nothing but the prowling lion and the howling jackal; yet God is here." That comforted him. Wherever you may be, whatever may be your case, God will be with you. Whatever period of your life you may now be in, God is with you. His eye is at the bridal and at the funeral; at the cradle and at the grave. In the battle, God's eye is looking through the smoke; in the revolution, there is God's

hand managing the masses of men who have broken loose from their rulers. In the earthquake, there is Jehovah manifest; in the tempest, there is God's hand, tossing the bark, dashing it against the rocks, or saving it in his hand from the boisterous waves. In all seasons, at all times, in all dangers, and in all climates, there is the hand of God.

IV. Our next remark is, that PROVIDENCE IS UNIFORM.

It is only one Providence, and ever one. "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness." There were four wheels and four faces, yet one likeness. There was but one piece of machinery; and thus we are taught that Providence is all one. Sometimes providences seem to cross each other. One thing that God does seems to contradict the next thing; but it never really does so.

It is a great truth, though hard for us to grasp, that Providence is one. Just look at the case of Joseph. God has it in his mind that Joseph shall be governor over all the land of Egypt: how is that to be done? The first thing to be done is that Joseph's brethren must hate him. O, say you, that is a step backward. Next, Joseph's brethren must put him in the pit. That is another step backward, say you. No, it is not: wait a little. Joseph's brethren must sell him; that is another step backward, is it not? Providence is one, and you must not look at its separate parts. He is sold; he becomes a favorite: so far, so good. That is a step onward. Anon, he is put in a dungeon. Wait and see the end; all the different parts of the machinery are one. They appear to clash; but they never do. Put them all together. If Joseph had not been put in the pit, he never would have been the servant of Potiphar: if he never had been put in the round-house, he never would have interpreted the jailor's dream; and if the king had never dreamed, he would not have been sent for. There were a thousand chances, as the world has it, working together to produce the exaltation of Joseph. Providence is one: it never clashes.

"Oh!" says one, "I cannot understand that; Providence seems to be very adverse to me. Mrs. Hannah More, I think it is, says, she went into a place

where they were manufacturing a carpet. She said: "There is no beauty there." The man said: "It is one of the most beautiful carpets you ever saw." "Why, here is a piece hanging out, and it is all in disorder." "Do you know why, ma'am? You look at the wrong side." So it is very often with us. You and I think Providence is very bad, because we are looking at the wrong side. We do look at the wrong side while we are here, but when we get to heaven we shall see the right side of God's dealings; and when we do we shall say, "Lord, how wonderful are thy works: in wisdom thou hast made them all: glorious are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." You have been puzzled sometimes to think why that friend was brought into the grave. You have said, Why was I made sick at such a time? Why that trouble and that calamity? That is no business of yours. It is yours to believe that all things work together for one great purpose: that one thing never crosses another. But you must not expect to see it so just yet. Here on earth the machine appears to be broken into pieces, and we can only see it in confusion: but in heaven we shall see it all put together. Suppose I go into a place where some great artist is manufacturing a machine: I say, Do you mean to say this is a machine? Yes, and an exquisite one it will be. It does not look like it; I could not put it together. O, no, sir, you could not, but I can: and come and see it when I have put it together, and you shall see that each part fits—that each cog on one wheel will work on the cog of another wheel, and all the parts will move together when I adjust them. Do not find fault with it, and say, One is too small and another too large, because you know nothing at all about it. So, dear friends, you and I can never see but parts of God's ways. We only see here a wheel and there a wheel; but we must wait till we get to heaven, then we shall see the right side of the carpet; we shall see it all put together, and then we shall see it was one piece of machinery, had one end, one aim, one object, and was all one.

V. The next thought is, that, in this text, PROVIDENCE IS COMPARED TO THE SEA.

Look to the 16th verse—"The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl." The word beryl is commonly used in Scripture to denote the ocean, because it bears the greatest likeness to that deep green you sometimes see, and at other times the blue

appearance of the sea. Let us transport ourselves for a moment to the top of some high cliff, and we look down on the noisy ocean. It has been the theme of a thousand songs; it has borne myriads of fleets on its mighty breast. Ay! and yet there it is rolling on. If you begin to think about the ocean, though it is one of the minor parts of God's works compared with the constellations of the heavens, and the globes which he has hung on high, you begin to be lost in the vastness of your conceptions concerning the greatness of God's works. And so with providence.

It is like the ocean for another reason. *The sea is never still*; both day and night it is always moving. In the day, when the sun shines upon it, its waves march up in marshaled order as if about to capture the whole land, and drown all the solid earth. Then again they march back each one as if reluctant to yield its prey. It is always moving: the moon shines upon it, and the stars light it up; still it moves. Or, it is darkness, and nothing is seen; still it moves—by night and day the restless billows chant a boisterous hymn of glory, or murmur the solemn dirge of mariners wrecked far out in the depths. Such is Providence; by night or day Providence is always going on. The farmer sleeps, but his wheat is growing. The mariner on the sea sleeps, but the wind and the waves are carrying on his bark. Providence! thou never stoppest; thy mighty wheels never stay their everlasting circles. As the blue ocean has rolled on impetuously for ages, so shall Providence, until he who first set it in motion shall bid it stop; and then its wheels shall cease, forever fixed by the eternal decree of the mighty God.

Again, you will see another reason why the sea is like Providence. *Man cannot manage it*. Who can rule or govern the sea? Men cannot. Xerxes made chains for the Hellespont, and lashed the sea with whips because it washed away his boats; but what cared the sea about that? It laughed at him; and if he had not been too great a coward to put himself on its bosom, it might have swallowed him. Canute put his chair on the beach, and bade the waves retire. What cared they for him? They came and would have washed him and his chair away if he had not moved backward. The sea is not to be governed by man. A whole fleet sails over it, and it is only like a feather blown by the wind across the surface of a brook. All we ever put on the sea is as nothing. It can never be restrained,

nor chained, nor managed by man. Greedy man hath carved the land, but the sea has no landmark. It is impetuous; it follows its own will. So does Providence; it will not be managed by man. Napoleon once heard it said, that man proposes and God disposes. "Ah," said Napoleon, "but I propose and dispose too." How do you think he proposed and disposed. He proposed to go and take Russia; he proposed to make all Europe his. He proposed to destroy that power, and how did he come back again? How had he disposed it? He came back solitary and alone, his mighty army perished and wasted, having well-nigh eaten and devoured one another through hunger. Man proposes and God disposes. Providence, like the sea, cannot be directed by man; it can be controlled by God. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" -

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men."

Man cannot alter it, and cannot change it. Let him try to stand against God's Providence; and Providence will grind and crush him.

There are many more reasons; but I think it would be wasting time to notice them. I leave you to finish that part of the subject.

VI. Again, GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS INTRICATE.

This is our sixth remark; and that you will find is here too. "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl; and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." We have just said that Providence is *intricate*. When Joseph brought his two sons up to Jacob's deathbed side, Jacob ordered the two boys to be brought; and when he was about to bless them, he guided his hands wittingly; and he put his right hand on the head of the youngest, and his left hand on the head of the eldest. "O!" said Joseph, "not so, my father." But he said, "it is even so;" and he gave the blessing. He would not give the blessing in any other way; but he crossed his hands. And so God usually blesses his children by crossing his hands. We say, "Do not deal so with me." "It is even so, child; there is a blessing on thy head." Do not say, Uncross thy

hands; that is the way to bless the most of all. I wish to put thee greatest blessing upon thee; and therefore I have crossed my hands. Providence is wonderfully intricate. Ah! you want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I assure you. You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you; you must believe it. You want to see how it can bring good to the soul; you may be enabled in a little time; but you cannot see it now; you must believe it. Honor God by trusting him. God has many gordian knots which wicked men may cut, and which righteous men may try to unravel, but which God alone can untie. We see the wicked prosper; they flourish, and great is their power, while the righteous are cast down. We say why? There are wheels within wheels. Do not fret yourselves because evil-doers are more prosperous. There may be a nation that seems to have right on its side; that nation may be crushed, and another people who are tyrannical may get the victory. Do not say why? Do not ask? You shall know the reason when you get up yonder:

"God plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

Do not attempt to do what Gabriel never dare do—to ask the reason why, for God will never give it.

VII. PROVIDENCE IS ALWAYS CORRECT.

I shall not detain you long over this. The prophet saw the wheels, and he well says, they turned not when they went, they always went straight forward; they never turned to the right or to the left. Such is God's Providence. Man marks out plans: he says, I shall build this tower; he gets it halfway up, and he finds he has not enough to finish it with; he has to pull it down, lay a smaller foundation, and build again. God never does so; he has a plan when he begins, and he carries that plan out: he lays the foundation, and always finishes the topstone. There are some who talk about God's changing his purpose; such people do not know what God is at all. How could God change? God must either change from a better to a worse, or from a worse to a better. If he change from a worse to a better, he is not perfect now; and if he change from what he is to something

worse, he will not be perfect then, and he will not be God. He cannot change. It is not possible that God should ever change or shift in any of his purposes. Can he change because he has not power? Why, sirs, he could girdle this globe with mountains, or move the hills into the sea. Can he change because he has not patience enough? What, he who from his purpose never swerves? Shall he change because he has made a mistake? Shall the Most High, Jehovah, ever have an error in his mighty mind? To err is human. With the divine Being the whole goes on, and what he has ordained shall be. On the iron rock of destiny it is written, and it cannot be altered. God moves the wheel, and the wheel goes on; and though a thousand armies stand to stop it, it goes on still. "They turned not to the right hand not to the left when they went."

I cannot make out what some of you do with your comfortless gospel—believing that God loves you today, and hates you tomorrow—that you are a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next. I could not believe a gospel like that. If I were a heathen, I could believe it at once, because I could manufacture a god of wood and stone. I would have a god of mud, that I could alter with my fingers, and change it to any fashion. But if I once believe in a God that "was and is, and is to come," I know he cannot change; and I feel a constancy of faith, and a firmness of hope, which the cares and trials of this mortal life cannot destroy. He will not cast off his people whom he hath chosen.

VIII. One more thought. PROVIDENCE IS AMAZING.

We shall not dwell on this; but just show you that the text says so. "As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four." Even the man that knows that every wave that dashes against the ship is washing him nearer home—that every breath of wind that rises comes to his sail and fills it, and sends it to the white cliffs of his native Albion—even the man that feels that all is for him—even he must say that Providence is amazing. O! that thought, it staggers thought! O! it is an idea that overwhelms me—that God is working all! The sins of man, the wickedness of our race, the crimes of nations, the iniquities of kings, the cruelties of wars, the terrific scourge of pestilence—all these things in some mysterious way are working the

will of God! We must not look at it; we cannot look at it. I cannot explain it. I cannot tell you where human will and free agency unite with God's sovereignty and with his unfailing decrees. This has been the place where intellectual gladiators have fought with each other ever since the time of Adam. Some have said, Man does as he likes; and others have said, God does as he pleases. In one sense, they are both true; but there is no man that has brains or understanding enough to show where they meet. We cannot tell how it is that I do just as I please as to which street I shall go home by; and yet I cannot go home but through a certain road. John Newton used to say, there were two streets to go to St. Mary Woolnoth; but Providence directed him as to which he should use. Last Sabbathday I came down a certain street I do not know why—and there was a young man who wished to speak to me; he wished to see me many times before. I say that was God's Providence—that I might meet that young man. Here was Providence, and yet there was my choice; how, I cannot tell. I cannot comprehend it. I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes—that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens—that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence—the fall of sere leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He that believes in a God must believe this truth. There is no standing-point between this and atheism. There is no half way between a mighty God that worketh all things by the sovereign counsel of his will and no God at all. A God that cannot do as he pleases—a God whose will is frustrated, is not a God, and cannot be a God. I could not believe in such a God as that.

IX. Our last and closing idea is, that PROVIDENCE IS FULL OF WISDOM.

You will see this by the last part of the 18th verse—"And their rings were full of eyes round about them four." You will say this morning, Our minister is a fatalist. Your minister is no such thing. Some will say, Ah! he believes in fate. He does not believe in fate at all. What is fate? Fate is this—*Whatever is, must be*. But there is a difference between that and

Providence. Providence says, *Whatever God ordains must be*; but the wisdom of God never ordains any thing without a purpose. Every thing in this world is working for some one great end. Fate does not say that. Fate simply says that the thing must be; Providence says, God moves the wheels along, and there they are. If any thing would go wrong, God puts it right; and if there is any thing that would move awry, he puts his hand and alters it. It comes to the same thing; but there is a difference as to the object. There is all the difference between fate and Providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man. Fate is a blind thing; it is the avalanche crushing the village down below and destroying thousands. Providence is not an avalanche; it is a rolling river, rippling at the first like a rill down the sides of the mountain, followed by minor streams, till it rolls in the broad ocean of everlasting love, working for the good of the human race. The doctrine of Providence is not, that *what is, must be*; but that, what is, works together for the good of our race, and especially for the good of the chosen people of God. The wheels are full of eyes; not blind wheels.

Let us close with the thought, that there is the greatest wisdom in the workings of Providence. Now you were in great distress probably, and you could not see why. The next time you are in distress, you must say, The wheels are full of eyes: I have but two eyes; but God's wheels are full of eyes—God can see every thing; I can only see one thing at a time. I see it looks good for me now; I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now; I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now; I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I know not what kind of flower that herb will yield. This affliction is a cassava root, full of poison, and would soon destroy me; but God can put that in the oven, so that all the poison shall evaporate, and it shall become food for me to live upon. This trouble of mine seems to me to be destructive: God shall get all the destroying power out of it, and it shall be made food. Now, thou tried one, groaning down in the valley, up with thine heart; away with thy tears; put thy hand on thy breast, and make thy heart stop its hard beating—thou poor soul! dash the cup of misery from thine hand; thou art not condemned; thou art a pardoned Christian. Remember that God hath said, "All things work together for good"—more still, they "work together for good to them that love God, even to them that are called

according to his purpose." O! how I would like to make your hearts like flint and steel against trouble! We cannot bear the winds of trouble; we are soon cast down and broken-hearted. When we are in prosperity, we are giants; we think we can do like Samson; we can take hold of the two pillars of trouble and distress, and we can pull them down. But once tell us that the Philistines will be upon us, and we have no power.

He who has faith is better than the stoic. The stoical philosopher bore it, because he believed it must be; the Christian bears it because he believes it is working for his good. Next time trouble comes, disease comes, pestilence comes, smile at it, and say:

"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode;
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there at night shall rest his head."

Let this be thy shield to keep off the thrusts of distress, let this be thy high rock against all the winds of sorrow. Sing,

"Though the way may be rough, it cannot be long,
So smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

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Providence

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. - Matthew 10:30

During this week my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence, and you will not wonder when I relate a portion of one day's

story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of 8000 persons, and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble, and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from 5000 to 6000 people gathered together to hear the Word; and a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see. It certainly was a huge uncomely building, but, nevertheless, it seemed well adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshipped God, and again in the evening, and we separated to our homes, or rather, we were about to separate, and all this while the kind providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding 2000 persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded, and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening there it stood, and neither moved nor shook. But mark the provident hand of God: in the evening, when the people were about to retire, and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way, and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us, and only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be re-set without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember, and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred, and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us; the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted. But we have a more marvellous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it, and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after we had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers, and

rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us, and how few of us would have escaped we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's providence. But if it had been a frost instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours beforehand, and then your minister, and the greater part of his congregation, would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any partakers of the scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; he hath been very gracious unto us, and remembered us for good.

Now, when we look abroad into the world we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God, that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe him to be wilfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation, that we cannot have patience with him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation: we have each of us seen in our own salvation such positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us, that we are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think hardly of the man, who, having seen and heard of such a providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand. It seems to me that the hand of God in providence is as clear as in creation; and whilst I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life, bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God. We must, if we would be true believers in God, and would avoid all atheism, give unto him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace, and providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to

forget him; we may easily see God in creation if we be at all enlightened, and if saved, we cannot avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved, and the effect of grace in our hearts, always compels us to feel that God is just. But providence is such a chequered thing, and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning his dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural Atheism—a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of his wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all, the text says, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer the *minuteness of providence*. Again, inasmuch as it is said of believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer *the kind consideration, the generous care, which God exercises over Christians*. And then, from the text, and from our Saviour's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw *a practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this truth*—that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

I. First, then, our text very clearly teaches us THE MINUTENESS OF PROVIDENCE. Every man can see providence in great things; it is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind, and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war, and the ravages of pestilence, come from the hand of God. We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that he is also Lord of the valleys. They will grant that he deals with great masses, but not with individuals; with seas in the bulk, but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of providence being in great things involves a providence in the little, for it were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hand, whilst the atom was left to chance; it is indeed a belief that contradicts itself; we must believe all chance or else all God. We must have all ordained and arranged, or else we must have

everything left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God; therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great, that he even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His providence descends to the minute particles of dust in the summer gale; he numbers the gnats in the sunshine, and the fishes in the sea. While it certainly doth control the massive orbs that shine in heaven, it doth not blush to deal with the drop that trickleth from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice, how little circumstances of daily life, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history, and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his brethren, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me hither." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them. One day, Joseph's brethren are gone out with the sheep; Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son; he loved him better than all his brethren. Why does he send him away? He sends him, however. Then why should it have happened at that particular time, that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send, and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the basement of the structure. Joseph goes; his brethren are in want of pasture, and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However Joseph goes there; he arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams, and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However, Joseph is sold; but he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt, he is taken to the

land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife, at all? Why is it again that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain. They do both offend their master; they are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream; the butler then thinks of Joseph; Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh. But take away any of those simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You cannot get the machine to work; if any of the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that, but any other history he likes to fix upon, that there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great results that tell upon the page of history, and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice, in the minutiae of providence, how *punctual* providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence, than when you consider how well God keeps time with himself. To return to our history—how is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at that time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time, so that Joseph's brethren might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later, and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready: you do not know how he may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor woman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha; she, however, had left her country at the time of famine, and had lost her estate. She wanted to get it back; God

determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and he talks to him: he tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange! in comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman; she comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted, just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her. All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say; but those who read Bibles, and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say; there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And whilst a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting him out of such things as this, would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the temple, and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the temple, and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him, and what is to become of poor Paul's life? Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead, when up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him. But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came, and when he came the streets were full; there was a mob about Jerusalem? How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance!" I laugh at you; it is providence. If there be anything in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God

"Overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs."

But mark, that the running of the youth, and his arrival at the precise time, and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time, just proved

the punctuality of Divine providence; and if God has a design that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve; and if he means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in providence is always sure, and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from his pursuers. He enters a cave, and a sparrow chirps at the entrance, and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they, "there is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago;" and the imposter's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan, and guides him in the sea, when he makes the deep to be hoary. Will we please to recollect, that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool, is as much in the hand of providence as the motion of the great serpent in the depths. You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly hither and thither in strange confusion. The believer in providence holds that the wing of every bird has stamped upon it the place where it shall fly, and fly with never such vagaries of its own wild will, it cannot diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from its predestinated track. It may whirl about, above, beneath,—east, west, north, south—wherever it pleases; still, it is all according to the providential hand of God. And although we see it not, it may be, that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby; and again, something a little greater still might be affected, until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who seeth God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see him; but he who believes that God is there, may go from the little providence up to the God of providence. Rest assured, when the fish in the sea take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars; for he who marshals the stars in their courses, and guides the planets in their march, is the master of the fly, and wings the bat, and guides the minnow, and doth not despise the tiniest of his creatures. You say there is predestination in the path of the earth; you believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God; there

is as much his ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance, but in everything there is a God. All things live and move in him, and have their being; nor could they live or move otherwise; for God hath so ordained them.

I hear one say, "Well, sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and providence. Fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be; it is just an arrow shot from a bow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence; providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything, and an end to be answered; all things are working together, and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be; but the thing is, because it is right it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history; he had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when he marked all the aisles of history, and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to recollect also, which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of providence may be seen in the fact, that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention, when we speak of providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought, which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from hell, and bearing thousands safely to heaven. Beyond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception, that is only born to die, is under the hand of God. And in turning over the page of history, you will often be struck, when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word. Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God. Take an instance—Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem; his mother is living at Nazareth: he will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Caesar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed, and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that?

Stupid idea of Caesar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live; that will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will, and Caesar cannot be opposed." Some think Caesar mad. God knows what he means to do with Caesar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem; and there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled, that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for that whim of Caesar's. So that even the will of man; the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant, is in the hand of God, and he turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth, to work his own will.

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that he who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that he who supports the dignity of his throne amidst the splendors of heaven maintains it also in the depths of the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around, which is not according to the determination of his own counsel and will; and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine, that God hath decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass, and that he overruleth all things for his own glory and good; so that with Martin Luther, we can say,

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."

II. The second point is, THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF GOD, IN TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE. In reading the text, I thought, "There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself." You all take care of yourselves to some extent, but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his head? But God will not only protect our limbs, but even the excrescence of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our tenderest friends! Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child has a little cough, she notices it: the slightest weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions

anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were sound, and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection; but she has never thought of numbering the hairs of her child's head, and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child—so careful that he numbers the hairs of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care, which God exerts over his people in the way of providence. I have often been struck with the providence of God, in keeping his people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in hell at this hour, if some special providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company, and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell, concerning his own deliverance before conversion. One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me, that a little time before his conversion he was shooting, and his gun burst in four pieces, which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground, while he stood there unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock. I was noticing in Hervey's works, one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, "Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream, and, having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag; upon this he cries out with a determined ardor, *I'll kill him, I'll kill him*; and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining in the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay.—This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep, only the preventing care of our Heavenly Father."

How wonderful the providence of God with regard to Christian people, in keeping them out of temptation. I have often noticed this fact, and I believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it; but the temptation does not come. And at other times, when the temptation comes, you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes! the best Christian in the world will tell you, that such is still the strength of his lust, that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin; but then the object is not there, or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin, in fact we feel an aversion to it, or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man's character has been saved by providence. The best man that ever lived, little knows how much he owes for preservation to the providence as well as to the grace of God.

How marvellously too has providence arranged all our places. I cannot but recur to my own personal history, for, after all, we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here to-day as a remarkable instance of providence. I should not have occupied this hall probably, and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes if it had not been for what I considered an untoward accident. I should have been at this time studying in College, instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened. I had agreed to go to College: the tutor had come to see me, and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend; I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house, he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me for two hours; I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer, and went away thinking I had not treated him well; I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away this text came into my mind, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." So I wrote to say that I must positively decline, I was happy enough amongst my own country people, and got on very well in preaching, and I did not care to go to College. I have now had four years of labor. But, speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for

the remarkable providence turning the whole tenour of my thoughts, and putting things into a new track. You have often had strange accidents like that. When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it any how; it was quite impossible. God turned you another way, and proved that providence is indeed the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in providence to some of you, in providing your daily bread. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in providence, especially if he is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth, when day by day the manna falls, he begins to think there is a providence then. The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat and puts it into his barn, or takes his regular income, gets on so nicely that he can do without providence; he does not care a bit about it. The rents of his houses all come in, and his money in the Three per Cents is quite safe—what does he want with providence? But the poor man who has to work at day labor, and sometimes runs very short, and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, "Well, I know there is a providence—I cannot help believing it; these things could not have come by chance."

III. And now, in conclusion, brethren and sisters, if these things be so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered, and if providence provides for his people all things necessary for this life, and godliness, and arranges everything with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

In the first place, we ought to be a bold race of people. What have we to fear? Another man looks up, and if he sees a lightning-flash, he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it; although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it, yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea, the waves are dashing against the ship, she reels to and fro; other men shake, because they think this is all chance; we, however, see an order in the waves, and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men the tempest is a fearful thing; we believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why

should we quiver? In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation, sees something very marvellous, but yet never shudders at it, while the ignorant peasant, who has never seen any thing so wonderful, is alarmed and fearful, and even thinks that evil spirits are at work. We are to say—let others say what they please—"I know God is here, and I am his child, and this is all working for my good; therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Especially may I address this remark to timid people. There are some of you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh! if you could but believe that God manages all, why, you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning, or because there is a mouse in the parlour, or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden. There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia was wrecked, because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine, that your son in the army was necessarily killed, because he happened to be before Lucknow; or, if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God's providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it, and it is yours to resign all things into his hands.

I may say to those of you also who have been bereaved—if you believe in providence you may grieve; but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before, and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one, and the minister put it thus. He said, "Suppose you are a gardener employed by another; it is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it, and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses; you have trained them up, and there they are, blooming in their beauty. You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden, and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry: you go to your fellow-servants, and charge them with having taken the rose. They will declare that they

had nothing at all to do with it; and one says, "I saw the master walking here this morning; I think he took it." Is the gardener angry then? No, at once he says, "I am happy that my rose should have been so fair as to attract the attention of the master. It is his own: he hath taken it; let him do what seemeth him good."

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance; the grave is not filled by accident; men die according to God's will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it; your husband is gone, your wife is buried,—the Master took them; thank him that he let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here, and thank him that as he gave, he himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry; but the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say -

"Thee at all times will I bless;
Having thee I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with thee."

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to keep us always in an equable frame of mind. One of the things we most want is, to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If the balance goes too much up, it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them; but do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that he has taken them himself, and still bless his name. Bear all. He who feels that everything cometh to pass according to God's will, hath a great main-stay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that bloweth; for he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, he can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear friends, to believe this, and maintain as the consequence of it, that continual calm and peace which renders life so happy. Do not get

fearing ills that may come to-morrow; either they will not come, or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils to-day, do not multiply them by fearing those of to-morrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, I would to God, that some of you who are full of carking care and anxiety, could be delivered from it by a belief in providence; and when you once get into that quiet frame, which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ, to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

But as for you who fear not God, remember, the stones of the field are in league against you; the heavens cry to the earth and the earth answereth to the heavens, for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good, everything is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with him, and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A Psalm Of Remembrance

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. - 1 John 4:16

It is very pleasant to read descriptions of the Holy Land from observant travellers, who, in glowing language, have depicted its interesting scenes. I must confess, that all books which speak of the land where Jesus lived and died have an attraction for me; but how much more delightful must it be, to journey there one's-self, to stand on the very spot where Jesus preached and prayed, and to kneel upon that blood-stained garden of Gethsemane, in which he sweat that sacred sweat of blood. I can scarcely imagine what must be the sensation of a true Christian, when he stands on Calvary, that spot of all others most dear to the believer's soul. All the descriptions that the traveller can possibly give, can never awaken the emotions which would be felt if we were really there ourselves. Now, this law of nature I would transfer to matters of grace. Let me tell you this day what I may concerning the acts of God's goodness in the souls of his people, my description will be dullness itself compared with the glorious reality. If God should lend me help, so that I could, in glowing pictures, pourtray the amazing love of Christ Jesus to those who believe in him; if I could tell you of their matchless experience, their divine drinkings at the fountain of life and bliss, their heavenly feastings in the banquetting-house, all this would be nothing, compared with what you would feel, if you yourself could taste, and handle, and see, and know, and believe.

Let me add another figure to render this truth yet more apparent. Suppose an eloquent foreigner, from a sunny clime, should endeavour to make you appreciate the fruits of his nation. He depicts them to you. He describes their luscious flavour, their cooling juice, their delicious sweetness; but how powerless will be his oration, compared with your vivid remembrance, if you have yourself partaken of the dainties of his land. It is even so with the good things of God; describe them as we may, we cannot awaken in you the joy and delight that is felt by the man who lives upon them, who makes them his daily food, his manna from heaven,

and his water from the rock. 'Tis feeling, 'tis tasting, 'tis actually receiving and enjoying, which is, after all, the highest oratory with which we can possibly explain to you the sweet and precious things of God.

Now, do you not see that John could specially speak with power, for he spake from his own experience. And do you not perceive that his language cannot be understood, except we put ourselves in his position, and are able to echo his words, when he said, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us?" There are many here, I doubt not, who can join in this declaration of the apostle. And may the Holy Spirit help me, while I endeavour to draw out an expression of grateful thanks from those who have believed and known the love which God hath to them.

First, then, I shall look upon my text as being *an abstract of Christian experience*; secondly, I shall view it as *the summary of Christian testimony*; and after that, I shall regard it as *the groundwork of Christian encouragement*.

I. First of all, we have before us here, THE ABSTRACT OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE: Some will demur to this. If you should bring some Christians up and say, "Come now, just tell us in a few words what you think of the Christian life;" they would begin with a deep fetched groan, and then with the slightest possible allusion to mercy they would pass on to describe their continual exercises of soul, their deep afflictions, their desperate adversities, and their tremendous corruptions, and then they would end with another groan. But I think the healthy Christian, if he is asked this question,— "Now can you possibly give in one short sentence a statement of your Christian experience?" would come forward joyously, and say "I will say nothing about myself, but I will speak to the honour of my God, and I am sweetly constrained to affirm, that *'I have known and have believed the love that God hath to me,'*" That would be his abstract of experience, and the very best I am sure that any child of God can present. It is true that we have our trials, but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It is true that we have our corruptions, and mournfully do we know this to be the fact; but it is just as true that we have an all-sufficient Saviour, who overcomes these corruptions, and enables us to tread the dragon beneath our feet. In looking back we dare not say that we have not passed the den of leopards. It would be wrong if we were to deny that we have floundered through the slough of despond,

and have crept along the valley of humiliation, but we can say we have been *through* them; we have not remained in them; we have not left our bones bleaching in the burning sun, nor our bodies to be the prey of the lion. Our sorrows have been the heralds of mercies. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise, for we reckon them to be the deep bass notes of our song. The deeper our troubles the louder our thanks to God, who has assuredly led his servants through all and hath preserved us until now. Our past troubles are no disturbers of our happy worship; they do but swell the stream of our grateful affection. We put down all our trials into the account, but still we declare our one uncontradicted avowal, that "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." You will observe the distinction which the apostle makes. I may not be able clearly to bring it out, but it struck my mind as being a very beautiful description of the Christian's two-fold experience. Sometimes he *knows* the love that God has to him and at other times he *believes* it. There is a difference here: I hope I shall be able to make it plain.

1. Sometimes the Christian knows the love of God to him, I will mention two or three particular ways in which he knows it.

Sometimes he knows it by *seeing* it. He goes to his house and he finds it stored with plenty—"his bread is given him and his water is sure." The secret of God is upon his tabernacle, the Almighty is with him, and his children are about him. He washes his steps with butter, and the rocks pour him out rivers of oil. His root is spread out by the river, and the dew lieth all night upon his branch; his glory is fresh in him, and his bow is renewed in his hand. He is blessed in his going out and in his coming in; he hath the blessings of heaven above, and of "the deep which lieth under." He is like Job; the Lord hath set a hedge about him, and all that he possesseth. Now, truly, he can say, "I know the love of God to me, for I can see it. I can see a gracious providence pouring forth out of the cornucopia of providence,—an abundance of all that my soul can desire." This, however, might not completely convince him of God's love if it were not that he has also a consciousness that these things are not given him as husks are cast to swine, but they are bestowed on him as love-tokens from a tender God. His ways please the Lord, and therefore he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. The man at such a time has a joyous spirit; when he reads the Scripture it is one great transparency from beginning to end; when he meditates upon its pages it is like a

bracelet set about with the rarest jewels. He goes about his Master's service, and the Lord makes him successful. He sows and he reaps, he ploughs, and the furrows team with plenty; the sower overtakes the reaper, and the reaper overtakes the sower. God gives him many harvests in a year. The work of his hands is established, and his labour of love is accepted. The Lord hath made him exceeding rich, he hath blessed Him, and his cup runs over; he hath all that heart can desire. "Now," he says, "I know the goodness of God." This, truly, is very easy work, and yet easy though it be, we ought not to forget that we have had such seasons, we have had many trials, but, in the desert of our trial, we have had sometimes an oasis like this; we can look back to some sunny spot when we could say, "Surely the arms of love are round about me both temporally and spiritually." "He hath set me upon a rock, and established my goings." Then the Christian *knows* the love of God.

Another time in which he knows his Father's love is, when he *sees* it after coming out of affliction. He hath been sore sick, and while he has been on his bed he has been vexed with anxious thoughts concerning those he might leave behind, or even about himself. In the hour of languishing he cried to the Lord for deliverance; and at last he felt the young blood leaping through his veins anew. New health was restored to him, and he trod the green sward again with light, elastic steps, singing, "The Lord hath heard my cry, like Hezekiah, and has lengthened my days. Now I know the love which God hath to me." Or else he has incurred great losses in business. One after another the curtains of his habitation were rent, the cords were cut in twain, and all the tent pins pulled up by the invading enemy; he thought at last that nothing would be left him, "Surely I shall die in poverty," says he, for bankruptcy stares him in the face. But anon the tide is changed, the keel of his ship almost grated on the gravel, but now it begins to float, and boldly he spreads his sails, and gallantly he rides the billows; now can he exclaim, "I know the love that God hath to me." He has brought his servant out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and hath again appeared to me in mercy and chased away my doubts and fears.

So also has it been with many a man when he has for years been labouring under a heavy trial and at last escapes from it. Look at old Jacob. I believe that all his life long he would have put in a demurrer against what I have just declared, viz., that this is a summary of Christian

experience. He would have said, "No, young man, I tell you it is not; my experience has been one of trouble and trial ever since I left my Father's house." And we could tell him the reason of it too, if he particularly wished to know. But surely when at last he put his aged arms round the neck of his son Joseph, when at last he saw him ruler over all Egypt, and when his two grandchildren were brought to kneel before him to receive his blessing, the old man might have reversed what he said and no more have exclaimed, "Few and evil," but "Now I know the love that God hath towards me." As it was he did end his life with a song, and finished by praising the angel who had blessed him and kept him from all evil. Even Jacob is no exception to the great rule—that the life of God's people is a proof of the text. "We know and believe the love that God hath to us." There are other ways in which God's children *know* their Father's love. Besides what they see there is something which they *feel*. There are times when the father takes his child into his arms, presses him to his bosom, and kisses him with the kisses of his lips. These are the fond expressions to set forth the tender communings which God hath with his children. John could say, "We have known," for he had laid his head on Jesus's bosom. He had been with him in the garden of Gethsemane, he had been with him on the mount of transfiguration, he had been with him, too, when he worked his special miracles, and therefore, from the fact that he had communion with Christ at the supper, and in his sufferings and his miracles, John might say, "We know the love that he hath to us." And have not you and I—let us now speak from personal experience—have not *we* had fellowship with Christ? There have been times when we were not nearer to ourselves than we were to God, when we were as assured that we were having fellowship with him as a man talketh with his friend; as sure, I say, as we were of our own existence. Bitter though we sometimes think that our lives have been, yet have there been periods in them akin to heaven, when we could say, "If this is not glory it is next door to it. If I am not on the other side Jordan, at least my Master is on this side of it. If I have not yet been permitted to walk the golden streets, yet these very streets on earth have been trodden by heavenly footsteps while I have walked with God." Times there have been when a Christian would not have changed his blest estate for an angel's wing of fire. He has felt that he was with Christ, and was as certain of it as if he had seen his pierced hands and his feet. Then could he say, "Now I *know* the love that God

hath towards me."

And at times, too, there has been another knowledge, not so high, perhaps, as communion, bringing with it less of rapture and ecstasy, but not less of solid consolation: I mean the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirit, that we are born of God. I am no believer in those dreams and visions with which many persons mar their experience. I do not believe in those tales I hear people tell about hearing a voice, or seeing an angel. Such things happen now and then—*now* and *then*; but when we are overdone with them, we begin to suspect them to be utterly false. But I speak not as a fanatic or enthusiast when I testify that there is such a thing as an express revelation, made by the Holy Spirit to the individual man. Besides, this written Word of God, which is that on which we rely, as a sure word of testimony, whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. There is, besides this I say, another, a distinct, decided, infallible utterance of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man, when he beareth witness with our spirit that we are born of God, and at such times—and I will not stop to explain how it is; for the natural man would not understand me, and the spiritual man knoweth already—at such times the believer says, "Now I *know* the love that God hath to me." If the devil himself in person should meet the believer when he hath this witness, and tell him that God did not love him, he would call him a liar to his face, and say, "The Spirit of God has told me so, and I will believe the Spirit of God, and I will not believe thee, thou liar from the beginning, thou father of lies." Now, this is a very joyous part of the believer's experience, that both by sight and by feeling, and by distinct inward witnessing, he can often say, "I *know* the love that God hath towards me."

2. But times there are of thick darkness, when neither sun nor moon appear for many days; when the tempest rages exceedingly, and two seas meet in dread collision. There are seasons when the Christian, dismasted and dismantled, drifts before the storm a miserable hulk, unable to grasp the rudder or to man the yards. All strength and hope are gone. He looks upward, but he sees no helper; downward, and he beholds nothing but the uttermost depths of despair; around him there is nought but terror, and all about him everything frowneth dismay. At such a time, noble is the Christian who can say, "Now it may be I do not *know* the love that God hath to me, but I *believe* it. Now I believe it," saith he: "Yes, roll on

ye waves; tell me that ye shall engulf me, but I believe not you. He who hath promised to preserve me—him I believe, and on his love will I rely, even though now I see no proof of it. Now, poor vessel, drift before the storm; and you, ye rocks, roar yonder with your sounding breakers; but I fear not you, for I *believe* the love of God towards me. I cannot be wrecked completely. Driven before the storm I may be; half a wreck and tempest-tossed I am, but wholly lost I never can be; and now this day, in the teeth of evidence, in opposition to everything which goes against it, now I *believe* the love which God hath for me."

The first position, that of knowing God's love, is the sweetest, but that of believing God's love, is the grandest. To feel God's love is very precious, but to believe it when you do not feel it, is the noblest. He may be but a little Christian who knows God's love, but he is a great Christian who believes it, when the visible contradicts it, and the invisible withholds its witness. No one so grand as that prophet, who sees the olive wither, the fig-tree blasted, the vines devoured by the caterpillar, the stalls emptied, and the flocks destroyed, who sees famine staring him in the face, and yet rejoices in the Lord. Oh, that is honouring God. Ye that believe him in the sunshine, ye offer him pence; but ye that believe him in the storm, ye pay him pounds. No revenue so rich as that which comes from the fat yet seemingly barren land of affliction; God gets no honour greater than that which he receives from the trustful faith, of a cast down but not destroyed believer. Blessed is he who is perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, who is poor, yet, by his faith, maketh many rich; who hath nothing yet possesseth all things; who cries, "I can do nothing," and yet can add, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

And now, do not these two states make up a summary of Christian experience? "*We know and believe* the love that God hath to us." "Ah," says one "we have sometimes doubted it." No, I will leave that. You may insert it in your confession, but I will not put it into my song. Confess your doubts, but write them not in this our psalm of praise. I am sure, in looking back, you will say, "Oh how foolish I was ever to doubt a faithful and unchanging God." Bring all your doubts and fears this day; hew them in pieces like Agag before the Lord, let not one escape; take them and hang them up upon a tree till evening, and then take a great stone and set it at the mouth of their sepulchre that they may rise no more. Oh for grace from this day forward to say, "When I know not my Father's love, I

will believe it, and when I have his presence, then will I sing aloud 'I know that love which he hath towards me.'" This, then, is my first head.

II. The second is,—this text is A SUMMARY OF THE BELIEVER'S TESTIMONY. Every Christian is to be a testifier. Everything that God has made speaks of him. One speaks of his power, another of his majesty. The rolling sea, and the bespangled sky, both tell of his power and of his strength. Others tell of his wisdom; some of his goodness. But the saint has a peculiar testimony. He is to be a witness with heart and lips. All the other creatures speak not with words. They may sing as they shine, but they cannot sing vocally. It is the believer's part in the great eternal chorus to lift up voice and heart at once, and as an intelligent, living, loving, learning witness, to testify to God. Now I think I can say, or rather, I will speak for the thousands of Israel gathered here this morning,—*we* can say our testimony to an unbelieving world, and to poor despairing sinners, is just this,—"*we know and have believed the love that God hath toward us.*" This is our testimony, and we desire to tell it everywhere as long as we live; and, dying, we hope we shall be enabled to repeat it with our last labouring breath. We will say, when life is finished, and eternity begins, "*we have known and have believed the love that God hath towards us.*"

Let me enlarge, however, upon this testimony; and in the presence of many who know nothing of God, let me give an outline of the full testimony of every believer.

In the first place we have known that God's love to us is *undeserved*. This we can tell you with the tears in our eyes.

"There was nothing in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight.

'Twas even so Father, we ever must sing,
For so it seem'd good in thy sight."

Our astonishment increases every hour when we think of his love to us, for there was nothing in us that could have caused it. Often have we asked ourselves the question:—

"Why was I made to hear thy voice
And enter while there's room
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"
and our only answer is—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste
And perish'd in our sin."

Ye poor sinners, ye think that there must be something in you before God can love you. Our testimony is, that God hath loved us; we are sure of this, and we do not speak half-heartedly, when we declare that we are equally sure that there never was anything in us by nature that he could love. We may doubt a great many doctrines, but we cannot doubt this. This is a matter of fact, that in us, that is, in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. We have known and have believed that the love of God towards us is free, sovereign, undeserved, and springs entirely from the overflowing love of his own heart, and is not caused by anything in us.

Another thing we can bear testimony to, is this—that the love of God is *unconquerable*. This is my witness, and the witness of all the thousands here to-day. We strove against God's love at first; Jesus knocked at the door, but we would not open to him; he invited, but we would not come; he called, but we would not hearken. We can say with deepest grief we treated our best friend most shamefully. He knocked at our door in the night with his hair wet with dew and his locks filled with the drops of the night, but we regarded him not. In sloth and pride we still kept the bed of indolence and self confidence, and we would not rise to let him in. And we can testify, that if his love could have been conquered, we should have conquered it; for we shot out the envenomed shafts of ingratitude, we held up against him perpetually the shield of our hard-heartedness, and if he could have been overcome, if he were not an Almighty Saviour, we should have defeated him, and have been still his enemies. Ye sinners, we can affirm that love divine is a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown.

We can yet again bear another testimony to God's love. We can say concerning his love that it has never been diminished by all the sins we have ever committed since we believed. We have been verily guilty, and we blush to say it. We have often revolted, but we have never found him unwilling to forgive. We have gone to him laden with guilt, but we have come away with our burden removed. Oh! if God could ever cast away his people, he would have cast away me. I am sure God never turns his children out of doors, or this had been my lot long ago. I am certain of the

doctrine of final perseverance, because I have persevered as long as I have. If God meant to take my name out of the covenant, he has had mighty reasons enough long ere this.

"If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ should fall away,
My fickle feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day;
Were not thy love as firm as free,
Thou soon would'st take it Lord from me."

No, we have known, we have believed the love of God to us is not to be cut asunder by our sins, nor diminished by our unworthiness.

And yet another thing we may say. We have known and we have believed the love of God to us to be perfectly *immutable*. We have changed, but he has changed never. We have doubted him; but when we believed not he has remained faithful. We have sometimes been in the greatest depths, but never too low for his long arm to reach. We have sometimes, it is true, run so far from him that we could not see *him*, but he could always see us. We have never found an end to his all-sufficiency, or, a limit to his omnipotence. We have never found a change in his love,

"Immutable his will,
Though dark may be my grave;
His loving heart is still
Unchangably the same.
My soul through many changes goes;
His love no variation knows."

We have known this. We have tasted and handled this. We are not to be argued out of it. We are sure it is true. God is immutable. Because he has been immutable; to us, so far, "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us."

I will make but one other remark here, and that is, we can bear our willing witness that the love of God to us has been an unfailing support in all our trials. I cannot speak as a grey-headed man of the storms and troubles which many of you have endured; but I have had more joys and more sorrows in the last few years than any man in this place, for my life has been compressed as with a Bramah press—a vast mass of emotion into one year. I have gone to the very bottoms of the mountains, as some of you know, in a night that never can be erased from my memory, a night

connected with this place. I have had to pass also through severe suffering and trial from the calamity and scorn of man, with abuse hailed pitilessly on my head. And I have had to pass through severe personal bodily pain. But as far as my witness goes, I can say that he is able to save unto the uttermost and in the last extremity, and he has been a good God to me. Unfaithful I have been; he has forgiven that, and will forgive; but unfaithful to me he never has been; and if I had the choosing of the rest of my life I would not choose, but let him map my way to the end as he has done until now, for "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." As for you grey-headed men now present, what tales you could tell. You remember the many deliverances you have had under your sharp afflictions. You have seen a wife buried, but you have seen your God living. You have seen your children carried one after another to the tomb, but you have been able to say "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be his name." You have had your dearest friends sundered from you, but still have said:

"How can I bereaved be
Since I cannot part with thee."

You have had attacks of Satan, you have had doubts and fears—you have been assailed by men, by earth and by hell, but you can say—

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud
Hath gathered thick and thundered loud;
He near my soul has always stood,
His loving kindness, O how good."

Your testimony is without a flaw. Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God has promised, he has never left you, never forsaken you. But to this day you can say, glory be unto the name of an unchanging God, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

III. And now the last point is—the practical use of this great truth. It is the ground work of christian encouragement. Will you just think that I am coming down out of the pulpit now to you. I cannot perform much pastoral visitation in going from house to house, and so let us do it wholesale this morning, and may the Spirit of God make it a reality.

Dear brothers and sisters, there are some of you here to day who have been very much and very sorely tried, for your path has been through fire and through water. You are servants o God, and in looking back you can

say that you have been helped hitherto. Just now your health and your spirits are failing you; you are brought very low indeed. Permit your minister to take hold of your hand, and look you in the face. My dear brother, will you dishonour your God now? You say, "No, God forbid that I should dishonour him." My dear friend, you have now before you a noble opportunity—an opportunity which an angel might well envy you; you have a noble opportunity of honouring God in the fire. I will not speak lightly of your troubles; I will suppose them to be just as great as you say they are. But will you glorify him in them all? Come, you have trusted him many times, will you trust him now? Perhaps Satan has a commission from on high to try you, and sift you in his sieve. He has been before God, and your Lord has said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" "Ah," says Satan, "he serves thee now, but thou hast set a hedge about him and blessed him, let me but touch him," and he has come down to you, and he has afflicted you in your estate, afflicted you in your family, and at last he has afflicted you in your body. Shall Satan be the conqueror? shall grace give way? O my dear brother, stand up now and say once more, once for all, "I tell thee, Satan, the grace of God is more than a match for thee; he is with me, and in all this I will not utter one word against the Lord my God. He doeth all things well—well, even now, and I do rejoice in him."

The Lord is always pleased with his children when they can stand up for him when circumstances seem to belie him. Here come the witnesses into court. The devil says, "Soul, God has forgotten thee, I will bring in my witness." First he summons your debts—a long bill of losses. "There," says he, "would God suffer you to fall thus, if he loved you?" Then he brings in your children—either their death, or their disobedience, or something worse, and says, "Would the Lord suffer these things to come upon you, if he loved you?" At last he brings in your poor tottering body, and all your doubts and fears, and the hidings of Jehovah's face. "Ah," says the devil, "do you believe that God loves you now?" Oh, it is noble, if you are able to stand forth and say to all these witnesses, "I hear what you have to say, let God be true, and every man and everything be a liar; I believe none of you. You all say, God does not love me; but he does, and if the witnesses against his love were multiplied a hundredfold, yet still would I say, "I know whom I have believed."

"I know that safe with him remains,

Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hands,
'Till the decisive hour;"

He will bring me safe to heaven at last, unhurt by the way.

I have but one other use to make of my text. In this large assembly, composed of so great a multitude of men, there are doubtless some who are saying, "I cannot think that God would have mercy on such a sinner as I am." "I cannot conceive," says another one, "though I know my guilt, I cannot conceive that the love of God can blot out such iniquity as mine." Permit me to take your hand, and if mine is not enough I could take you around these galleries, and down here, and I could give you hundreds of hands, and hundreds of lips should speak and say, "Sinner, never think that the love of God can be exceeded, or destroyed, by your sin, for *I* obtained mercy," and round the gallery the sound would go if this were a gospel chorus—"and I," "and I," "and I," and you might go up to the brother, and say, "What were you?" "I was a drunkard;" says one. "I was a swearer, I cursed God ;" says another, "I loved the pugilistic ring, and the skittle ground;" says another; "I was a whoremonger, an adulterer, and yet God has forgiven me," and O how sweetly would we all sing in chorus, concerning the power of Christ to save, for we have all in our measure felt its might.

Now, my dear friend I take your hand, and I say, "We have known and have believed the love that God hath to us," and *we* are the very chief of sinners ourselves. Will you honour God by believing that he is able to save you through the blood of Christ, for if the Lord now enables you to honour him in believing, depend upon it, he has begun a good work in you and has set his heart upon you. Sinners, believe that God is love. O trust him who gave his Son to die. He will deny you nothing. If you ask with humble faith, you shall assuredly receive. Our witness is given; reject it not. "We have known, we have believed the love that God hath to us."

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Preach The Gospel

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. - 1 Corinthians 9:16

The greatest man of Apostolic times was the apostle Paul. He was always great in everything. If you consider him as a sinner, he was *exceeding* sinful; if you regard him as a persecutor, he was *exceeding* mad against the Christians, and persecuted them even unto strange cities, if you take him as a convert, his conversion was the most notable one of which we read, worked by miraculous power, and by the direct voice of Jesus speaking from heaven - "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" - If we take him simply as a Christian, he was an extraordinary one, loving his Master more than others, and seeking more than others to exemplify the grace of God in his life. But if you take him as an apostle, and as a preacher of the Word, he stands out pre-eminent as the prince of preachers, and a preacher to kings - for he preached before Agrippa, he preached before Nero Caesar - he stood before emperors and kings for Christ's name's sake. It was the characteristic of Paul, that whatever he did, he did with all his heart. He was one of the men who could not allow one half of his frame to be exercised, while the other half was indolent but, when he set to work, the whole of his energies - every nerve, every sinew - were strained in the work to be done, be it bad work or be it good. Paul, therefore, could speak from experience concerning his ministry; because he was the chief of ministers. There is no nonsense in what he speaks; it is all from the depth of his soul. And we may be sure that when he wrote this, he wrote it with a strong unpalsied hand - "Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

Now, these words of Paul, I trust, are applicable to many ministers in the present day; to all those who are especially called, who are directed by the inward impulse of the Holy Spirit to occupy the position of gospel

ministers. In trying to consider this verse, we shall have three inquiries this morning: - First, *What is it to preach the gospel?* Secondly, *Why is it that a minister has nothing to glorify of?* And thirdly, *What is that necessity and that woe, of which it is written, "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel?"*

I. The first enquiry is, WHAT IS IT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL? There are a variety of opinions concerning this question, and possibly amongst my own audience - though I believe we are very uniform in our doctrinal sentiments - there might be found two or three very ready answers to this question: What is it to preach the gospel? I shall therefore attempt to answer it myself according to my own judgment, if God will help me; and if it does not happen to be the correct answer, you are at liberty to supply a better to yourselves at home.

1. The first answer I shall give to the question is this: *To preach the gospel is to state every doctrine contained in God's Word, and to give every truth its proper prominence.* Men may preach a part of the gospel; they may only preach one single doctrine of it; and I would not say that a man did not preach the gospel at all if he did but maintain the doctrine of justification by faith - "By grace are ye saved through faith." I should put him down for a gospel minister, but not for one who preached the whole gospel. No man can be said to preach the whole gospel of God if he leaves it out, knowingly and intentionally, one single truth of the blessed God. This remark of mine must be a very cutting one, and ought to strike into the consciences of many who make it almost a matter of principle to keep back certain truths from the people, because they are afraid of them. In conversation, a week or two ago, with an eminent professor, he said to me, "Sir, we know that we ought not to preach the doctrine of election, because it is not calculated to convert sinners." "But," said I to him, "who is the man that dares to find fault with the truth of God? You admit, with me, that it is a truth, and yet you say it must not be preached. I dare not have said that thing. I should reckon it supreme arrogance to have ventured to say that a doctrine ought not to be preached when the all-wise God has seen fit to reveal it. Besides, is the whole gospel intended to convert sinners? There are some truths which God blesses to the conversion of sinners; but are there not other portions which were

intended for the comfort of the saint? and ought not these to be a subject of gospel ministry as well as the others? And shall I look at one and disregard the other? No: if God says, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people' if election comforts God's people, then must I preach it." But I am not quite so sure, that after all, that doctrine is not calculated to convert sinners. For the great Jonathan Edwardes tells us, that in the greatest excitement of one of his revivals, he preached the sovereignty of God in the salvation or condemnation of man, and showed that God was infinitely just if he sent men to hell! that he was infinitely merciful if he saved any; and that it was all of his own free grace, and he said, "I found no doctrine caused more thought nothing entered more deeply into the heart than the proclamation of that truth." The same might be said of other doctrines. There are certain truths in God's word which are condemned to silence; they, forsooth, are not to be uttered, because, according to the theories of certain persons, looking at these doctrines, they are not calculated to promote certain ends. But is it for me to judge God's truth? Am I to put his words in the scale, and say, "This is good, and that is evil?" Am I to take God's Bible, and sever it and say, "this is husk, and this is wheat?" Am I to cast away any one truth, and say, "I dare not preach it?" No: God forbid. Whatsoever is written in God's Word is written for our instruction: and the whole of it is profitable, either for reproof, or for consolation, or for edification in righteousness. No truth of God's Word ought to be withheld, but every portion of it preached in its own proper order.

Some men purposely confine themselves to four or five topics continually. Should you step into their chapel, you would naturally expect to hear them preaching, either from this, "Not of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God," or else, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." You know that the moment you step in you are sure to hear nothing but election and high doctrine that day. Such men err also, quite as much as others, if they give too great prominence to one truth to the neglect of the others. Whatsoever is here to be preached, "all it whatever name you please, write it high, write it low - the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the standard of the true Christian. Alas! alas! many make an iron ring of their doctrines, and he who dares to step beyond that narrow circle, is not reckoned orthodox. God bless heretics,

then! God send us more of them! Many make theology into a kind of treadmill, consisting of five doctrines, which are everlastingly rotated; for they never go on to anything else. There ought to be every truth preached. And if God has written in his word that "he that believeth not is condemned already," *that* is as much to be preached as the truth that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." If I find it written, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," that man's condemnation is his own fault, I am to preach that as well as the next clause, "In me is thy help found." We ought, each of us who are entrusted with the ministry, to seek to preach all truth. I know it may be impossible to tell you all of it. That high hill of truth hath mists upon its summit. No mortal eye can see its pinnacle; nor hath the foot of man ever trodden it. But yet let us paint the mist, if we cannot paint the summit. Let us depict the difficulty itself if we cannot unravel it. Let us not hide anything, but if the mountain of truth be cloudy at the top, let us say, "Clouds and darkness are around him," Let us not deny it; and let us not think of cutting down the mountain to our own standard, because we cannot see its summit or cannot reach its pinnacle. He who would preach the gospel must preach all the gospel. He who would have it said he is a faithful minister, must not keep back any part of revelation.

2. Again, am I asked what it is to preach the gospel? I answer *to preach the gospel is to exalt Jesus Christ*. Perhaps this is the best answer that I could give. I am very sorry to see very often how little the gospel is understood even by some of the best Christians. Some time ago there was a young woman under great distress of soul; she came to a very pious Christian man, who said "My dear girl, you must go home and pray." Well I thought within myself, that is not the Bible way at all. It never says, "Go home and pray." The poor girl went home; she did pray, and she still continued in distress. Said he, "You must wait, you must read the Scriptures and study them." That is not the Bible way; that is not exalting Christ; find a great many preachers are preaching that kind of doctrine. They tell a poor convinced sinner, "You must go home and pray, and read the Scriptures; you must attend the ministry;" and so on. Works, works, works - instead of "By grace are ye saved through faith," If a penitent should come and ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I would say, "Christ must save you - believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I

would neither direct to prayer, nor reading of the Scriptures nor attending God's house; but simply direct to faith, naked faith on God's gospel. Not that I despise prayer - that must come after faith. Not that I speak a word against the searching of the Scriptures - that is an infallible mark of God's children. Not that I find fault with attendance on God's word - God forbid! I love to see people there. But none of those things are the way of salvation. It is nowhere written - "He that attendeth chapel shall be saved," or, "He that readeth the Bible shall be saved." Nor do I read - "He that prayeth and is baptised shall be saved;" but, "He that believeth," - he that has a naked faith on the "Man Christ Jesus," - on his Godhead, on his manhood, is delivered from sin. To preach that faith alone saves, is to preach God's truth. Nor will I for one moment concede to any man the name of a gospel minister, if he preaches anything as the plan of salvation except faith in Jesus Christ, faith, faith, nothing but faith in his name. But we are, most of us, very much muddled in our ideas. We get so much work stored into our brain, such an idea of merit and of doing, wrought into our hearts, that it is almost impossible for us to preach justification by faith clearly and fully; and when we do, our people won't receive it. We tell them, "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But they have a notion that faith is something so wonderful, so mysterious, that it is quite impossible that without doing something else they can ever get it. Now, that faith which unites to the Lamb is an instantaneous gift of God, and he who believes on the Lord Jesus is that moment saved, without anything else whatsoever. Ah! my friends, do we not want more exalting Christ in our preaching, and more exalting Christ in our living? Poor Mary said, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him," And she might say so now-a-days if she could rise from the grave. Oh! to have a Christ-exalting ministry! Oh! to have preaching that magnifies Christ in his person, that extols his divinity, that loves his humanity; to have preaching that shows him as prophet, priest, and king to his people! to have preaching whereby the spirit manifests the Son of God unto his children: to have preaching that says, "Look unto him and be ye saved all the ends of the earth," - Calvary preaching, Calvary theology, Calvary books, Calvary sermons! These are the things we want, and in proportion as we have Calvary exalted and Christ magnified, the gospel is preached in our midst.

3. The third answer to the question is: *to preach the gospel is to give every class of character his due.* "You are only to preach to God's dear people, if you go into that pulpit," said a deacon once to a minister. Said the minister, "Have you marked them all on the back, that I may know them?" What is the good of this large chapel if I am only to preach to God's dear people? They are few enough. God's dear people might be held in the vestry. We have many more here besides God's dear people, and how am I to be sure, if I am told to preach only to God's dear people, that somebody else won't take it to himself? At another time some one might say, "Now, be sure you preach to sinners. If you do not preach to sinners this morning, you won't preach the gospel. We shall only hear you once; and we shall be sure you are not right if you do not happen to preach to sinner this particular morning, in this particular sermon." What nonsense, my friends! There are times when the children must be fed, and there are times when the sinner must be warned. There are different times for different objects. If a man is preaching to God's saints if it so happen that little is said to sinners, is he to be blamed for it, provided that at another time when he is not comforting the saints, he directs his attention specially to the ungodly? I heard a good remark from an intelligent friend of mine the other day. A person was finding fault with "Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions" because they were not calculated to convert sinners. He said to the gentleman, "Did you ever read; 'Grote's History of Greece?'" "Yes." Well, that is a shocking book, is it not? for it is not calculated to convert sinners. "Yes, but," said the other, "'Grote's History of Greece' was never meant to convert sinners." "No," said my friend, "and if you had read the preface to 'Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portion,' you would see that it was never meant to convert sinners, but to feed God's people, and if it answers its end the man has been wise, though he has not aimed at some other end." Every class of person is to have his due. He who preaches solely to saints at all times does not preach the gospel; he who preaches solely and only to the sinner; and never to the saint, does not preach the whole of the gospel. We have amalgamation here. We have the saint who is full of assurance and strong; we have the saint who is weak and low in faith; we have the young convert; we have the man halting between two opinions; we have the moral man; we have the sinner; we have the reprobate; we have the

outcast. Let each have a word. Let each have a portion of meat in due season; not at every season, but in *due* season. He who omits one class of character does not know how to preach the entire gospel. What! Am I to be put into the pulpit and to be told that I am to confine myself to certain truths only, to comfort God's saints? I will not have it so. God gives men hearts to love their fellow-creatures, and are they to have no development for that heart? If I love the ungodly am I to have no means of speaking to them? May I not tell them of judgment to come, of righteousness, and of their sin? God forbid I should so stultify my nature and so brutalize myself, as to have a tearless eye when I consider the loss of my fellow creatures, and to stand and say "Ye are dead, I have nothing to say to you!" and to preach in effect if not in words that most damnable heresy, that if men are to be bayed they will be saved - that if they are not to be saved they will not be saved; that necessarily, they must sit still and do nothing whatever; and that it matters not whether they live in sin or in righteousness - some strong fate has bound them down with adamant chains; and their destiny is so certain that they may live on in sin. I believe their destiny is certain - that as elect, they will be saved, and if not elect they are damned for ever. But I do not believe the heresy that follows as an inference that therefore men are irresponsible and may sit still. That is a heresy against which I have ever protested, as being a doctrine of the devil and not of God at all. We believe in destiny; we believe in predestination; we believe in election and non-election: but, notwithstanding that, we believe that we must preach to men, He Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved," but believe not on him and ye are damned.

4. I had thought of giving one more answer to this question, but time fails me. The answer would have been somewhat like this - that to preach the gospel is not to preach certain truths *about* the gospel, not to preach *about* the people, but to preach *to* the people. To preach the gospel is not to talk about what the gospel is, but to preach it into the heart, not by your own might, but by the influence of the Holy Ghost - not to stand and talk as if we were speaking to the angel Gabriel, and telling him certain things, but to speak as man to man and pour our heart in to our fellow's heart. This I take it, is to preach the gospel, and not to mumble some dry manuscript over on Sunday morning or Sunday evening. To preach the

gospel is not to send a curate to do your duty for you; it is not to put on your fine gown and then stand and give out some lofty speculation. To preach the gospel is not, with the hands of a bishop, to turn over some beautiful specimen of prayer, and then to go down again and leave it to some humbler person to speak. Nay; to preach the gospel is to proclaim with trumpet tongue and flaming zeal the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, so that men may hear, and understanding, may turn to God with full purpose of heart. This is to preach the gospel.

II. The second question is - How IS IT THAT MINISTERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GLORY? "For though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glorify it." There are some weeds that will grow anywhere; and one of them is Pride. Pride will grow on a rock as well as in a garden. Pride will grow in the heart of a shoe-black as well as in the heart of an alderman. Pride will grow in the heart of a servant girl and equally as well in the heart of her mistress. And pride will grow in the pulpit. It is a weed that is dreadfully rampant. It wants cutting down every week, or else we should stand up to our knees in it. This pulpit is a shocking bad soil for pride. It grows terribly; and I scarcely know whether you ever find a preacher of the gospel who will not confess that he has the greatest temptation to pride. I suppose that even those ministers of whom nothing is said, but that they are very good people, and who have a City church, with some six people attending it, have a temptation to pride. But whether that is so or not, I am quite sure wherever there is a large assembly, and wherever a great deal of noise and stir is made concerning any man there is a great danger of pride. And, mark you, the more proud a man is the greater will be his fall at last. If people will hold a minister up in their hands and do not keep hold of him, but let him go, what a fall he will have, poor fellow, when it is all over. It has been so with many. Many men have been held up by the arms of men, they have been held up by the arms of *praise*, and not of *prayer*; these arms have become weak, and down they have fallen. I say there is temptation to pride in the pulpit; but there is no ground for it in the pulpit; there is no soil for pride to grow on; but it will grow without any. "I have nothing to glorify of." But, notwithstanding, there often comes in some reason why we should glory, not real, but apparent to our own selves.

1. Now, how is it that a true minister feels he has "nothing to glorify of." First, *because he is very conscious of his own imperfections*. I think no man will ever form a more just opinion of himself than he who is called constantly and incessantly to preach. Some man once thought he could preach, and on being allowed to enter the pulpit, he found his words did not come quite so freely as he expected, and in the utmost trepidation and fear, he leaned over the front of the pulpit and said "My friends, if you would come up here, it would take the conceit out of you all, I verily believe it *would* out of a great many, could they once try themselves whether they could preach. It would take their critical conceit out of them, and make them think that after all it was not such easy work. He who preaches best feels that he preaches worst. He who has set up some lofty model in his own mind of what eloquence should be, and what earnest appeal ought to be, will know how much he falls below it. He, best of all, can reprove himself when he knows his own deficiency. I do not believe when a man does a thing well, that therefore he will glory in it. On the other hand, I think that he will be the best judge of his own imperfections, and will see them most clearly. *He* knows what he ought to be: other men do not. They stare, and gaze, and think it is wonderful, when he thinks it is wonderfully absurd and retires wondering that he has not done better. Every true minister will feel that he is deficient. He will compare himself with such men as Whitfield, with such preachers as those of puritanical times, and he will say, "What am I? Like a dwarf beside a giant, an ant-hill by the side of the mountain." When he retires to rest on Sabbath-night, he will toss from side to side on his bed, because he feels that he has missed the mark, that he has not had that earnestness, that solemnity, that death-like intenseness of purpose which became his position. He will accuse himself of not having dwelt enough on this point, or for having shunned the other, or not having been explicit enough on some certain subject, or expanded another too much. He will see his own faults, for God always chastises his own children at night-time when they have done something wrong. We need not others to reprove us; God himself takes us in hand, The most highly honored before God will often feel himself dishonored in his own esteem.

2. Again, another means of causing us to cease from all glory is the fact that God reminds us that all our gifts are borrowed. And strikingly have I

this morning been reminded of that great truth - that *all our gifts are borrowed*, by reading in a newspaper to the following effect: -

"Last week, the quiet neighborhood of New Town was much disturbed by an occurrence which has thrown a gloom over the entire neighborhood. A gentleman of considerable attainment, who has won an honorable degree at the university has for some months been deranged. He had kept an academy for young gentlemen, but his insanity had obliged him to desist from his occupation, and he has for some time lived alone in a house in the neighborhood. The landlord obtained a warrant of ejection; and it being found necessary to handcuff him, he was, by sad mismanagement, compelled to remain on the steps, exposed to the gaze of a great crowd, until at last a vehicle arrived, which conveyed him to the asylum. One of his pupils (says the paper) is Mr. Spurgeon."

The man from whom I learned whatever of human learning I have, has now become a raving lunatic in the Asylum! When I saw that, I felt I could bend my knee with humble gratitude and thank my God that not yet had my reason reeled, not yet had those powers departed. Oh! how thankful we ought to be that our talents are preserved to us, and that our mind is not gone! Nothing came nearer and closer to me than that. There was one who had taken all pains with me - a man of genius and of ability; and yet there he is! how fallen! how fallen! How speedily does human nature come from its high estate and sink below the level of the brutes? Bless God my friends, for your talents! thank him for your reason! thank him for your intellect! Simple as it may be, it is enough for you, and if you lost it you would soon mark the difference. Take heed to yourself lest in aught you say. "This is Babylon that I have builded;" for, remember, both trowel and mortar must come from him. The life, the voice, the talent, the imagination, the eloquence - all are the gift of God; and he who has the greatest gifts must feel that unto God belong the shield of the mighty, for he has given might to his people, and strength unto his servants.

3. One more answer to this question. Another means whereby God preserves his ministers from glorying is this: *He makes them feel their constant dependance upon the Holy Ghost*. Some do not feel it, I confess. Some will venture to preach without the Spirit of God, or without

entreating it. But I think that no man, who is really commissioned from on high, will ever venture to do so, but he will feel that he needs the Spirit. Once, while preaching in Scotland, the Spirit of God was pleased to desert me, I could not speak as usually I have done. I was obliged to tell the people that the chariot wheels were taken off; and that the chariot dragged very heavily along. I have felt the benefit of that ever since. It humbled me bitterly, for I could have crept into a nut-shell, and I would have hidden myself in any obscure corner of the earth. I felt as if I should speak no more in the name of the Lord, and then the thought came "Oh! thou art an ungrateful creature: hath not God spoken by thee hundreds of times? And this once, when he would not do so wilt thou upbraid him for it? Nay, rather thank him, that a hundred times he hath stood by thee; and, if once he hath forsaken thee, admire his goodness, that thus he would keep thee humble." Some may imagine that want of study brought me into that condition, but I can honestly affirm, that it was not so. I think that I am bound to give myself unto reading, and not tempt the Spirit by unthought-of effusions. Usually, I deem it a duty to seek a sermon of my Master and implore him to impress it on my mind, but on that occasion, I think I had even prepared more carefully than I ordinarily do, so that unpreparedness was not the reason. The simple fact was this - "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" and winds do not always blow hurricanes. Sometimes the winds themselves are still. And, therefore, if I rest on the Spirit, I cannot expect I should always feel its power alike. What could I do without the celestial influence, for to that I owe everything. By this thought God humbles his servants. God will teach us how much we want it. He will not let us think we are doing anything ourselves. "Nay, says he, "thou shalt have none of the glory. I will take thee down. Art thou thinking 'I am doing this?' I will show thee what thou art without me "Out goes Samson. He attacks the Philistines. He fancies he can slay them; but they are on him. His eyes are out. His glory is gone, because he trusted not in his God, but rested in himself. Every minister will be made to feel his dependence upon the Spirit; and then will he, with emphasis, say, as Paul did, "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glorify of."

III. Now comes the third question, with which we are to finish **WHAT IS THAT NECESSITY WHICH IS LAID UPON US TO PREACH THY**

GOSPEL?

1. First, *a very great part of that necessity springs from the call itself*: If a man be truly called of God to the ministry, I will defy him to withhold himself from it. A man who has really within him the inspiration of the Holy Ghost calling him to preach cannot help it. He must preach. As fire within the bones, so will that influence be until it blazes forth. Friends may check him, foes criticise him, despisers sneer at him, the man is indomitable; he must preach if he has the call of heaven. All earth might forsake him; but he would preach to the barren mountain-tops. If he has the call of heaven, if he has no congregation, he would preach to the rippling waterfalls, and let the brooks hear his voice. He could not be silent. He would become a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." I no more believe it possible to stop ministers, than to stop the stars of heaven. I think it no more possible to make a man cease from preaching, if he is really called, than to stop some mighty cataract, by seeking, with an infant's cup, to drink its waters. The man has been moved of heaven, who shall stop him? He has been touched of God, who shall impede him? With an eagle's wing he must fly; who shall chain him to the earth? With seraph's voice he must speak, who shall stop his lips? Is not his word like a fire within me? Must I not speak if God has placed it there? And when a man does speak as the Spirit gives him utterance, he will feel a holy joy akin to heaven; and when it is over he wishes to be at his work again, and longs to be once more preaching. I do not think young men are called of God to any great work who preach once a week, and think they have done their duty. I think if God has called a man, he will impel him to be more or less constantly at it, and he will feel that he must preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. But another thing will make us preach: we shall feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel; and that is *the sad destitution of this poor fallen world*. Oh, minister of the gospel! stand for one moment and bethink thyself of thy poor fellow creatures! See them like a stream, rushing to eternity - ten thousand to their endless home each solemn moment fly! See the termination of that stream, that tremendous cataract which dashes streams of souls into the pit! Oh, minister, bethink thyself that men are being damned each hour by thousands, and that each time

thy pulse beats another soul lifts up its eyes in hell, being in torments; bethink thyself how men are speeding on their way to destruction, how "the love of many waxeth cold" and "iniquity doth abound." I say, is there not a necessity laid upon thee? Is it not woe unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel? Take thy walk one evening through the streets of London when the dusk has gathered, and darkness veils the people. Mark you not yon profligate hurrying on to her accursed work? See you not thousands and tens of thousands annually ruined? Up from the hospital and the asylum there comes a voice, "Woe is unto you if ye preach not the gospel." Go to that huge place built around with massive walls, enter the dungeons, and see the thieves who have for years spent their lives in sin. Wend your way sometimes to that sad square of Newgate, and see the murderer hanged. A voice shall come from each house of correction, from each prison, from each gallows, saying, "Woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." Go thou to the thousand death-beds, and mark how men are perishing in ignorance, not knowing the ways of God. See their terror as they approach their Judge, never having known what it was to be saved, not even knowing the way; and as you see them quivering before their Maker, hear a voice, "Minister, woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." Or take another course. Travel round this great metropolis, and stop at the door of some place where there is heard the tinkling of bells, chanting and music, but where the whore of Babylon hath her sway, and lies are preached for truth; and when thou comest home and thinkest of Popery and Puseyism, let a voice come to thee, "Minister woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." Or step into the hall of the infidel where he blasphemes thy Maker's name; or sit in the theater where plays, libidinous and loose are acted, and from all these haunts of vice there comes the voice, "Minister, woe is unto thee if thou preachest not the gospel." And take thy last solemn walk down to the chambers of the lost; let the abyss of hell be visited, and stand thou and hear

"The sullen groans, the hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts."

Put thine ear at hell's gate, and for a little while list to the commingled screams and shrieks of agony and fell despair that shall lend thine ear;

and as thou comest from that sad place with that doleful music still affrighting thee, thou wilt hear the voice, "Minister! minister! woe is unto thee if thou preaches not the gospel." Only let us have these things before our eyes, and we must preach. *Stop preaching! Stop preaching!* Let the sun stop shining, and we will preach in darkness. Let the waves stop their ebb and flow, and still our voice shall preach the gospel, let the world stop its revolutions, let the planets stay their motion; we will still preach the gospel. Until the fiery center of this earth shall burst through the thick ribs of her brazen mountains, we shall still preach the gospel; till the universal conflagration shall dissolve the earth, and matter shall be swept away, these lips, or the lips of some others called of God, shall still thunder forth the voice of Jehovah. We cannot help it. "Necessity is laid upon us, yea woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel.

Now, my dear hearers, one word with you. There are some persons in this audience who are verily guilty in the sight of God because *they* do not preach the gospel. I cannot think out of the fifteen hundred or two thousand persons now present, within the reach of my voice, there are none who are qualified to preach the gospel besides myself. I have not so bad an opinion of you as to conceive myself to be superior in intellect to one half of you, or even in the power of preaching God's Word: and even supposing I should be, I cannot believe that I have such a congregation that there are not among you many who have gifts and talents that qualify you to preach the Word. Among the Scotch Baptists it is the custom to call upon all the brethren to exhort on the Sabbath morning; they have no regular minister to preach on that occasion, but every man preaches who likes to get up and speak. That is all very well, only, I fear, many unqualified brethren would be the greatest speakers, since it is a known fact, that men who have little to say will often keep on the longest; and if I were chairman, I should say, "Brother, it is written, 'Speak to edification.' I am sure you would not edify yourself and your wife, you had better go and try that first, and if you cannot succeed, don't waste our precious time."

But still I say, I cannot conceive but what there are some here this morning who are flowers "wasting their sweetness in the desert air, "gems of purest ray serene," lying in the dark caverns of ocean's oblivion. This is

a very serious question. If there be any talent in the Church at Park Street, let it be developed. If there be any preachers in my congregation let them preach. Many ministers make it a point to check young men in this respect. There is my hand, such as it is, to help any one of you if you think you can tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour you have found. I would like to find scores of preachers among you; would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets. There are some here who ought to be prophets, only they are half afraid - well, we must devise some scheme of getting rid of their bashfulness. I cannot bear to think that while the devil sets all his servants to work there should be one servant of Jesus Christ asleep. Young man, go home and examine thyself, see what thy abilities are, and if thou findest that thou hast ability, then try in some poor humble room to tell to a dozen poor people what they must do to be saved. You need not aspire to become absolutely and solely dependent upon the ministry, but if it should please God, even desire it. He that desireth a bishopric desireth a good thing. At any rate seek in some way to be preaching the gospel of God. I have preached this sermon especially, because I want to commence a movement from this place which shall reach others. I want to find some in my church, if it be possible, who will preach the gospel. And mark you, if you have talent and power, woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel.

But oh! my friends, if it is woe unto us if we preach not the gospel, what is the woe unto you if ye hear and receive not the gospel? May God give us both to escape from that woe! May the gospel of God be unto us the savor of life unto life, and not of death unto death.

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A Question For A Questioner

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? - Psalm 77:9

Asaph was very grievously troubled in spirit. The deep waters were not only around his barque, but they had come in even unto his soul. When the spirit of a man is wounded, then is he wounded indeed; and such was the case with this man of God. In the time of his trouble he was attacked with doubts and fears; so that he was made to question the very foundations of things. Had he not taken to continual prayer he had perished in his affliction; but he cried unto God with his voice, and the Lord gave ear unto him. Nor did he only pray, but he used the fittest means for escaping from his despondency. Very wisely this good man argued with himself, and sought to cure his unbelief. He treated himself homoeopathically, meeting like with like. As he was attacked by the disease of questioning, he gave himself questions as a medicine. Observe how he kills one question with another, as men fight fire with fire. Here we have six questions, one after another, each one striking at the very heart of unbelief. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" If questions are raised at all let us go through with them; and as the Saviour answered one question of his opponents by another, so may we also silence the questions of unbelief by further questions which shall strip our doubt of all disguises.

The question which makes our text is meant to end other questions. You may carry truth as far as ever you like, and it will always be truth. Truth is like those crystals which, when split up into the smallest possible fragments, still retain their natural form. You may break truth in pieces, you may do what you like with it, and it is truth throughout; but error is diverse within itself, and evermore bears its own death within itself. You can see its falsehood even in its own light. Bring it forward, strip it of its disguises, behold it in its naked form, and its deformity at once appears. Carry unbelief to its proper consequences, and you will revolt from it, and be driven by the grace of God to faith. Sometimes our doubts assume appearances which are not their own, and so are hard to deal with; but if we make them take their own natural shapes, we shall easily destroy them. The question before us is what the logician would call a *reductio ad*

absurdum; it reduces doubt to an absurdity; it puts into plain and truthful words the thought of an unbelieving mind, and at once it is seen to be a horrible notion. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?" One might smile while reading a suggestion so absurd, and yet there is grave cause for trembling in the profanity of such a question. "Hath God forgotten?" We stumble at the first word. How can God forget? "Hath God forgotten to be?" We snap the question at that point, and it is blasphemous. It is no better when we give it as a whole,— "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" The bare idea is both ridiculous and blasphemous. Again, I say, it is wise when we are vexed with evil questioning to put down the questions in black and white, and expose them to the daylight. Drive the wretched things out of their holes; hunt them in the open; and they will soon be destroyed. Let the light of God into the dark cellar of your despondency, and you will soon quit the den in sheer disgust at your own folly. Make a thought appear to be absurd and you have gone a long way towards conquering it.

The question now before us is one of very wide application. I shall not attempt to suggest all the ways in which it may be employed, but I am going to turn it to three uses this morning. The first is for *the man of God in distress*. Let him take this question, and put it to his own reason and common sense, and especially to his own faith, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" When we have handled the question in that way, we will pass it over to *the seeking sinner who is despondent*, and we will ask him whether he really believes that God hath forgotten to be gracious. When this is done, we may have a moment or two left for *the Christian worker who is dispirited*, who cannot do his work as he would wish to do, and who mourns over the little result coming from it. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Will you be allowed to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and will you never come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you? We shall have quite enough matter to fill up our time, and many fragments remaining when the feast is over. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word!

I. TO THE MAN OF GOD IN DISTRESS, this question is commended, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

What kind of distress is that which suggests such a question? Where had Asaph been? In what darkness had he wandered? In what tangled wood had he lost himself? How came he to get such a thought into his mind?

I answer, first, this good man had been troubled by unanswered prayers. "In the day of my trouble," he says,— "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord"; and he seems to say that though he sought the Lord his griefs were not removed. He was burdened, and he cried unto God beneath the burden, but the burden was not lightened. He was in darkness, and he craved for light, but not a star shone forth. Nothing is more grievous to the sincere pleader than to feel that his petitions are not heeded by his God. It is a sad business to have gone up, like Elijah's servant, seven times, and yet to have seen no cloud upon the sky in answer to your importunity. It tries a man to spend all night in wrestling, and to have won no blessing from the covenant angel. To ask, and not to receive; to seek, and not to find; to knock, and to see no open door,—these are serious trials to the heart, and tend to extort the question, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Unanswered prayer is very staggering even to strong faith; but the weak faith of a tried believer is hard put to it by long delays and threatened denials. When the mercy-seat itself ceases to yield us aid, what can we do? You will not wonder, then, considering your own tendency to doubt, that this man of God, when his prayers did not bring him deliverance, cried out, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Besides that, he was enduring continued suffering. Our text says, "My sore ran in the night." His wound was bleeding ever: there was no cessation to his pain. At night he woke up and wished it were morning, and when the daylight came he wished for night again, if, perchance, he might obtain relief; but none came. Pain of body, when it is continuous and severe, is exceedingly trying to our feeble spirits; but agony of soul is worse still. Give me the rack sooner than despair. Do you know what it is to have a keen thought working like an auger into your brain? Has Satan seemed to pierce and gimlet your mind with a sharp, cutting thought that would not be put aside? It is torment indeed to have a worm gnawing at your heart, a fire consuming your spirit: yet a true child of God may be thus tormented. When Asaph had prayed for relief, and the relief did not come, the temptation came to him to ask, "Am I always to suffer? Will the

Lord never relieve me? It is written, 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds'; has he ceased from that sacred surgery? 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious?'"

In addition to this, the man of God was in a state of mind in which his depression had become inveterate. He says, "My soul refused to be comforted." Many plasters were at hand, but he could not lay them upon the wound; many cordials offered themselves, but he could not receive them—his throat seemed closed. The meadows were green, but the gate was nailed up, and the sheep could not get in; the brooks flowed softly, but he could not reach their margin to lie down and drink. Asaph was lying at the pool of Bethesda, and he saw others step in to be healed, but he had no man to put him into the pool when the waters were troubled. His mind had become confirmed in its despondency, and his soul refused to be comforted.

More than that, there seemed to be a failure of the means of grace for him. "I remembered God, and was troubled." Some of God's people go up to the house of the Lord where they were accustomed to unite in worship with delight, but they have no delight now; they even go to the communion-table, and eat the bread and drink the wine, but they do not receive the body and blood of Christ to the joy of their faith. Anon they get them to their chambers, and open their Bibles, and bow their knees, and remember God; but every verse seems to condemn them; their prayers accuse them, and God himself seems turned to be their enemy; and then it is little wonder that unbelief exclaims, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

At the back of all this there was another trouble for Asaph, namely, that he could not sleep. He says, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking." It seemed as if the Lord himself held up his eyelids, and would not let them close in sleep. Others on their beds were refreshed with "kind nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep"; but when Asaph sought his couch he was more unrestful there than when he was engaged in the business of the day. We may speak of sleeplessness very lightly, but among afflictions it is one of the worst that can happen to men. When the chamber of repose becomes a furnace of anguish it goes hard with a man. When the Psalmist could

not find even a transient respite in sleep, his weakness and misery drove him to say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Moreover, there was one thing more: he lost the faculty of telling out his grief: "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." There are some people to whom we would not tell our trouble, for we know they would not understand it, for they have never been in deep waters themselves; there are others to whom we could not tell our trouble, though they might help us, because we feel ashamed to do so. To be compelled to silence is a terrible increase to anguish: the torrent is swollen when its free course is prevented. A dumb sorrow is sorrow indeed. The grief that can talk will soon pass away; that misery which is wordless is endless. The brook that ripples and prattles as it flows is shallow; but deep waters are silent in their flow. When a man falls under the power of a dumb spirit it needs Christ himself to come and cast the devil out of him, for he is brought into a very grievous captivity. We who know what a poor thing human nature is when it is brought into affliction, are not surprised that the man of God said in such a case, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Having thus, you see, put the doubt in the most apologetic style, and mentioned the excuses which mitigate the sin of the question, I am now going to expose its unreasonableness and sinfulness, by considering *what answers we may give to such a question?* I shall endeavour to answer it by making it answer itself—

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Answer: Hath God forgotten anything? If he could forget, could he be God? Is it not absurd to speak of him as short of memory, of whose understanding there is no searching? Shall we speak of him as forgetting, when to his mind all things are present, and the past and the future are ever before him as in a map which lies open before the beholder's eye? Oh child of God, why doest thou talk thus? Oh troubled heart, wilt thou insult thy God, wilt thou narrow the infinity of his mind? Can God forget? Thou art forgetful. Perhaps thou canst scarce remember from hour to hour thine own words and thine own promises; but is the Lord such an one as thou art? Not even the least thing is passed over by him. He hath not forgotten the young ravens in their nests, but he heareth when they cry. He hath not

forgotten a single blade of grass, but giveth to each its own drop of dew. He hath not forgotten the sea monsters down deep in the caverns of ocean. He hath not forgotten a worm that hides itself away beneath the sod; therefore banish the thought once for all, that thy God hath forgotten anything, much less that he hath forgotten to be gracious.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then hath he forgotten an old, long, ancient, aye, eternal habit of his heart. Hast thou not heard that his mercy endureth for ever? Did he not light up the lamps of heaven because of his mercy? Do we not sing, "To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever"? Since the creation hath he not in providence always been gracious? Is it not his rule to open his hand, and supply the want of every living thing? Did he not give his Son to redeem mankind? Hath he not sent his Spirit to turn men from darkness to light? After having been gracious all these myriads of ages, after having manifested his love and his grace at such a costly rate, hath he forgotten it? Thou, O man, takest up a practice, and thou layest it down; thou doest a thing now and then, and then thou ceasest from thy way, but shall the eternal God who has always been gracious forget to be gracious? Oh, Lord, forgive the thought.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Why, then, he must have forgotten his purpose! Hath thou not heard that or ever the earth was he purposed to redeem unto himself a people who should be his own chosen, his children, his peculiar treasure, a people near unto him? Before he made the heavens and the earth, had he not planned in his own mind that he would manifest the fulness of his grace toward his people in Christ Jesus, and dost thou think that he has turned from his eternal purpose, and rent up his divine decrees, and burned the book of life, and changed the whole course of his operations among the sons of men? Dost thou know what thou art at to talk so? Doth he not say, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"? Hath he said, and will he not do it? Hath he purposed, and shall it not come to pass? Banish, then, the thought of his forgetting to be gracious.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then he must have forgotten his

own *covenant*; for what was the purport of his covenant with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, on the behalf of his people? Is it not called a covenant of grace? Is not grace the spirit and tenor and object of it? Of old he said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy"; and in his covenant he ordains to show this grace to as many as are in Christ Jesus. Now, if a man's covenant be confirmed it stands fast. Nothing that occurs after a covenant has been made can alter it; and God having once made a covenant turneth not from his promise and his oath. The law which was four hundred and thirty years after the covenant made with Abraham could not change the promises which the Lord had made to the believing seed, neither can any accident or unforeseen circumstance make the covenant of grace null and void; indeed, there are no accidents with God, nor any unforeseen circumstances with him. He hath lifted his hand to heaven and hath sworn; he hath declared, "If my covenant be not with day and night, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob." The Lord hath not forgotten his covenant with day and night, neither will he cast off his believing people. He cannot, therefore, forget to be gracious.

More than that, when thou sayest, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" dost thou not forget that in such a case he must have forgotten *his own glory*? for the main of his glory lies in his grace. In that which he does out of free favour and love to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving men, he displays the meridian splendour of his glory. His power, his wisdom, and his immutability praise him; but in the forefront of all shines out his grace. This is his darling attribute; by this he is illustrious on earth and in heaven above. Hath God forgotten his own glory? Doth a man forget his honour? Doth a man turn aside from his own name and fame? He may do so in a moment of madness; but the thrice holy God hath not forgotten the glory of his name, nor forgotten to be gracious.

Listen, and let unbelief stand rebuked. If God hath forgotten to be gracious, then he must have forgotten *his own Son*, he must have forgotten Calvary and the expiatory sacrifice offered there; he must have forgotten him that is ever with him at his right hand, making intercession for transgressors; he must have forgotten his pledge to him that he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Canst thou conceive that? It

is verging upon blasphemy to suppose such a thing; yet it must be that he has forgotten his own Son if he hath forgotten to be gracious.

Once more; if this were the case, the Lord must have forgotten *his own self*; for grace is of the essence of his nature, since God is love. We forget ourselves and disgrace ourselves, but God cannot do so. Oh beloved, it is part and parcel of God's own nature that he should show mercy to the guilty and be gracious to those who trust in him. Hast thou forgotten as a father thy children? Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? These things are barely possible, but it is utterly impossible that the great Father should forget himself by forgetting his children; that the great Lord who hath taken us to be his peculiar heritage and his jewels should cease to value us and forget to be gracious to us.

I think I hear some one say, "I do not think God hath forgotten to be gracious *except to me*." Doth God make any exceptions? Doth he not speak universally when he addresses his children? Remember, if God forgot to be gracious to one of his believing people he might forget to be gracious to them all. If there were one instance found in which his love failed, then the foundations would be removed, and what could the righteous do? The Good Shepherd doth not preserve some of his sheep, but all of them; and it is not concerning the strong ones of his flock that he saith, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;" but he has said it of all the sheep, aye, and of the smallest lamb of all the flock, of the most scabbed and wounded, of all that he has purchased with his blood. The Lord hath not forgotten himself in any one instance; but he is faithful to all believers.

Now, let us attend to *the amendment of the question*. Shall I tell thee, friend, thou who hast put this question, what the true question is which thou oughtest to ask thyself? It is not, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" but "Hast thou forgotten to be grateful?" Why, thou enjoyest many mercies even now. It is grace which allows thee to live after having asked such a vile question. Grace is all around thee, if thou wilt but open thine eyes, or thine ears. Thou hadst not been spared after so much sin if God had forgotten to be gracious.

Listen: Hast thou not forgotten to be believing? God's word is true, why dost thou doubt it? Is he a liar? Has he ever played thee false? Which promise of his has failed? Time was when thou didst trust him; then thou knewest he was gracious; but thou art doubting now without just cause; thou art permitting an evil heart of unbelief to draw thee aside from the living God. Know this, and repent of it, and trust thy best Friend.

Hast thou not also forgotten to be reverent? Else how couldst thou ask such a question? Should a man say of God that he has forgotten to be gracious? Should he imagine such a thing? Should the keenest grief drive to such profanity? Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Shall anyone of us begin to doubt that grace, which has kept us out of the bottomless pit, and spared us to this hour? Oh, heir of glory, favoured as thou hast been to bathe thy forehead in the sunlight of heaven full often, and then to lean thy head on the Saviour's bosom,—is it out of thy mouth that this question comes,—"Hath God forgotten to be gracious"? Call it back and bow thine head unto the dust, and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon thy servant, that he hath even thought thus for an instant."

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Why, surely thou hast forgotten thyself, or thou wouldest not talk so: thou hast forgotten that thou owest everything to thy Lord, and art indebted to him even for the breath in thy nostrils. Thou hast forgotten the precious blood of Jesus; thou hast forgotten the mercy-seat; thou hast forgotten providence; thou hast forgotten the Holy Spirit; thou hast forgotten all that the Lord has done for thee: surely, thou hast forgotten all good things, or thou wouldest not speak thus. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and leave the dunghill of thy despair, and sing, "His mercy endureth for ever." Say in thy soul,—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Thus much to the child of God. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply it to every troubled heart.

II. Furthermore, I desire to talk a little with THE SEEKING SINNER IN DESPONDENCY. You have not yet found joy and peace through

believing, and therefore I will first *describe your case*, and what it is that has made you say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

You labour under a sense of guilt; you know that you have transgressed against God, and you feel that this is a terrible thing, involving wrath to the uttermost. The arrows of God are sticking in your soul, and rankling there. You cannot trifle with sin as you once did; it burns like a fiery poison in your veins! You have been praying to get rid of that sense of sin, but it deepens. The case I am stating is very clear to every child of God; but it is not at all clear to the man who is enduring it. He cries, "The more I pray, the more I go to hear the word, the more I read the Bible, the blacker sinner I seem to be. 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious?'"

Moreover, a sense of weakness is increasing upon you. You thought that you could pray; but now you cannot pray. You thought it the easiest thing in the world to believe; but now the grappling-irons will not lay hold upon the promise, and you find no rest. You cannot now perform those holy acts which you once thought to be so easy. Your power is dried up, your glory is withered. Now you groan out, "I would but I can't repent, then all would easy be. Alas, I have no hope, no strength; I am reduced to utter weakness." *We understand all this, but you do not; and we do not wonder at your crying,—*"Hath God forgotten to be gracious." "Oh, but sir, I have been crying to God that he would be pleased to deliver me from sin, and the more I try to be holy the more I am tempted; I never knew such horrible thoughts before, nor discovered such filthiness in my nature before. When I get up in the morning I resolve that I will go straight all the day, and before long I am more crooked than ever. I feel worse rather than better. The world tempts me, the devil tempts me, the flesh tempts me, everything goes wrong with me. 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious'? I have prayed the Lord to give me peace, and he promises to give rest; but I am more uneasy than ever, and cannot rest where I used to do. I used to be very happy when I was at chapel on Sunday; I thought I was doing well to be at public worship; but now I fear that I only go as a formalist, and therefore I mock God, and make matters worse. I rested once in being a teetotaller, in being a hard-working, honest, sober man; but now I see that I must be born again. I used to rest once in the idea that I was becoming quite religious; but now it seems to me that my betterness is a

hollow sham, and all my old nests are pulled down.

My friend, I perfectly understand your case, and think well of it; for the like has happened to many of us. You must be divorced from self before you can be married to Christ; and that divorce must be made most clear and plain, or Jesus will never make a match with you. You must come clear away from self-righteousness, self-trust, self-hope, or else one of these days, when Jesus has saved you, there might be a doubt as to whether he is to have all the glory, or to go halves with self. He makes you nothing that he may be all in all to you. He grinds you to the dust that he may lift you out of it for ever. Meanwhile, I do not wonder that the question crosses your mind, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Let me *show how wrong the question is*. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" If he has, he has forgotten what he used to know right well. David was foul with his adultery—remember that fifty-first Psalm—but how sweet was the prophet's message to the penitent king: "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die!" "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," was a prayer most graciously answered in that royal sinner's case. Remember Jonah, and how he went down to the bottom of the mountains in the whale's belly, and was brought even to hell's door; yet he lived to sing "Salvation is of the Lord," and was brought out of the depths of the sea. Remember Manasseh, who shed innocent blood very much, and yet the grace of God brought him among thorns, and made him a humble servant of the Lord. Remember Peter, how he denied his Master, but his Master forgave him, and bade him feed his sheep. Forget not the dying thief, and how in the extremity of death, filled with all the agonies of crucifixion, he looked to the Lord, and the Lord looked on him, and that day he was with the King in paradise. Think also of Saul of Tarsus, that chief of sinners, who breathed out threatenings against the people of God, and yet was struck down, and, before long was in mercy raised up again, and ordained to be a chosen vessel to bear the gospel among the heathen. If God has forgotten to be gracious, he has forgotten a line of things in which he has wrought great wonders, and in which his heart delighted from of old. It cannot be that he will turn away from that which is so dear to him.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then why are all the old arrangements for grace still standing? There is the mercy-seat; surely that would have been taken away if God had forgotten to be gracious. The gospel is preached to you, and this is its assurance, "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." If the Lord had forgotten to be gracious he would not have mocked you with empty words.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is still living, and still stands as a priest to make intercession for transgressors. Would that be the case if God had forgotten to be gracious? The Holy Spirit is still at work convincing and converting; would that be so if God had forgotten to be gracious? Oh brothers, while Calvary is still a fact, and the Christ has gone into the glory bearing his wounds with him, there is a fountain still filled with blood wherein the guilty may wash. While there is an atoning sacrifice there must be grace for sinners. I cannot enlarge on these points, for time flies so rapidly; but the continuance of the divine arrangements, the continuance of the Son of God as living and pleading, and the mission of the Holy Spirit as striving, regenerating, comforting—all this proves that God hath not forgotten to be gracious.

Remember that God himself must according to nature be ever gracious so long as men will put their trust in the great sacrifice. He has promised to be gracious to all who confess their sins and forsake them and look to Christ; and he cannot forget that word without a change which we dare not impute to him. God might sooner forget to be than forget to be gracious to those to whom he has promised his grace. He has promised to every poor, guilty, confessing soul that will come and put his trust in Christ that he will be gracious in pardoning sin, and so it must be.

I shall come to close quarters with you. I know your despair has driven you to the question, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" and I would silence it by putting other questions to you. Is it not you that have forgotten to believe in Christ? "I have been praying," says one. That is all very well, but the gospel is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," not "he that prays." "I have been trying to come to Christ." I know that, but I read nothing about this *trying* in Holy Scripture, and I fear your trying is that which keeps you from Jesus. You are told to believe in

Christ, not to try to believe. A minister in America, some time ago, was going up the aisle of his church during a revival, when a young man earnestly cried to him, "Sir, can you tell me the way to Christ?" "No," was the answer, very deliberately given; "I cannot tell you the way to Christ." The young man answered, "I beg pardon; I thought you were a minister of the gospel." "So I am," was the reply. "How is it that you cannot tell me the way to Christ?" "My friend," said the minister, "*there is no way to Christ*. He is himself the way. All that believe in him are justified from all things. There is no way to Christ; Christ is here." O! my hearer, Christ himself is the way of salvation, and that way comes right down to your foot, and then leads right up to heaven. You have not to make a way to the Way, but at once to run in the way which lies before you. The way begins where you now are; *enter it*. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ now, and you are saved; and then you will no more ask the question, "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"

"Oh," says one, "but I have been looking to reform myself and grow better, and I have done a good deal in that way." That is not the gospel; it is all very right and proper, but the gospel is, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." The other day I saw my bees swarming; they hung on a branch of a tree in a living mass; the difficulty was to get them into a hive. My man went with his veil over his face and began to put them into the skep; and I noticed that he was particularly anxious to get the queen bee into it; for if he once had her in the hive the rest would be sure to follow, and remain with her. Now, faith is the queen bee. You may get temperance, love, hope, and all those other bees into the hive; but the main thing is to get simple faith in Christ, and all the rest will come afterwards. Get the queen bee of faith, and all the other virtues will attend her.

"Alas!" cries one, "I have been listening to the gospel for years." That is quite right, for "faith cometh by hearing"; but recollect, we are not saved by mere listening, nor even by knowing, unless we advance to believing. The letter of the word is not life; it is the spirit of it which saves. When tea was first introduced into this country a person favoured a friend with a pound of it. It was exceedingly expensive, and when he met his friend next, he enquired, "Have you tried the tea?" "Yes, but I did not like it at

all." "How was that? Everybody else is enraptured with it." "Why," said the other, "we boiled it in a saucepan, threw away the water, and brought the leaves to table; but they were very hard, and nobody cared for them." Thus many people keep the leaves of form, and throw away the spiritual meaning. They listen to our doctrines, but fail to come to Christ. They throw away the true essence of the gospel, which is faith in Jesus. I pray you, do not act thus with what I preach. Do not bury yourself in my words, or even in the words of Scripture; but pass onward to the life and soul of their meaning, which is Christ Jesus, the sinner's hope. All the aroma of the gospel is in Christ; all the essence of the gospel is in Christ, and you have only to trust him to enjoy eternal life. You guilty, worthless sinner, you at the gates of hell, you who have nothing to recommend you, you who have no good works or good feelings, simply trust the merits of Christ, and accept the atonement made by his death, and you shall be saved, your sin shall be forgiven, your nature shall be changed, you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and you shall never say again, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

III. The time has gone; therefore THE DISAPPOINTED WORKER must be content with a few crumbs. You have been working for Christ, dear brother, and have fallen in to a very low state of heart, so that you cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" I know what state you are in. You say, "I do not feel as if I could preach; the matter does not flow. I do not feel as if I could teach; I search for instruction, and the more I pull the more I cannot get it." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Can he not fill thine empty vessel again? Can he not give thee stores of thought, emotion, and language? He has used thee; can he not do so again? "Ah, but my friends have gone; I am in a village from which the people remove to London, and I lose my best helpers." Or, perhaps you say, "I work in a back street, and everybody is moving out into the suburbs." You have lost your friends, and they have forgotten you; but, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" You can succeed so long as the Lord is with you. Be of good courage; your best friend is left. He who made a speech in the Academy found that all his hearers had gone except Plato; but as Plato remained, the orator finished his address. They asked him how he could continue under the circumstances, and he replied that Plato was enough for an audience. So, if God be pleased with you, go on; the divine pleasure is

more than sufficient. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Did not Wesley say when he was dying, "The best of all is, God is with us"? Therefore fear not the failure of friends.

"But, sir, the sinners I have to deal with are such tough ones: they reject my testimony; they grow worse instead of better; I do not think I can ever preach to them again." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" *You* cannot save them, but he can. "But I work in such a depraved neighbourhood, the people are sunk in poverty and drunkenness." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Does not he know the way to save drunkards? Does not he know how to rescue the harlot and the whoremonger, and make them clean and chaste?

"Ah, but the church in which I labour is in a wretched state; the members are worldly, lukewarm, and divided. I have no brethren around me to pray for me, as you have; they are always squabbling and finding fault with one another." That is a horrible business, but "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Cannot God put you right, and your church right? If he begins with you by strengthening your faith, may you not be the means of healing all these divisions, and bringing these poor people into a better state of mind, and then converting the sinners round about you? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

"Ah, well," saith one, "I am ready to give it all up." I hope you will not do so. If you have made up your mind to speak no more in the name of the Lord, I hope that word will be like fire in your bones; for if God has not forgotten to be gracious, provoked as he has been, how can you forget to be patient? Is it possible while God's sun shines on you that you will refuse to shine on the fallen? If God continues to be gracious, you ought not to grow weary in well-doing.

Perhaps I speak to some dear brother who is very old and infirm; he can hardly hear, and scarcely see, so that he reads his Bible with difficulty. He gets to the service now, but he knows that soon he will be confined to his chamber, and then to his bed. His mind is sadly failing him; he is quite a wreck. Take this home with you, my aged brother, and keep it for your comfort if you never come out again: "Hath God forgotten to be

gracious?" Oh, no; the Lord hath said, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Having loved his own which were in the world, the Lord Jesus loved them unto the end; and he will love *you* to the end. When the last scene comes, and you close your eyes in death, blessed be his name, you shall know that he has not forgotten you. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is the Lord's promise, and his people's sheet-anchor. Therefore, let us not fear when our frail tabernacles are taken down, but let us rejoice that God hath not forgotten to be gracious. Though our bodies will sink into the dust, they will ere long rise again, and we shall be in glory for ever with the Lord. Blessed be his name. Amen.

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A Question For Communicants

What mean ye by this service? - Exodus 12:26

In a spiritual religion, everything must be understood. That which is not spiritual, but ritualistic, contents itself with the outward form. Under the Jewish dispensation, there was a very strong tendency in that direction; but it was kept to some extent in check. Under the Christian faith, this tendency must not be tolerated at all. We must know the meaning of what we do; otherwise we are not profited. We do not believe in the faith of the man who was asked what he believed, and who replied that he believe what the church believed. "But what does the church believe?" "The church believes what I believe." "Well, but what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." He could not be got to explain himself any further. We look upon such expressions as the talk of ignorance, and not the language of faith. Faith knows what she believes,

and can give a reason for the hope that is in her meekness and fear.

Concerning the Passover, the young people among the Jews were encouraged to ask their parents this question, "What means ye by this service?" Children should be encouraged now to ask such gracious questions. I am afraid they are not prompted to do so as they used to be in Puritan times. After the sermon always came the catechizing of the children when they were at home; and every father was bound to be attentive, because he had to ask the boys and girls in the evening what they had heard; and they were more attentive then than now, because they had to be prepared to answer any questions of their parents in return. Cultivate in your children a desire to understand everything connected with our holy faith.

In this chapter, from which I had culled my text, the parents are taught how to answer their children. If the parent be ignorant, a question from his child is inconvenient. He finds his ignorance exposed, and he perhaps is vexed with the child who has been the innocent means of unveiling him to himself. Be ready to tell your children what the ordinances of the gospel mean. Explain baptism to them, explain the Lord's supper to them; and above all, explain the gospel; and let them know as far as words can make it plain, what is that great mystery whereby we are saved, whereby sin is forgiven, and we are made the children of God.

I thought it would be profitable, if God gave me strength for the exercise, very briefly to answer the question supposed to be put by an intelligent youth, "What mean ye by this service?" - this service that is called by some people "Holy Communion"; which is sometimes called the "Eucharist"; and among us is called "the Lord's supper", or "the breaking of bread." What does it mean?

It means many things; but chiefly five, of which I will speak now.

I. This supper is, first of all, A MEMORIAL.

If you want to keep something in mind from generation to generation, you may attempt it in many ways. You may erect a bronze column, or you

may engrave a record of it upon brass in the church. The column will get sold for old bronze, and somebody will steal the brasses from the church; and the memorial will disappear. You may write it upon marble if you please; but in our climate, at any rate, the inscription is very apt to be obliterated; and the old stones, though they last long, may after a time be as dumb as the treasures of Nineveh and Egypt were for centuries. These monuments did preserve the records, but they were hidden under the sand, or buried beneath the ruins of cities; and though they have a tongue now, and are speaking forcibly, yet whatever had been entrusted to them would have been forgotten while they were lying under the sand of the desert, or in the debris of the palaces of Koyunjik. There are other ways of preserving memorials, such as writing in books; but books can be lost. Many valuable works of the ancients have entirely ceased, and no copies of them can be found. Some of the books mentioned in the Old Testament, which were not inspired books, but still were books which we should greatly value now, have quite passed out of existence.

It is found that, upon the whole, one of the best ways of remembering a fact is to have some ceremony connected with it, which shall be frequently performed, so as to keep the fact in memory. I suppose that Absalom will never be forgotten. He built himself a pillar in the king's dale; he knew his own infamous history, and he thought it might be forgotten. No one would care to remember it so he built himself a monument; and there it stands, or what is reputed to be that monument, to this day, and every Arab who passes by the spot throws a stone at it. Absalom will better be remembered by the ceremony of throwing stones at his tomb than by any record in marble.

To turn your thoughts to something infinitely higher, I cannot conceive of a surer and better method of keeping the death of Christ in mind than of meeting together, as we shall do to-night, for the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of the juice of the vine in memory of his death. Other facts may be forgotten; this one never can be. To-night, and every first day of the week, in ten thousand places of worship, believers meet together for the breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ's cross and passion, his precious death and burial. Those great facts can never pass out of mind. Jesus said to his disciples, "This do in remembrance of me."

In obeying his command you are doing what is most effectual in keeping your Lord in remembrance. As I preach to-night, having no sort of reliance upon my own words, I want you to practise them as I go along; then you will be like the woman who said that, when she heard a sermon about light weights and short measures, thought she forgot what the preacher said, when she got home, she recollected to burn her bushel, which was short. So, if you can just practice the sermon as you hear it, it will be well.

Recollect, then, that you come to this table to-night to remember an absent Friend. Jesus has gone away. He who loved us better than any other ever loved us, has left us for a while. We sometimes take little parting gifts from friends, and they say to us -

"When this you see,
Remember me."

Probably, almost everybody here has, at some time or other, had certain tokens of remembrance by which they might be reminded of some dear one who is far away across the seas; out of sight, but not out of mind. You come to the communion-table, then, to remember your absent Friend.

You come, also, chiefly to remember his great deed of love. This supper is a memorial of what Jesus did for you when he was on the earth. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He laid down his life for you; remember that to-night. "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" dwell on that fact. Let these words wake the echoes in your hearts, "Gethsemane!" "Gabbatha!" "Golgotha!" Can you forget all that Jesus suffered there on your behalf? If you have let these things slip in any degree from your heart's affections, come and write them down again. Come to the table, and there celebrate the memorial of his love, and wounds, and agonies, and death for you.

"In memory of the Saviour's love,
We keep the sacred feast,
Where every humble contrite heart
Is made a welcome guest,

"By faith we take the bread of life,
With which our souls are fed;
And cup, in token of his blood
That was for sinners shed."

You are also called upon to remember a dear Friend who, although he has gone away, has gone about your business. It was expedient for you that he should go away. He is doing you more good where he has gone than he could have done if he stayed here. He is pressing on your suit to-night. Your business would miscarry were it not for him; but within the veil that hides him from you, he is pleading for you. His power, his dignity, his merit, are all freely being employed for you. He is pleading the causes of your soul. Can you, will you, forget him? Will you not now forget everything else, and indulge the sweet memory of your faithful Lover, your dear Husband, who is married to you in ties of everlasting wedlock? Come, I pray you, keep the memorial of this dear Friend.

And you have to remember a Friend who will return very soon. He only tells you to do this till he comes. He is coming back to us. His own words are, "Behold, I come quickly!" That is not quite the meaning of what he said; it was, "Behold, I am coming quickly!" He is on his way, his chariot is hurrying towards us the axles of the wheels are hot with speed. He is coming as fast as he can. The long-suffering of God delays him, till sinners are brought in, till the full number of his elect shall be accomplished; but he is not delaying; he is not lingering; he is not slack, as some men count slackness; he is coming quickly. Will you not remember him? Soon will his hand be on the door; soon for you, at any rate, he may cry, "Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come away;" and soon he may be here among us, and then we shall reign with him for ever and ever.

I charge my own heart to remember my dear Lord to-night; and I pray you, brothers and sisters, let not the feebleness of my reminder deprive you now of the happiness of thinking much of Christ your Lord. Sit you still, and let all other thoughts be gone, and think only of him who loved you and died for you. Let your thoughts go back to Calvary, as you sing, in

mournful accents, -

"O sacred head once wounded,
With grief and pain weigh'd down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thine only crown!
How pale art thou with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!"

Oh, eyes full of tears! Oh, shoulders once beaten with the gory lash! Oh, hands once nailed to the cruel tree! Oh, feet once fastened to the bitter cross! Soon shall we behold the Christ who loved us, and died for us. Wherefore let us observe this sacred feast in remembrance of him.

II. But I must be briefer on my second point. The second meaning of the Lord's supper is that it is AN EXHIBITION. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." We are helped to remember it by the type, the emblem, the metaphor which is supplied to us by this supper. How is that? Is there any likeness to the death of Christ in this supper? I answer, there is a great likeness.

There is his broken body, represented by the bread which is broken, and intended for use. His dear body was broken, marred, sadly marred, given over to the hands of death, laid in the sepulchre, wrapped about with fine linen, left there, as his enemies thought, never to rise again. In that broken bread, broken that even believing children may eat their morsel, you see Christ's body given up for his people's sake.

But there stands a cup. It is full of the red juice of the grape. What means it? He himself shall explain it: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Now, the shedding of blood is the great token of death. One would not long talk of killing without speaking of blood-shedding; in fact, bloodshed usually means dying by a violent death; and so did he die. They pierced his hands and his feet; the soldier thrust his lance into his side, and forthwith came there out blood and

water. That stream of blood was the token that he really was dead. He hath poured out from his veins his precious life to purchase his redeemed. The broken bread, the cluster pressed into the cup, and leaving nothing but its blood-red juice, these two things symbolize Christ's death.

But, most of all, this is an exhibition of the two things separate, the bread and the cup. We have heard of some mixing the bread with the wine; that is not the Lord's supper. We have heard of others partaking of the wafer, as they call it, and leaving the cup; this is not taking the Lord's supper. They must be both there; the bread here, the wine-cup there; because the separation of the blood from the flesh is the surest token of death. "The blood is the life thereof;" and if the blood be drained away, there is death. Therefore the blood is represented by the cup, and the flesh is represented by the bread; these two separated are the great token and emblem of Christ's death.

We show, display, exhibit, symbolize, the death of our Lord at this table in this fashion; we partake of both symbols, eating of the bread, drinking of the cup, the whole ministering to the support of our life. At this table we say to all of you who do not know Christ, Christ's death is our life, and the remembrance of Christ's death is the food of our life. If any of you are spectators of the ordinance, this is the meaning of our little acted sermon, Christ has died. Christ's death is the support of our faith, the food of our souls; in token whereof we take this bread and this cup, and eat and drink. So this supper is a showing forth of Christ's death. How many here can say that Christ's death is their life? How many of you can say that you feed upon him? Dear friends, you must not come to the table unless you can say it; but if you can, come and welcome; and if you cannot, oh! may the Lord teach you the lesson that is so needful, the lesson that is so blessed, when it is once learnt, that Christ on the cross is the one hope of eternal glory.

You have thus had two meanings of the Lord's supper; first, it is a memorial; and next, an exhibition.

III. The Lord's supper is, next, A COMMUNION.

We must have this brought out prominently, or we shall miss a great deal. We are at the Lord's table; we eat of his bread, we drink out of his cup. This betokens friendship. When, in the East, a man has eaten of an Arab's salt, he is henceforth under his protecting care; and he who has spiritually eaten of Christ's bread, has come under Christ's protection; Christ will take care of him. All feuds are ended; an eternal peace is established between the two. It was a tender parable in which Nathan spoke of a man who had a little ewe lamb, which did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom. This is your privilege, to lie in Christ's bosom, to drink out of his cup, and to eat of his bread. This is a very sweet fellowship; enjoy it to-night to the full.

We go further than that, for we not only eat of his bread, but symbolically we feast upon him. His flesh is meat indeed; and his blood is drink indeed. Can I really feed upon Christ? Really, yes. Carnally, no. There is no such thing as the carnal eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood; that were a horrible thing; that were to make a man a cannibal; but the spiritual feeding upon the Incarnate God, this is what we mean. He gives us his flesh to eat, and we thus enter into a fellowship of the most intense and mysterious kind; not merely eating with him, but eating him; not merely receiving from him, but receiving him himself to be the life of our hearts. May you get to that point to-night! I believe in the real presence of Christ; I do not believe in the carnal presence of the Romanist. I believe in the real presence of the believer; but that reality is none the less real because it is spiritual; and only spiritual men can discern it.

Now, beloved, if we really come in the right spirit to this table, when we have eaten the bread, it becomes part of us; when the wine is sipped, the juice of the grape enters into our constitution; we cannot separate it from ourselves. Such is our fellowship with Christ. He is one with us, and we are one with him. "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" We are one with Christ; partners with him; all that he has is ours; all that we have is his. He gives himself to us; we yield ourselves to him. It is Christ and Co., only the little "Co." drops its name to be swallowed up in him who is all in all. There is the meaning of the bread and the cup. We take Christ into ourselves, as he has taken us up into his

greater self.

But communion also means that we are one with each other. I wish that you would catch that thought. I am afraid there are some members of the church here, who have never realized their union with all the rest of the members. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. There should be an intimate feeling of fellowship, a readiness to help and love one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

I cannot shake off from myself the idea that this makes up a large part of the meaning of the Lord's supper, the communion of saints with each other as well as the communion of the saints with Christ. May we enjoy it to-night! For my part, I like to feel, when I come to the table, that I am going to have communion, not only with this church, large as it is, not merely with the members of one denomination (I wish there were no denominations), not merely with the company of one body of Christians - would to God, there were but one body of Christians throughout the world! - but freely inviting all who belong to any part of the visible church; I delight to think that at this table to-night I shall have fellowship with the brethren in the United States, of all names, and sorts, and ages, and ranks. There cannot be two churches of Christ. There is but one Church, one Head, and one body. Though there are some very naughty children in the Lord's family, they must not be kept without their supper; there is some other way of chastening them; and as long as there is true living communion between one Christian and another, where God has given the thing signified, I dare not keep back the sign. If he gives them to have fellowship with Christ, who am I that shall say, "Thou shalt have not fellowship with me"? I dare not say it.

The meaning of this supper, then, is communion.

IV. But a fourth meaning of the Lord's supper is A COVENANTING. Our Lord said to his disciples, "This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood." We do well to sing, -

"Thy body broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember thee."

When we come to the Lord's table, we must be careful that we there take Christ to be our God in covenant. We take the one living God for ever and ever. He gives himself to us, and we take him, and we declare, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our Guide even unto death." Do you understand that covenant relationship, every one of you? Do you know what you are doing when you take the piece of bread, and eat it, and take the cup and drink of it? If you are truly a believer in Christ, God is in covenant with you through the body and the blood of Christ, and you recognize that blessed truth, and take him to be your God.

Now, the covenant runs thus, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." When, therefore, we come to this covenanting table, we agree that we will be the Lord's people; henceforth, not the devil's, not the world's, not our own; but the Lord's. When the Lord's people are chastened, we expect to be chastened with them. When the Lord's people are persecuted, we expect to be persecuted with them. We must take them for better or worse, to have and to hold, and death itself must not part us from the Lord's people. That is the meaning of coming to this table, recognizing that, between you and God there is an agreement made that must not be broken, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, by which God becomes yours and you become his, so that you are for ever to be one of those that belong wholly to him.

Here, at the communion-table, God, the covenant God, seals his love to us. "Come hither, my child," saith the Lord, "I love thee, and I gave myself for thee, in token whereof put this bread into thy mouth, to remind thee of how I gave myself for thee. I love thee, so that thou art mine. I have called thee by my name, in token whereof I remind thee that I bought thee with my precious blood. Therefore, let that sip of the juice of the vine go into thy body, to remind thee that by my precious blood, which was shed for many, I have redeemed thee from going down into the pit." There are seals at that table, new seals of the covenant, new tokens, new

love gifts from the Lord, to remind you of what he has done for you.

And you are to come here to-night to testify anew your love to God. Here you say, "My Master, let me eat with thee." If any of you have lost your first love, and have grown spiritually cold, the Saviour stands at the door, and knocks, and he says, "Open to me," and he also says that if we open to him, he will come in, and sup with us, and we with him. He said that to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, the church which was neither cold nor hot, which he threatened to spew out of his mouth. If thou art only fit to make Christ sick, yet if thou wilt open the door to him, he will come and feast with thee to-night, and all shall be well with thee. He testifies his love to you. Come and testify yours to him to-night. That is the meaning of this bread and this cup. Your covenant with death is broken, your agreement with hell is disannulled; and now you are in covenant with God, and he is in covenant with you, even in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken.

V. Lastly, and very briefly, this supper signifies A THANKSGIVING. It is often called, by friends who love hard words, the "Eucharist." We have some friends who always carry a gold pencil, on purpose to put down every word that nobody understands, that they may use it next Sunday in their sermon. Such people call the Lord's supper the "Eucharist", which signifies "the giving of thanks." This is the thanksgiving service of the Church of God. It ought to be celebrated every Lord's-day. Every Sabbath should be a thanksgiving Sunday, for Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and we ought to give thanks every time we celebrate his resurrection. Certainly we should do so when we celebrate his death. What are we going to do to-night by way of thanksgiving?

Well, we are coming to a festival, not a funeral. The choice festival of the Jewish faith was the Passover. The Lord's supper takes its place with higher joys; we come to this feast to testify our joy in Christ. There is bread, but there is also wine upon the table. This is to show that it is a festival for joy and delight, and you cannot praise Christ better, and give thanks to him better than by rejoicing in him. Praise him by your grateful joy. I think that we should always come to the Lord's table with a feeling of deep reverence; but that reverence should never tend to bondage. We

want you not to come here quivering and shaking, as if you were slaves that came to eat a morsel of your master's bread, under fear of the lash. No, no; come, ye children; come, ye beloved ones of the Lord! Come, ye table companions of Christ, and sit at the festival he has prepared, and let your joy be full of thanksgiving!

We come to the table, next, actually to praise the Lord for giving Christ to us. When our Lord broke the bread, he gave thanks; so shall we to-night. Come ye, beloved, thankfully to praise the Father for the gift of Christ; and as you take the bread into your mouth, say in your heart, "Bless the Lord!" and as you drink of the cup, say in your spirit, "Blessed be his holy name! Blessed be the Father, for his eternal love to us; blessed be Jesus, for his love which has saved us to know all these precious things!"

One way in which we show our thanks to Christ is that we receive with gratitude the emblems of his death. Each one who communes with us will receive the bread, and eat it, and take the cup, and drink it. We do not hold it up, and look at it; we do not kneel down, and pay it homage; we receive it. We have done so now these many years. How long is it since we began this holy feast? Well, with some of us, it is over forty years since our first communion, and we do not want any better food. We desire to keep in memory the same Christ, to feed upon the same doctrine of the incarnation and atoning sacrifice; and if we should be spared, beloved, another forty years, which is far from likely, we shall have a sweeter taste for Christ even than we have now. He will be more dear to us, more precious, more delightful, even than he is to-night. So we come to the table to show our gratitude by receiving and receiving again.

Let me whisper in your ear, when this communion is over, and you shall leave this table, "Pray, beloved, that you may go away in the same spirit as your Lord and Master did, when after rising from supper, he went out to the garden, not there to have a sweet hour of lonely communion with God, but there to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He went there to be arrested, to be hurried off to the bar of Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod, and the rest of them. He went there, in fact to die; but he went away singing." So I want you to go away from this communion singing praises to God. As my dear brother

said in prayer, you must have your Gethsemanes, your Golgothas; but I want you to go away from this table singing. Whatever comes, high or low, bright or dark, heaven or another age in this dark wilderness, brethren, let us sing. We often say, "Let us pray;" but to-night, at the table, I say, "Let us sing." Let us sing unto the Lord because of his great gift to us, which we to-night remember, and set forth, and commune with, and covenant with. Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live; for we can never sufficiently praise him for all that he has done for us.

"We'll praise our risen Lord,
While at his feet we sit,
His griefs a hallow'd theme afford
For sweetest music fit."

Thus I have explained all about the Lord's supper; do you know anything about it? Some of you are going away. You are going away! Yes, and the day shall come when you will not have anywhere to go! When the great marriage supper is spread, and the feast of the gracious shall be held, and the whole universe shall be gathered, oh! where will you go? You will not be allowed to linger at the door, neither will you go home to wait till others shall return from the festival. You must be driven from God's presence if you come not by faith in Christ to that great feast. The fiery swords of the angel-guards shall be unsheathed, and they shall pursue you through the blackness of eternal darkness, down to infinite despair! The Lord have mercy upon you to-night, that he may have mercy upon you in that day, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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The Question Of Fear And The Answer Of Faith

Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. - Job 23:6

I shall not to-night consider the connexion of these words, or what was particularly intended by Job. I shall use them in, perhaps, another sense from that which he intended. No doubt Job meant to say, that if God would allow him to argue his case before him, it was his firm belief that God, so far from taking advantage of his superior strength in the controversy, would even strengthen him, that the controversy might be fair, and that the judgment might be unbiassed. "He would not plead against me with his great strength; no, but he would put strength in me." We shall use the text, however, to-night, in another sense.

It is one of the sure marks of a lost and ruined state when we are careless and indifferent concerning God. One of the peculiar marks of those who are dead in sin is this: they are the wicked who forget God. God is not in all their thoughts; "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." The sinful man is ever anxious to keep out of his mind the very thought of the being, the existence, or the character of God; and so long as man is unregenerate, there will be nothing more abhorrent to his taste, or his feelings, than anything which deals with the Divine Being. God perhaps, as Creator, he may consider; but the God of the Bible, the infinite Jehovah, judging righteously among the sons of men—condemning and acquitting—that God he has no taste for, he is not in all his thoughts, nor does he regard him. And mark you, it is a blessed sign of the work of grace in the heart, when man begins to consider God. *He* is not far from God's heart who hath meditations of God in his own heart. If we desire to seek after God, to know him, to understand him, and to be at peace with him, it is a sign that God has dealings with our soul, for otherwise we should still have hated his name and abhorred his character.

There are two things in my text, both of which have relation to the Divine Being. The first is, *the question of fear*: "Will he plead against me with his great power?" and the second is, *the answer of faith*: "No, but he will put strength in me." The fearful and the prayerful, who are afraid of sin and

fear God, together with those who are faithful and believe in God, are in a hopeful state; and hence, both the question of the one, and the answer of the other, have reference to the great Jehovah, our God, who is for ever to be adored.

I. We shall consider, in the first place, to-night THE INQUIRY OF FEAR: "Will he plead against me with his great power?" I shall consider this as a question asked by the convinced sinner. He is seeking salvation, but, when he is bidden to come before his God and find mercy, he is compelled by his intense anxiety to make the trembling inquiry, "Will he plead against me with his great power?"

1. And, first, I gather from this question the fact that *a truly penitent sinner has a right idea of many of God's attributes*. He does not understand them all, for instance, he does not yet know God's great mercy; he does not yet understand his unbounded compassion; but so far as his knowledge of God extends, he has an extremely correct view of him. To him the everlasting Jehovah appears GREAT in every attribute, and action, and supremely GREAT in his Majesty. The poor worldling knows there is a God; but he is to him a little God. As for the justice of God, the mere worldly man scarcely ever thinks of it. He considers that there is a God, but he regards him as a Being who has little enough respect for justice. Not so, however, the sinner. When God has once convinced him of his sin, he sees God as a *great* God, a God of *great* justice, and of *great* power. Whoever can misunderstand God's great justice or God's great power, a convinced sinner never will. Ask him what he thinks of God's justice, and he will tell you it like the great mountains; it is high, he cannot attain unto it. "Ah," saith he, "God's justice is very mighty; it *must* smite me. He *must* hurl an avalanche of woe upon my devoted head. Justice demands that he should punish me. I am so great a sinner that I cannot suppose he would ever pass by my transgression, my iniquity, and my sin." It is all in vain for you to tell such a man that God is little in his justice; he replies, "No," most solemnly, "No," and you can most plainly read his earnestness in his visage, when he replies, "No." He replies, "I feel that God is just; I am even now consumed by his anger; by his wrath am I troubled." "Tell me God is not just," says he; "I know he is; I feel that within an hour or two hell must swallow me up, unless Divine

mercy delivers me. Unless Christ shall wash me in his blood, I feel I can never hope to stand among the ransomed." He has not that strange idea of God's justice that some of you have. You think sin is a trifle! You suppose that one brief prayer will wipe it all away. You dream that by attendance at your churches and at your chapels, you will wash away your sins. You suppose that God, for some reason or other, will very easily forgive your sin. But you have no right idea of God's justice. You have not learned that God never does forgive until he has first punished, and that if he does forgive any one, it is because he has punished Christ first in the stead of that person. But he never forgives without first exacting the punishment. That would be an infringement on his justice; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? You have, many of you, lax enough ideas of the justice of the Divine Being; but not so the sinner who is laboring under a knowledge of sin.

An awakened soul feels that God is greatly *powerful*. Tell him that God is but a weak God, and he will answer you; and shall I tell you what illustrations he will give you, to prove that God is great in power. He will say, "Oh, sir, God is great in power as well in justice; look up yonder: can you not see in the dark past, when rebel angels sinned against God, they were so mighty that each one of them might have devastated Eden and shaken the earth. But God, with ease, hurled Satan and the rebels angels out of heaven, and drove them down to hell." "Sir," saith the sinner, "is he not mighty?" And then he will go on to tell you how God unbound the swaddling bands of the great ocean, that it might leap upon the earth; and how he bade it swallow up the whole of mortal race, save those who were hidden in the ark. And the sinner says, with his eyes well nigh starting from their sockets, "Sir, does not this prove that he is great in power, and will by no means acquit the wicked?" And then he proceeds, "Look again at the Red Sea; mark how Pharaoh was enticed into its depths, and how the parted sea, that stood aloof for awhile to give the Israelites an easy passage, embraced with eager joy, locked the adverse host within their arms, and swallowed them up quick;" and as he thinks he sees the Red Sea rolling o'er the slain, he exclaims, "Sir, God is great in power; I feel he must be, when I think of what he has done." And as if he had not finished his oration, and would let us know the whole of the greatness of God's power, he continues his narration of the deeds of

vengeance. "O sir, remember, he must be great in power, for I know that he hath digged a hell, which is deep and large, without bottom. He hath made a Tophet—the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it." "Yes, beyond a doubt," groans the trembling soul, "he must be great in power. I feel he is, and I feel more than that; I feel that justice has provoked God's arm of power to smite *me*, and unless *I* am covered in that righteousness of Christ, *I* shall ere long be dashed to pieces, and utterly devoured by the fury of his wrath." The sinner, as far as the harsher attributes of God's nature are concerned, when he is under conviction, has a very fair and a just idea of the Divine Being, though, as I have remarked before, not yet understanding the mercy and the infinite compassion of God towards his covenant people, he has too harsh a view of God, dwelling only upon the darker side, and not upon those attributes which shed a more cheering light upon the darkness of our misery. That is the first truth which I glean from the text.

2. The second truth which I gather from this question, "Will he plead against me with his great power?" is this: *that the trembling sinner feels that every attribute of God is against him as a sinner.* "Oh!" he will say, "I look to *God*, and I can see nothing in him but a consuming fire. I look to his *justice*, and I see it, with sword unsheathed, ready to smite me low. I look to his *power*, and I behold it, like a mighty mountain, tottering to its fall, to crush me. I look to his *immutability*, and methinks I see stern justice written on its brow, and I hear it cry, 'Sinner, I will not save, I will condemn thee.' I look to his *faithfulness*, and I mark that all his threatenings are as much 'yea and amen' as his promises. I look to his *love*, but even his love frowns, and accuses me, saying, 'thou hast slighted me.' I look to his *mercy*, but even his mercy launches out the thunderbolt, with accusing voice, reminding me of my former hardness of heart, and harshly chiding me thus, 'Go thou to justice, and glean what thou canst there. I, even I, am against thee, for thou hast made me wroth!'"

Oh! trembling penitent, where art thou to-night? Somewhere here, I know thou art. Would to God there were many like thee! I know thou wilt agree with me in this statement, for thou hast a dread apprehension that every attribute of the Divine Being's character is armed with fire and

sword to destroy thee. Thou seest all his attributes like heavy pieces of ordnance, all pointed at thee and ready to be discharged. Oh that thou mayest find a refuge in Christ! And oh! ye who never were convinced of sin, let me for one moment lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. Know ye this—perhaps ye laugh at it—that all God's attributes are against you, if you are not in Christ! If you are not sheltered beneath the wings of Jesus, there is not one single glorious name of God, nor one celestial attribute, which does not curse you. What wouldst thou think, if at thy door to-night there should be planted great pieces of heavy cannon, all loaded, to be discharged against thee? But dost thou know, that where thou sittest to-night there are worse than heavy cannons to be discharged at thee? Yes, I see them, I see them! There is God's justice, and there is the angel of vengeance, standing with the match, ready to bid it hurl vengeance at thee. There is his power; there is his bare arm, ready to break thy bones, and crush thee into powder. There is his love, all blazing, turned to hate because thou hast rejected it; and there is his mercy, clad with mail, going forth like a warrior to overthrow thee. What sayest thou, O sinner, to-night? Against thee all God's attributes are pointed. He hath bent his bow and made it ready. The sword of the Lord has been bathed in heaven; it is bright and sharp; it is furbished. How wilt thou escape, when a mighty arm shall bring it down upon thee? or how wilt thou flee, when he shall draw his bow and shoot his arrows at thee, and make thee a mark for all the arrows of his vengeance? Beware, beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver! For tear you in pieces, he will yet, unless you shelter in the Rock of Ages, and wash yourselves in the stream of his wondrous blood. Fly to him, then, ye chief of sinners, fly. But if ye will not, now ye this, God is against you! He will plead against thee with his great power, unless thou hast our all-glorious Jesus to be thine advocate.

3. And just one more hint here. The sinner, when he is labouring on account of guilt, feels that God would be just if he were to "*plead against him with his great power?*" "Oh," saith he, "If I go to God in prayer, perhaps instead of hearing me he will crush me as I would a moth." What, soul, would he be just if he did that? "Ay," saith the sinner, "just, supremely just. Perhaps I shall have stripped myself of all my ornaments, and like a naked one have flown to him; perhaps then he will lash me

harder than before, and I shall feel it all the worse for this my nakedness." And will he be just, should the flagellation of his vengeance fall upon thy shoulders? "Yes," he saith, "infallibly just." And should he smite thee to the lowest hell, would he be just? "Yes," saith the penitent, "just, infinitely just. I should have no word to say against him. I should feel that I deserved it all. My only question is, not whether he would be just to do it, but *will* he do it?" "Will he plead against me with his great power?" This is the question of fear. Some here, perhaps, are asking that question.

Now let them hear the reply of faith; God give them a good deliverance!

II. THE REPLY OF FAITH IS, "No." O sinner, hear that word, "No;" there are sonnets condensed into it. "Will he plead against me with his great power?" "No, no," say the saints in heaven; "no," say the faithful on earth; "no," say the promises; "no," unanimously exclaim the oracles of Scripture; no, most emphatically no, he will not plead against you with his great power, but he will put strength into you.

1. And here we make a similar remark to that with which we commenced the former part of the sermon, namely, this: *the fearful soul has a very right view of God in many respects, but the faithful soul has a right view of God in all respects.* He that hath faith in God knows more of God better than any man. Why, if I believe God, I can see all his attributes vindicated. I can see the wrath of justice expiated by yonder bleeding sufferer on the accursed tree. I can see his mercy and his justice joining hands with his wrath. I can see his power now turned on my behalf, and no longer against me. I can see his faithfulness become the guardian of my soul instead of the slaughterer of my hopes. I can see all his attributes standing, each of them conjoined, each of them glorious, each of them lovely, and all united in the work of man's salvation. He that feareth God, knows half of God; he that believeth God, knoweth all of God that he can know; and the more he believeth God, the more he understandeth God, the more he comprehendeth his glory, his character, his nature, and his attributes.

2. The next thing is, that *the believer when he is brought into peace with God does not tremble at the thought of God's power.* He does not ask,

"Will he plead against me with his great power?" But he says, "No, that very power, once my terror, and fear, is now my refuge and my hope, for he shall put that very power in me. I rejoice that God is Almighty, for he will lend me his omnipotence—he will put strength into me." Now, here is a great thought; if I had power to handle it, it would give me opportunity indeed to preach to you. But I cannot reach the heights of eloquence, I shall therefore simply exhibit the thought for a moment to you. The very power which would have damned my soul, saves my soul. The very power that would have crushed me, God puts into me, that the work of salvation may be accomplished. No, he will not use it to crush me, but he will put that very strength into me. Dost see there the Mighty One upon his throne? Dread Sovereign, I see thine awful arm. What, wilt thou crush the sinner? Wilt thou utterly destroy him with thy strength? "No," saith he, "Come hither, child." And if you go to his Almighty throne, "There," saith he "that self-same arm which made thee quake, see there, I give it to thee. Go out and live. I have made thee mighty as I am, to do my works; I will put strength into thee. The same strength which would have broken thee to pieces on the wheel shall now be put into thee, that thou mayest do mighty works."

Now, I will show you how this great strength displays itself. Sometimes it goes out in prayer. Did you ever hear a man pray in whom God had put strength? You have heard some of us poor puny souls pray, I dare say; but have you ever heard a man pray that God had made into a giant? Oh, if you have, you will say it is a mighty thing to hear such a man in supplication. I have seen him now and then slip in his wrestling; but, like a giant, he has recovered his footing, and seemed like Jacob, to hurl the angel to the ground. I have marked the many lay hold upon the throne of mercy, and declare, "Lord, I will never let go, except thou bless me." I have seen him, when heaven's gates have been apparently barred, go up to them, and say, "Ye gates, open wide in Jesus' name;" and I have seen the gates fly open before him, as if the man were God himself; for he is armed with God Almighty's strength. I have seen that man, in prayer, discover some great mountain in his hills and made them like chaff, by the immensity of his might. Some of you think I am talking enthusiasm; but such cases have been, and are now. Oh! to have heard Luther pray! Luther, you know, when Melancthon was dying, went to his death-bed,

and said, "Melancthon, you shall not die!" "Oh," said Melancthon, "I must die! It is a world of toil and trouble," "Melancthon," said he, "I have need of thee, and God's cause has need of thee, and as my name is Luther, thou shalt not die!" The physician said he would. Well, down went Luther on his knees, and began to tug at death. Old death struggled mightily for Melancthon, and he had got him well nigh on his shoulders. "Drop him," said Luther, "drop him, I want him." "No," said death, "he is my prey, I *will* take him!" "Down with him," said Luther, "down with him, death, or I will wrestle with thee!" And he seemed to take hold of the grim monster, and hurl him to the ground; and he came off victorious, like an Orpheus, with his wife, up from the very shades of death; he had delivered Melancthon from death by prayer! "Oh," say you, "that is an extraordinary case." No, beloved, not one-half so extraordinary as you dream. I have men and women here who have done the same in other cases; that have asked a thing of God, and have had it; that have been to the throne, and showed a promise, and said they would not come away without its fulfilment, and have come back fro God's throne conquerors of the Almighty; for prayer moves the arm that moves the world. "Prayer is the sinew of God," said one, "it moves his arm;" and so it is. Verily, in prayer, with the strength of the faithful heart, there is a beautiful fulfilment of the text, "He will put strength in me."

A second illustration. Not only in prayer, but in *duty*, the man who has great faith in God, and whom God has girded with strength, how gigantic does he become! Have you never read of those great heroes who put to flight whole armies, and scattered kings like the snow on Salmon? Have you never read of those men that were fearless of foes, and stalked onward before all their opposers, as if they would as soon die as live? I read, this day, of a case in the old kirk of Scotland, before that King James who wished to force the black prelacy upon them. Andrew Melville and some of his associates were deputed to wait upon the king, and as they were going with a scroll ready written, they were warned to take care and return, for their lives were at stake. They paused a moment, and Andrew said, "I am not afraid, thank God, nor feeble-spirited in the cause and message of Christ; come what pleases God to send, our commission shall be executed." At these words the deputation took courage, and went forward. On reaching the palace, and having obtained an audience, they

found his majesty attended by Lennox and Arran, and several other lords, all of whom were English. They presented their remonstrance. Arran lifted it from the table, and glancing over it, he then turned to the ministers, and furiously demanded, "Who dares sign these treasonable articles?" "WE DARE." said Andrew Melville, "and will render our lives in the cause." Having thus spoken, he came forward to the table, took the pen, subscribed his name, and was followed by his brethren. Arran and Lennox were confounded; the king looked on in silence, and the nobles in surprise. Thus did our good forefathers appear before kings, and yet were not ashamed. "The proud had them greatly in derision, yet they declined not from the law of God." Having thus discharged their duty, after a brief conference, the ministers were permitted to depart in peace. The king trembled more at them than if a whole army had been at his gates; and why was this? It was because God had put his own strength into them, to make them masters of their duty. And you have some such in your midst now. Despised they may be; but God has made them like the lion-like men of David, who would go down into the pit in the depth of winter, and take the lion by the throat and slay him. We have some in our churches—but a remnant, I admit—who are not afraid to serve their God, like Abdiel, "faithful amongst the faithless found." We have some who are superior to the customs of the age, and scorn to bow at mammon's knee, who will not use the trimming language of too many modern ministers, but stand out for God's gospel, and the pure white banner of Christ, unstained and unsullied by the doctrines of men. Then are they mighty! Why they are mighty is, because God has put strength in them.

Still, some say, I have dealt with extraordinary cases. Come then, now we will have a home-case, one of your own sort, that will be like yourselves. Did you ever stand and take a view of heaven? Have you discerned the hills which lie between your soul and paradise? Have you counted the lions you have to fight, the giants to be slain, and the rivers to be crossed? Did you ever notice the many temptations with which you must be beset, the trials you have to endure, the difficulties you have to overcome, the dangers you have to avoid? Did you ever take a bird's-eye view of heaven, and all the dangers which are strewn thickly along the path thither? And didst thou ever ask thyself this question, "How shall I, a poor feeble worm, ever get there?" Didst thou ever say within thyself, "I am not a

match for all my foes, how shall I arrive at paradise?" If thou hast ever asked this question, I will tell thee what is the only answer for it: thou must be girded with Almighty strength, or else thou wilt never gain the victory. Easy thy path may be, but it is too hard for thy infantile strength, without the Almighty power. Thy path may be one of little temptation, and of shallow trial; but thou wilt be drowned in the floods yet, unless Almighty power preserve thee. Mark me! however smooth thy way, there is nothing short of the bare arm of Deity that can land any one of you in heaven. We must have Divine strength, or else we shall never get there. And there is an illustration of these words: "No, but he will put his strength in me."

"And shall I hold on to the end?" says the believer. Yes, thou wilt, for God's strength is in thee. "Shall I be able to bear such-and-such a trial?" Yes, thou wilt. Cannot Omnipotence stem the torrent? And Omnipotence is in thee; for, like Ignatius of old, thou art a God-bearer; thou bearest God about with thee. Thy heart is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and thou shalt yet overcome. "But can I ever stand firm in such-and-such evil day?" Oh! yes you will, for he will put his strength in you. I was in company, some time ago, with some ministers; one of them observed, "Brother, if there were to be stakes in Smithfield again, I am afraid they would find very few to burn among us." "Well," I said, "I do not know anything about how you would burn; but this I know right well, that there never will be any lack of men who are ready to die for Christ." "Oh!" said he, "but they are not the right sort of men." "Well," said I, "but do you think they are the Lord's children?" "Yes, I believe they are, but they are not the right sort." "Ah!" said I, "but you would find them the right sort, if they came to the test every one of them; they have not got burning grace yet. What would be the use of it?" We do not want the grace till the stakes come; but we should have burning grace in burning moments. If now, to-night, a hundred of us were called to die for Christ, I believe there would not only be found a hundred, but five hundred, that would march to death, and sing all the way. Whenever I find faith, I believe that God will put strength into the man; and I never think anything to be impossible to a man with faith in God, while it is written, "He will put strength in me."

3. But now the last observation shall be, we shall all want this at the last;

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

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

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

Just one word, and then farewell. There is within reach of my voice, I am thoroughly convinced, one who is seeking Christ, whose only fear is this: "Sir, I would, but I cannot pray; I would, but I cannot believe; I would, but I cannot love; I would, but I cannot repent." Oh! hear this, soul: "He will put his strength in thee." Go home; and down on thy knees; if thou canst not pray, groan; if thou canst not groan, weep; if thou canst not weep, feel; if thou canst not feel, feel because thou canst not feel; for that is as far as many get. But stop there, mark you, stop there, and he will give you his blessing; do not get up till you have got the blessing. Go there in all thy weakness; if you do not feel it, say, "Lord, I do not feel as I ought to feel; but oh that I could! Lord, I cannot repent, as I would repent—oh that thou wouldst help me!" "Oh! sir," you say, "but I could not go so far as that, for I don't think I have got a strong desire." Go and say, "Lord I would desire; help me to desire." And then sit down and think of your lost

estate. Think of your ruin and the remedy, and muse on that; and mark thee, whilst thou art in the way, the Lord will meet with thee. Only believe this, that if thou triest Christ he will never let thee try in vain. Go and risk thy soul on Christ to-night, neck or nothing, sinner. Go now, break or make; go and say, "Lord, I know I must be damned if I have not Christ." Stay there, and say, "If I perish, I perish only here;" and I tell you, you will never perish. I am bondsman for God. This head to the block if your soul goes to hell, if you pray sincerely and trust Christ. This neck to the gallows, again I say, this neck to the rope and to the hangman's gallows, if Christ reject you after your have earnestly sought him. Only try that, I beseech thee, poor soul. "Oh," you say, "but I have not strength enough; I cannot do that." Well, poor soul, *crawl* to the mercy-seat, and there lie flat, just as you are. You know that misery often speaks when it utters not a word. The poor mendicant squats himself down in the street. He says nothing, There protrudes a ragged knee, and there is a wounded hand. He says nothing; but with his hands folded on his breast he looks at every passer-by; and though not a word is spoken, he winneth more than if he daily drawled out his tale, or sung it along the street. So do thou sit like Bartimeus by the way-side begging; and if thou hearest him pass by, then cry, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me." But if thou canst scarce say that, sit there, and exhibit thy poor wounds; tell the Lord thy desperate condition; strip thy loathsome sores, and let the Almighty see the venom. Turn out thy heart, and let the rank corruption be all inspected by the Almighty eye. "And he hath mercies rich and free." Who can tell, poor sinner, who can tell? He may look on thee.

"Jesus died upon the tree,
And why, poor sinner, not for thee?

His Sovereign grace is rich and free,
And why, poor sinner, not for thee?

"Our Jesus loved and saved me,
Say why, poor sinner, why not thee?"

Only do this; and if thou art a sinner, hear this: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to

save sinners; of whom I am chief." He will not "Plead against you with his great power; no, he will put his strength in you!" The Lord dismiss you with his blessing.

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Questions Which Ought To Be Asked

This was followed by a farewell address from his son, Thomas Spurgeon.

But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven? - Job 35:10-11

Elihu perceived the great ones of the earth oppressing the needy, and he traced their domineering tyranny to their forgetfulness of God: "None saith, Where is God my Maker?" Surely, had they thought of God they could not have acted so unjustly. Worse still, if I understand Elihu aright, he complained that even among the oppressed there was the same departure in heart from the Lord: they cried out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but unhappily they did not cry unto God their Maker, though he waits to be gracious unto all such, and executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Both with great and small, with oppressors and oppressed, there is one common fault in our nature, which is described by the apostle in the Romans, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Until divine grace comes in and changes our nature there is none that saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" This is a very grave fault, about which we shall speak for a few minutes, and may the Holy Ghost bless the word.

I. And first, LET US THINK OVER THESE NEGLECTED QUESTIONS, beginning with "Where is God my Maker?" There are four questions in

the text, each of which reminds us of the folly of forgetting it. First, Where is God? Above all things in the world we ought to think of him. Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man"; but it is far more true that the proper study of mankind is God. Let man study man in the second place, but God first. It is a sad thing that God is all in all, that we owe everything to him, and are under allegiance to him, and yet we neglect him. Some men think of every person but God. They have a place for everything else, but no place in their heart for God. They are most exact in the discharge of other relative duties, and yet they forget their God. They would count themselves mean indeed if they did not pay every man his own, and yet they rob God. They rob him of his honor, to which they never give a thought they rob him of obedience, for his law has no hold on them; they rob him of his praise, for they are receiving daily at his hands, and yet they yield no gratitude to their great Benefactor. "None saith, Where is God?" My dear hearer, do you stand convicted of this? Have you been walking up and down in this great house, and never asked to see the King whose palace it is? Have you been rejoicing at this great feast, and have you never asked to see your Host? Have you gone abroad through the various fields of nature, and have you never wished to know him whose breath perfumes the flowers, whose pencil paints the clouds, whose smile makes sunlight, and whose frown is storm. Oh, it is a strange, sad fact—God so near us, and so necessary to us, and yet not sought for!

The next point is, "None saith, Where is God my Maker?" Oh! unthinking man, God made you. He fashioned your curious framework, and put every bone into its place. He, as with needlework, embroidered each nerve, and vein, and sinew. He made this curious harp of twice ten thousand strings: wonderful it is that it has kept in tune so long: but only he could have maintained its harmony. He is your Maker. You are a mass of dust, and you would crumble back to dust at this moment if he withdrew his preserving power: he but speaks, and you dissolve into the earth on which you tread. Do you never think of your Maker? Have you no thought for him without whom you could not think at all? Oh, strange perversity and insanity that a man should find himself thus curiously made, and bearing within his own body that which will make him either a madman or a worshipper; and yet for all that he lives as if he had nothing

to do with his Creator—"None saith, Where is God my Maker?"

There is great force in the next sentence: "Who giveth songs in the night." That is to say, God is our Comforter. Beloved friends, you that know God, I am sure you will bear witness that, though you have had very severe trials, you have always been sustained in them when God has been near you. Some of us have been sick—nigh unto death, but we have almost loved our suffering chamber, and scarce wished to come out of it, so bright has the room become with the presence of God. Some of us here have known what it is to bury our dearest friends, and others have been short of bread, and forced to look up each morning for your daily manna; but when your heavenly Father has been with you—speak, ye children of God—have you not had joy and rejoicing, and light in your dwellings? When the night has been very dark, yet the fiery pillar has set the desert on a glow. No groans have made night hideous, but you have sung like nightingales amid the blackest shades when God has been with you. I can hardly tell you what joy, what confidence, what inward peace the presence of God gives to a man. It will make him bear and dare, rest and wrestle, yield and yet conquer, die and yet live. It will be very sad, therefore, if we poor sufferers forget our God, our Comforter, our song-giver.

Two little boys were once speaking together about Elijah riding to heaven in the chariot of fire. One of them said, "I think he had plenty of courage. I should have been afraid to ride in such a carriage as that." "Ah!" Ah!" said the other, "but I would not mind if God drove it." So do Christians say. They mind not if they are called to mount a chariot of fire if God drives it, We speak as honest men what we do know and feel, and we tell all our fellow-men that as long as God is present with us we have no choice of what happens to us, whether we sorrow or whether we rejoice. We have learned to glory in tribulations also when God's own presence cheers our souls, Why do not they also seek to know the Giver of songs?

And then there is a fourth point. "None saith, Where is God my Maker, who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and make/h us wiser than the fowls of heaven?" Here we are reminded that God is our Instructor. God has given us intellect; it is not by accident, but by his gift,

that we are distinguished from the beasts and the fowls. Now, if animals do not turn to God we do not wonder, but shall man forget? Strange to say, there has been no rebellion against God among the beasts or the birds. The beasts obey their God, and bow their necks to man. There are no sin-loving cattle or apostate fowls, but there are fallen men. Think, O man, it may have been better for thee if thou hadst been made a frog or a toad than to have lived a man if thou shouldst live and die without making peace with thy Maker. Thou gloriest that thou art not a beast: take heed that the beast do not condemn thee. Thou thinkest thyself vastly better than the sparrow which lights upon thy dwelling: take heed that thou do better and rise to nobler things. Methinks if there were a choice in birds, and souls dwelt in them, their minstrelsy would be as pure as now it is: they would scorn to sing loose and frivolous songs, as men do, but they would carol everlastingly sweet psalms of praise to God. Methinks if there were souls in any of the creatures, they would devote themselves to God. as surely as angels do. Why then, O man, why is it that thou with thy superior endowments must needs be the sole rebel, the only creature of earthly mould that forgets the creating and instructing Lord?

Four points are then before us. Man does not ask after his God, his Maker, his Comforter, his Instructor: is he not filled with a fourfold madness? How can he excuse himself?

II. Supposing you do not ask these questions, let me remind you that **THERE ARE QUESTIONS WHICH GOD WILL ASK OF YOU.**

When Adam had broken God's command he did not say, "Where is God my Maker?" but the Lord did not therefore leave him alone. No, the Lord came out, and a voice, silvery with grace, but yet terrible with justice, rang through the trees, "Adam, where art thou?" There will come such a voice to you who have neglected God. Your Judge will enquire, "Where art thou?" Though you hide in the top of Carmel, or dive with the crooked serpent into the depths of the sea, you will hear that voice, and you will be constrained to answer it. Your dust long scattered to the wind will come together, and your soul will enter into your body, and you will be obliged to answer, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Then you will hear the second question, "Why didst thou live and die without me?" And such questions as these will come thick upon you, "What did I do that thou shouldst slight me? Did I not give you innumerable mercies? Why did you never think of me? Did I not put salvation before you? Did I not plead with you? Did I not entreat you to turn unto me? Why did you refuse me? "You will have no answer to those questions: and then there will come another question—ah! how I wish it would come to you while there is time to answer it—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" To-night I put it to you that you may propose a way of escape, if your imagination is equal to the task. You will be baffled even in trying to invent an escape now, and how much more when your time of judgment really comes! If you neglect the salvation of God in Christ you cannot be saved. In the next world, how will you answer that question—"How shall we escape?" You will ask the rocks to hide you, but they will refuse you that dread indulgence. You will beseech them to crush you, that you may no longer see the terrible face of the King upon the throne, but even that shall be denied you. Oh, be wise, and ere you dare the wrath of the King eternal and dash upon the bosses of his buckler, turn and repent, for why will ye die?

III. Now, if any seek an answer to the grave enquiries of the text, and do sincerely ask, "Where is God my Maker?" let us GIVE THE ANSWERS. Where is God? He is everywhere. He is all around you now. If you want him, here he is. He waits to be gracious to you. Where is God your Maker? He is within eye-sight of you. You cannot see him, but he sees you. He reads each thought and every motion of your spirit, and records it too. He is within ear-shot of you. Speak, and he will hear you. Ay, whisper—nay, you need not even form the words with the lips, but let the thought be in the soul, and he is so near you—for in him you live and move and have your being—that he will know your heart before you know it yourself. Where is your Comforter? He is ready with his "songs in the night." Where is your Instructor? He waits to make you wise unto salvation.

"Where, then, may I meet him?" says one. You cannot meet him—you must not attempt it—except through the Mediator. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." If you come

to Jesus you have come to God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," which word we preach. Believe in Jesus Christ, and your God is with you. Trust your soul with Jesus Christ, and you have found your Creator, and you shall never again have to say, "Where is God my Maker?" for you shall live in him, and he shall live in you. You have found your Comforter and you shall joy in him, while he shall joy in you. You have also in Christ Jesus found your Instructor, who shall guide you through life, and bring you to perfection in yon bright world above.

May the Holy Ghost use this little sermon as a short sword to slay your indifference; for Christ's sake.

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Rahab's Faith

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. - Hebrews 11:31

In almost every capital of Europe there are varieties of triumphal arches or columns, upon which are recorded the valiant deeds of the country's generals, its emperors, or its monarchs. You will find, in one case, the thousand battles of a Napoleon recorded, and in another, you find the victories of a Nelson pictured. It seems, therefore, but right, that faith, which is the mightiest of the mighty, should have a pillar raised to its honor, upon which its valiant deeds should be recorded. The apostle Paul undertook to raise the structure, and he erected a most magnificent pillar in the chapter before us. It recites the victories of faith. It begins with one triumph of faith, and then proceeds to others. We have, in one place, faith triumphing over *death*; Enoch entered not the gates of hades, but reached heaven by another road from that which is usual to men. We have faith, in another place, wresting with *time*; Noah, warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, wrestled with time, which placed his deluge a hundred and twenty years away; and yet, in the confidence of faith, he believed against all rational expectation, against all probability, and his faith was more than a match for probability and time too. We have faith triumphing over *infirmity*—Abraham begetteth a son in his old age. And then we have faith triumphing over *natural affection*, as we see Abraham climbing to the top of the hill and raising the knife to slay his only and beloved son at the command of God. We see faith, again, entering the lists with the infirmities of *old age* and the pains of the last struggle, as we read, "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff." Then we have faith combating the allurements of a wealthy court. "By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." We see faith dauntless in courage when Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, and equally patient in suffering when he

endured as seeing him who is invisible. We have faith dividing seas, and casting down strong walls. And then, as though the greatest victory should be recorded last, we have faith entering the lists with sin, holding a tournament with iniquity, and coming off more than a conqueror. "Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." That this woman was no mere hostess, but a real harlot, I have abundantly proved to every candid hearer while reading the chapter. I am persuaded that nothing but a spirit of distaste for free grace would ever have led any commentator to deny her sin.

I do think this triumph of faith over sin is not the least here recorded, but that if there be any superiority ascribable to any one of faith's exploits, this is, in some sense, the greatest of all. What! faith, didst thou fight with hideous lust? What! wouldst thou struggle with the fiery passion which sendeth forth flame from human breasts? What! wouldst thou touch with thy hallowed fingers foul and bestial debauchery? "Yea," says faith, "I did encounter this abomination of iniquity; I delivered this woman from the loathsome chambers of vice, the wily snares of enchantment, and the fearful penalty of transgression; yea, I brought her off saved and rescued, gave her purity of heart, and renewed in her the beauty of holiness; and now her name shall be recorded in the roll of my triumphs as a woman full of sin, yet saved by faith."

I shall have some things to say this morning concerning this notable victory of faith over sin, such as I think will lead you to see that this was indeed a supereminent triumph of faith. I will make my divisions alliterative, that you may recollect them. This woman's faith was *saving faith, singular faith, stable faith, self-denying faith, sympathising faith, and sanctifying faith*. Let no one run away, when I shall have expounded the first point, and miss the rest, for you can not apprehend the whole power of her faith unless you remember each of those particulars I am about to mention.

I. In the first place, this woman's faith was SAVING FAITH. All the other persons mentioned here were doubtless saved by faith; but I do not find it specially remarked concerning any of them that they perished not through their faith; while it is particularly said of this woman, that she

was delivered amid the general destruction of Jericho purely and only through her faith. And, without doubt, her salvation was not merely of a temporal nature, not merely a deliverance of her body from the sword, but redemption of her soul from hell. O! what a mighty thing faith is, when it saves the soul from going down to the pit! So mighty is the ever-rushing torrent of sin, that no arm but that which is as strong as Deity can ever stop the sinner from being hurried down to the gulf of black despair, and, when nearing that gulf, so impetuous is the torrent of divine wrath, that nothing can snatch the soul from perdition but an atonement which is as divine as God himself. Yet faith is the instrument of accomplishing the whole work. It delivers the sinner from the stream of sin, and so, laying hold upon the omnipotence of the Spirit, it rescues him from that great whirlpool of destruction into which his soul was being hurried. What a great thing it is to save a soul! You can never know how great it is unless you have stood in the capacity of a saviour to other men. You heroic man who, yesterday, when the house was burning, climbed the creaking stair-case, and, almost suffocated by the smoke, entered an upper chamber, snatched a babe from its bed and a woman from the window, bore them both down in his arms, and saved them at the peril of his own life, *he* can tell you what a great thing it is to save a fellow-creature. Yon noble-hearted youth who, yesterday, sprang into the river, at the hazard of himself, and snatched a drowning man from death, he felt, when he stood upon the shore, what a great thing it was to save life. Ah! but you can not tell what a great thing it is to save a soul. It is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can tell you that, for he is the only one who has ever been the Saviour of sinners. And remember, you can only know how great a thing faith is by knowing the infinite value of the salvation of a soul. "Now, by faith, the harlot Rahab was delivered." That she was really saved in a gospel sense as well as temporally, seems to me to be proved from her reception of the spies which was an emblem of the entrance of the word into her heart, and her hanging out of the scarlet thread was an evidence of faith, not unaptly picturing faith in the blood of Jesus the Redeemer. But who can measure the length and breadth of that word—*salvation*. Ah! it was a mighty deed which faith accomplished when he bore her off in safety. Poor sinner! take comfort. The same faith which saved Rahab can save thee. Art thou literally one of Rahab's sisters in guilt? She was saved, and so mayest thou be, if God shall grant thee

repentance. Woman! art thou loathsome to thyself? Dost thou stand at this moment in this assembly, and say, "I am ashamed to be here; I know I have no right to stand among people who are chaste and honest?" I bid thee still remain; yea, come again and make this thy Sabbath house of prayer. Thou art no intruder! Thou art welcome! For thou hast a sacred right to the courts of mercy. Thou hast a sacred right; for here *sinner*s are invited, and thou art such. Believe in Christ, and thou, like Rahab, shalt not perish with the disobedient, but even thou shalt be saved.

And now there is some gentleman in the audience who says, "There's a gospel for you; it is a kind of sanctuary for wicked men, unto which the worst of people may run and be saved." Yes, that is the stale objection which Celsus used against Origen in his discussion. "But," said Origen, "it is true, Celsus, that Christ's gospel is a sanctuary for thieves, robbers, murderers, and harlots. But know this, it is not a sanctuary merely, it is an hospital too; for it heals their sins, delivers them from their diseases, and they are not afterwards what they were before they received the gospel." I ask no man to-day to come to Christ, and then continue his sins. If so, I should ask him to do an absurdity. As well might I talk of delivering a Prometheus, while his chains are allowed to remain upon him and bind him to his rock. It can not be. Christ taketh away the vulture from the conscience, but he taketh away the chains too, and maketh the man wholly free when he doeth it all. Yet, we repeat it again, the chief of sinners are as welcome to Christ as the best of saints. The fountain filled with blood was opened for black ones; the robe of Christ was woven for naked ones; the balm of Calvary was compounded for sick ones; life came into the world to raise the dead. And O! ye perishing and guilty souls, may God give you Rahab's faith, and you shall have this salvation, and shall with her stand yonder, where the white-robed spotless hosts sing unending hallelujah to God and the Lamb.

II. But mark, Rahab's faith was a SINGULAR FAITH. The city of Jericho was about to be attacked; within its walls there were hosts of people of all classes and characters, and they knew right well that if their city should be sacked and stormed they would all be put to death; but yet, strange to say, there was not one of them who repented of sin, or who even asked for mercy, except this woman who had been a harlot. She, and she alone was

delivered, a solitary one among a multitude. Now, have you ever felt that it is a very hard thing to have a singular faith? It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as every body else believes, but the difficulty is to believe a thing alone, when no one else thinks as you think; to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause when the enemy mustereth his thousands to the battle. Now, this was the faith of Rahab. She had not one who felt as she did, who could enter into her feelings and realize the value of her faith. She stood alone. O! it is a noble thing to be the lonely follower of despised truth. There be some who could tell you a tale of standing up alone. There have been days when the world poured continually a river of infamy and calumny upset them, but they stemmed the torrent, and, by continued grace, made strong in weakness, they held their own until the current turned, and they, in their success, were praised and applauded by the very men who sneered before. Then did the world accord them the name of "great." But where lay their greatness? Why, in this, that they stood as firm in the storm as they stood in the calm—that they were as content to serve God alone as they were to run by fifties. To be good we must be singular. Christians must swim against the stream. Dead fish always float down the stream, but the living fish forces its way against the current. Now, worldly religious men will go just as every body else goes. That is nothing. The thing is to stand alone. Like Elijah, when he said, "I only am left and they seek my life;" to feel in one's self that we believe as firmly as if a thousand witnesses stood up by our side. O! there is no great right in a man, no strong-minded right, unless he dares to be singular. Why, the most of you are as afraid as you ever can be to go out of the fashions, and you spend more money than you ought because you think you must be respectable. You dare not move in opposition to your brethren and sisters in the circle in which you move; and therefore you involve yourselves in difficulties. You are blindfolded by the rich fabric of fashion, and therefore many a wrong thing is tolerated because it is customary. But a strong-minded man is one who does not try to be singular, but who *dares* to be singular, when he knows that to be singular is to be right. Now, Rahab's faith, sinner as she was, had this glory, this crown about its head, that she stood alone, faithful among the faithless found."

And why should not God vouchsafe the same faith to thee, my poor,

sinning, but contrite hearer? You live in a back street, in a house which contains none but Sabbath breakers, and irreligious men and women. But if you have grace in your heart you will dare to do right. You belong to an infidel club; if you should make them a speech after your own conscience, they would hiss you; and if you forsook their company, they would persecute you. Go and try them. Dare them. See, whether you can do it; for if you are afraid of men, you are taken in a snare which *may prove your grief* and *is now your sin*. Mark you, the chief of sinners can make the most daring of saints; the worst men in the devil's army, when they are converted, make the truest soldiers for Jesus. The forlorn hope of Christendom has generally been led by men who have proved the high efficacy of grace to an eminent degree by having been saved from the deepest sins. Go on, and the Lord give you that high and singular faith!

III. Furthermore, this woman's faith was A STABLE FAITH, which stood firm in the midst of trouble, I have heard of a church clergyman who was once waited upon by his church warden, after a long time of drought, and was requested to put up the prayer for rain. "Well," said he, "my good man, I will offer it, but it's not a bit of use while the wind is in the east, I'm sure." There are many who have that kind of faith: they believe just so far as probabilities go with them, but when the promise and the probability part, then they follow the probability and part with the promise. They say, "The thing is likely, therefore I believe it." But that is no faith, it is sight. True faith exclaims, "The thing is unlikely, yet I believe it." This is real faith. Faith is to say, that "mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day." Faith is to look through that cloud, not with the eye of sight, which seeth naught, but with the eye of faith, which seeth every thing, and to say, "I trust him when I can not trace him; I tread the sea as firmly as I would the rock; I walk as securely in the tempest as in the sunshine, and lay myself to rest upon the surging billows of the ocean as contentedly as upon my bed." The faith of Rahab was the right sort of faith, for it was firm and enduring.

I will just have a little talk with Rahab this morning, as I suppose old Unbelief did commune with her. Now, my good woman, don't you see the absurdity of this thing? Why, the people of Israel are on the other side of Jordan, and there is no bridge: how are they to get over? Of course they

must go up higher toward the fords; and then Jericho will be for a long time secure. They will take other cities before coming to Jericho; and, besides, the Canaanites are mighty, and the Israelites are only a parcel of slaves; they will soon be cut in pieces, and there will be an end of them; therefore, do not harbor these spies. Why put your life in jeopardy for such an improbability? "Ah," says she, "I do not care about the Jordan; my faith can believe across the Jordan, or else it were only a dry-land faith." By-and-by, they march through the Jordan dry shod, and then Faith gets firmer confidence. "Ah!" says she, secretly within herself, what she would willingly have said to her neighbors, "will you not now believe? will you not now sue for mercy?" "No," they say; "the walls of Jericho are strong; can the feeble host resist us? And lo on the morrow the troops are out, and what do they do? They simply blow a number of rams' horns; her neighbors say, "Why, Rahab, you do not mean to say you believe now? They are mad." The people just go round the city, and all hold their tongues, except the few priests blowing rams' horns. "Why, it is ridiculous. It were quite a new thing in warfare to hear of men taking a city by blowing rams' horns." That was the first day; probably the next day Rahab thought they would come with scaling-ladders and mount the walls; but no, rams' horns again, up to the seventh day; and this woman kept the scarlet thread in the window all the time, kept her father and mother, and brothers and sisters in the house, and would not let them go out; and on the seventh day, when the people made a great shout, the wall of the city fell flat to the ground; but her faith overcame her womanly timidity, and she remained within, although the wall was tumbling to the ground. Rahab's house stood alone upon the wall, a solitary fragment amid a universal wreck, and she and her household were all saved. Now would you have thought that such a rich plant would grow in such poor soil—that strong faith could grow in such a sinful heart as that of Rahab? Ah! but here it is that God exercises his great husbandry. "My Father is the husbandman," said Christ. Any husbandman can get a good crop out of good soil; but God is the husbandman who can grow cedars on rocks, who can not only put the hyssop upon the wall, but put the oak there too, and make the greatest faith spring up in the most unlikely position. All glory to his grace! the great sinner may become great in faith. "Be of good cheer, then, sinner! If Christ should make thee repent, thou hast no need to think that thou shalt be the least in the family. O! no; thy name may yet

be written among the mightiest of the mighty, and thou mayest stand as a memorable and triumphant instance of the power of faith.

IV. This woman's faith was A SELF-DENYING FAITH. She dared to risk her life for the sake of the spies. She knew that if they were found in her house she would be put to death; but though she was so weak as to do a sinful deed to preserve them, yet she was so *strong* that she would run the risk of being put to death to save these two men. It is some thing to be able to deny ourselves. An American once said, "I have got a good religion; it's the right sort of religion; I do not know that it costs me a cent a year; and yet I believe I am as truly a religious man as anybody." "Ah!" said one who heard it, "the Lord have mercy on your miserable stingy soul, for if you had been saved you would not have been content with a cent a year"—a halfpenny per annum! I hazard this assertion, that there is nothing in the faith of that man who does not exercise self-denial. If we never give any thing to Christ's cause, work for Christ, deny ourselves for Christ, the root of the matter is not in us. I might call some of you hypocrites: you sing,

"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give him all."

Yes, *but you would not, though*; you know better than that, for you do not, as it is, give all, no, nor yet half, nor yet the thousandth part. I suppose you think you are *poor* yourselves, though you have got some thousand pounds odd a year, and so you keep it yourself, under the notion that "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." I don't know how else it is you make your religion square with itself, and be at all consistent. This woman said, "If I must die for these men, I will; I am prepared, bad name as I have, to have a worse name still; as a traitor to my country I am prepared to be handed down to infamy, if it be necessary, for having betrayed my country in taking in these spies, for I know it is God's will it should be done, and do it I will at every hazard." O men and brethren, trust not your faith, unless it has self-denial with it. Faith and self-denial, like the Siamese twins, are born together, and must

live together, and the food that nourisheth one must nourish both. But this woman, poor sinner as she was, would deny herself. She brought her life, even as that other woman, who was a sinner, brought the alabaster box of precious ointment, and broke it on the head of Christ.

V. Not to detain you too long, another point very briefly. This woman's faith was A SYMPATHISING FAITH. She did not believe for herself only; she desired mercy for her relations, Said she, "I want to be saved, but that very desire makes me want to have my father saved, and my mother saved, and my brother saved, and my sister saved." I know a man who walks seven miles every Sabbath to hear the gospel preached in a certain place—a place where they preach *the* gospel. You know that very particular, superfine sort—*the* gospel, a gospel, the spirit of which consists in bad temper, carnal security, arrogance, and a seared conscience. But this man was one day met by a friend, who said to him, "Where is your wife?" "*Wife?*" said he to him. "What! does she not come with you?" "O! no", said the man; "she never goes anywhere." "Well, but," said he, "don't you try to get her to go, and the children?" "No; the fact of it is, I think, if I look to myself that is quite enough." "Well," said the other, "and you believe that you are God's elect, do you?" "Yes." "Well, then," said the other, "I don't think you are, because you are worse than a heathen man and a publican, for you don't care for your own household; therefore I don't think you give much evidence of being God's elect, for they love their fellow-creatures." So sure as our faith is real, it will want to bring others in. You will say, "You want to make proselytes." Yes; and you will reply, that Christ said to the Pharisees, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte." Yes, and Christ did not find fault with them for doing so; what he found fault with them for was this—"When ye have found him ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourselves."

The spirit of proselyting is the spirit of Christianity, and we ought to be desirous of possessing it. If any man will say, "I believe such and such a thing is true, but I do not wish any one else to believe it, I will tell you, it is a lie; he does not believe it, for it is impossible, heartily and really to believe a thing, without desiring to make others believe the same. And I am sure of this, moreover, it is impossible to know the value of salvation without desiring to see others brought in. Said that renowned preacher,

Whitefield, "As soon as I was converted, I wanted to be the means of the conversion of all that I had ever known. There were a number of young men that I had played cards with, that I had sinned with, and transgressed with: the first thing I did was, to go to their houses to see what I could do for their salvation, nor could I rest until I had the pleasure of seeing many of them brought to the Saviour." This is a first-fruit of the Spirit. It is a kind of instinct in a young Christian. He must have other people feel what he feels. Says one young man, in writing to me this week, "I have been praying for my fellow-clerk in the office; I have desired that he might be brought to the Saviour, but at present there is no answer to my prayers." Do not give a penny for that man's piety which will not spread itself. Unless we desire others to taste the benefits we have enjoyed, we are either inhuman monsters or outrageous hypocrites; I think the last is most likely. But this woman was so strong in faith that all her family were saved from destruction. Young woman! you have a father, and he hates the Saviour. O! pray for him. Mother! you have a son: he scoffs at Christ. Cry out to God for him. Ay, my friends— young people like myself—we little know what we owe to the prayers of our parents. I feel that I shall never be able sufficiently to bless God for a praying mother. I thought it was a great nuisance to be had in at such a time to pray, and more especially to be made to cry, as my mother used to make me cry. I would have laughed at the idea of any body else talking to me about these things; but when she prayed, and said, "Lord, save my son Charles," and then was overcome, and could not get any further for crying, you could not help crying too; you could not help feeling; it was of no use trying to stand against it. Ah! and there you are young man! Your mother is dying, and one thing which makes her death-bed bitter is, that you scoff God and hate Christ. O! it is the last stage of impiety, when a man can think lightly of a mother's feelings. I would hope there are none such here, but that those of you who have been so blessed, as to have been begotten and brought forth by pious men and women may take this into consideration—that to perish with a mother's prayers is to perish fearfully; for if a mother's prayers do not bring us to Christ, they are like drops of oil dropped into the flames of hell that will make them burn more fiercely upon the soul for ever and ever. Take heed of rushing to perdition over your mother's prayers!

There is an old woman weeping—do you know why? I believe she has sons too, and she loves them. I met with a little incident in company, the other day, after preaching. There was a little boy at the corner of the table, and his father asked him, "Why does your father love you, John?" Said the dear little lad, very prettily, "Because I'm a good boy." "Yes," said the father, "he would not love you if you were not a good boy." I turned to the good father and remarked that I was not quite sure about the truth of the last remark, for I believed he would love him if he were ever so bad. "Well," he said, "I think I should." And said a minister at the table, "I had an instance of that yesterday. I stepped into the house of a woman who had a son transported for life, and she was as full of her son Richard as if he had been prime minister, or had been her most faithful and dutiful son." Well, young man, will you kick against love like that—love that will bear your kicks, and will not turn round against you, but love you straight on still? But perhaps that woman—I saw her weep just now—had a mother, who has gone long ago, and she was married to a brutal husband, and at last left a poor widow; she calls to mind the days of her childhood, when the big Bible was brought out and read around the hearth, and "Our Father which art in heaven" was their nightly prayer. Now, perhaps, God is beginning some good thing in her heart. O! that he would bring her now, though seventy years of age, to love the Saviour! Then would she have the beginning of life over again in her last days, which will be made her best days.

VI. One more head, and then we have done. Rahab's faith was a SANCTIFYING FAITH. Did Rahab continue a harlot after she had faith? No, no, she did not. I do not believe she was a harlot at the time the men went to her house, though the name still stuck to her, as such ill names will; but I am sure she was not afterward, for Salmon the prince of Judah married her, and her name is put down among the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ. She became after that a woman eminent for piety walking in the fear of God. Now, you may have a dead faith which will ruin your soul. The faith that will save you is a faith which sanctifies. "Ah!" says the drunkard, "I like the gospel, sir; I believe in Christ;" then he will go over to the Blue Lion to-night, and get drunk. Sir, that is not the believing in Christ that is of any use. "Yes," says another, "I believe in Christ;" and when he gets outside he will begin to talk lightly, frothy words, perhaps

lascivious ones, and sin as before. Sir, you speak falsely; you do not believe in Christ. That faith which saves the soul is a real faith, and a real faith sanctifies men. It makes them say, "Lord, thou hast forgiven me my sins; I will sin no more. Thou hast been so merciful to me, I will renounce my guilt; so kindly hast thou treated me, so lovingly hast thou embraced me, Lord, I will serve thee till I die; and if thou wilt give me grace, and help me so to be, I will be as holy as thou art." You can not have faith, and yet live in sin. To believe is to be holy. The two things must go together. That faith is a dead faith, a corrupt faith, which lives in sin that grace may abound. Rahab was a sanctified woman. O that God might sanctify some that are here! The world has been trying all manner of processes to reform men: there is but one thing that ever will reform them, and that is, faith in the preached gospel. But in this age preaching is much despised. You read the newspaper you read the book; you hear the lecturer; you sit and listen to the pretty essayist; but where is the preacher? Preaching is not taking out a manuscript sermon, asking God to direct your heart, and then reading pages prepared beforehand. That is reading—not preaching. There is a good tale told of an old man whose minister used to read. The minister called to see him, and said, "What are you doing John?" "Why, I'm prophesying, sir." "Prophesying; how is that? You mean you are reading the prophecies?" "No, I don't; I'm prophesying; for you read preaching, and call it preaching, and I read prophecies, and, on the same rule, that is prophesying." And the man was not far from right. We want to have more outspoken, downright utterances of truth and appeals to the conscience, and until we get these, we shall never see any very great and lasting reforms. But by the preaching of God's word, foolishness though it seem to some, harlots are reformed, thieves are made honest, and the worst of men brought to the Saviour. Again let me affectionately give the invitation to the vilest of men, if so they feel themselves to be,

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

Your sins will be forgiven, your transgressions cast away, and you shall henceforth go and sin no more, God having renewed you, and he will keep you even to the end. May God give his blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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The Real Presence, The Great Want Of The Church

It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. - Song of Solomon 3:4-5

Is it necessary to say that the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer corporeally present in his church? It ought not to be needful to assert so evident a truth; and yet it is important to do so, since there are some who teach that in what they are pleased to call "the Holy Sacrament." Christ is actually present in his flesh and blood. Such persons unwittingly deny the real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if he has indeed assumed our humanity, and is in all points made like unto his brethren, his flesh and blood cannot be in two places at one time. Our bodily humanity could not be present in more places than one at one time, and if Christ's humanity be like ours it cannot be in an unlimited number of places at once; in fact, it can only be in one place. Where that place is we know from Scripture, for he sitteth at the right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Unless you are to suppose that the humanity of Christ is something altogether different from ours, it cannot be here and there and everywhere; but to suppose that it is a different humanity from ours is to

deny that he is Incarnate in our nature. Our Lord Jesus told his disciples that he would go away, and he has gone away. He ascended into heaven, bearing humanity up to the throne of God. "He is not here, for he is risen."

Remember, also, that because the Lord Jesus is absent corporeally, the Holy Spirit the Comforter is with us, for he especially said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Those who believe that Christ's flesh and blood are or can be present on earth, deny the presence of the Holy Spirit; for the Scripture is plain enough upon that point—that the bodily absence of our Lord is the cause and condition of the presence of the Comforter. If Jesus dwells still corporeally upon the earth, then the Spirit of God is not upon the earth. Many other most serious errors follow from the supposition that the humanity of the Redeemer is present anywhere except at the right hand of God, even the Father; yet it is an imagination which lies at the basis of the sacramental system, and thousands are greatly enamoured of it.

No word of mine this morning is intended to have the remotest connection with any sacramental presence of the corporeal nature of our Lord; our mind has a far other matter before it. Let us, therefore, having guarded ourselves so as not to be misunderstood, proceed to speak of another presence of our blessed Lord. The fact is, that Christ Jesus, the Lord, is present in his church by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is this day the representative of Christ in the midst of the church, and it is in the power and the energy of the Holy Ghost that Christ is with us always, and will be even to the end of the world. As God, Jesus is everywhere; as man, he is only in heaven; as God and man in one person, Mediator and Head of the Church, he is present with us by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, whom the Father has sent in his name. It is by the working of the Spirit of God that Christ's presence in the church is manifested; and we are to expect no other presence than that: we have the spiritual divine presence of the second person of the blessed Trinity, and the presence of Christ Jesus also in the power of his representative on earth, the Holy Ghost. This presence, not a bodily but a spiritual presence, is the glory of the church of God. When she is without it she is shorn of her strength; when

she possesses it all good things ensue. Brethren, if a church be without the Spirit of God in it, it may have a name to live, but it is dead, and, you know, that after death there follows corruption, corruption which breeds foulness and disease. Hence, those churches which have turned aside unto error, have not only lost all power to do good, but they have become obnoxious and the causes of great evil in the midst of the world. If any professing church abides not in Christ it is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and while it is decaying, it is injurious, and there is need for the world's welfare that it be utterly destroyed. We must have Christ in the church, or the body which was meant to be the medium of the greatest good becomes the source of the grossest evil. Let the Spirit of God be in the church, then there is power given to all her ministries; whether they be ministries of public testimony in the preaching of the word, or ministries of holy love amongst the brethren, or ministries of individual earnestness to the outside world, they will all be clothed with energy, in the fullness of the power of the Lord Jesus. Then her ordinances become truly profitable, then baptism is burial with the Lord, and the sacred supper is a feast of love; then the communion of the brethren in their solemn prayer and praise becomes deep and joyful, and their whole life and walk are bright with the glow of heaven. In the presence of the Lord the graces of the saints are developed; the church grows rich in all spiritual gifts; her warfare becomes victorious, and her continual worship sweet as the incense of the golden censor. What the moon is to the night, or the sun to the day, or the Nile to Egypt, or the dew to the tender herb, or the soul to the human frame, that is the presence of Jesus to his church. Give us the Spirit of God and we will ask no endowments from the State, nor sigh for the prestige of princely patronage. Endow us, O God, with the Holy Ghost, and we have all we need. The poverty of the members, their want of learning, their want of rank, all these shall be as nothing. The Holy Ghost can make amends for all deficiencies, and clothe his poor and obscure people with an energy at which the world shall tremble. This made the apostolic church mighty, she had the Holy Ghost outpoured upon her: the lack of this made the medieval ages dark as midnight, for men contended about words and letters, but forgot the Spirit: the return of this inestimable blessing has given us every true revival: the working of the eternal Spirit, the presence of Christ in the midst of his people is the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing

beneath his wings. This has been our confidence, as a church, these eighteen years, and if we are yet to see greater and better things, we must still rely on this same strength, the divine presence of Jesus Christ by the wonder-working Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

It becomes then the great desire of every earnest Christian who loves the church of God, that Christ should be in the church, and that by his Spirit he should work wonders there, and I have selected this text with the view of stirring up the spiritual-minded among you to seek so great a blessing. Let me endeavor, in opening up this blessed text, to show the means and the course of action necessary if we would see the church revived by her Lord's presence.

I. And first, we learn from the text that before ever we can bring the Well-Beloved into our mother's house, the church, **WE MUST FIND HIM PERSONALLY FOR OURSELVES.**

We begin with that. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth." How can we bring into the chamber of the church him whom we have not yet met with ourselves? How can we communicate grace to others instrumentally, unless, first of all, we have received it into our own hearts? I am not now about to speak of the need of conversion; we all know that no spiritual act can be performed until we become spiritual men; but I am now speaking about something higher than bare conversion. If we would bless the church, we must ourselves occupy a higher platform than that of being merely saved; we must be believers, walking in fellowship with Christ, and having, in that respect, found him whom our soul loveth. There are many believers who have only just enough grace to enable us to hope that they are alive; they have no strength with which to work for God's cause, they have not an arm to lend to the help of others, neither can they even see that which would comfort others, for they are blind, and cannot see afar off, they want all their sight, and all their strength, for themselves. Those who are to bring the Well-Beloved into our mother's house, must be of another kind. They must get beyond the feebleness which is full of doubting and fearing, into the assurance which grasps the Savior, and the fellowship which lives in

daily communion with him. I know there are some such in this church, and I would single them out, and speak to them thus: "Brother, if thou wouldst bring Christ into the church which thou lovest, then, first of all, thine inmost soul must so love Christ, that thou canst not live without his company. This must be thy cry: "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and this must be the goal of thine aspirations: "I have found him whom my soul loveth." It must not be talk, it must be soul-love; it must not be a profession of affection for Jesus, but the inmost bowels of our being must be moved by his name. The words are very strong, "him whom my soul loveth;" as if though the spouse might love the daughters of Jerusalem, might love the watchmen of the city, might love them all in their place, yet her soul's love, the essence of her love, her deepest, fondest, purest, and most real love, was all for him. Are there not such hearts here, virgin minds in whom Christ is first, last, midst, chief, and all in all? Oh, if there be, ye are the men, ye are the women, who, finding your Beloved, can bring him into the church. May God multiply your number, and may each of you have compassion on the languishing church of this chill age, and labor to restore to her the glory which has faded from her brow. Pray ye for Laodicea in her lukewarmness, and Sardis in her spiritual death; but you will only prevail in proportion as your inmost soul loves the Redeemer and abides in his love.

These ardent lovers of Jesus must diligently seek him. The chapter before us says that the spouse sought him, sought him on her bed, sought him in the streets, sought him in the broadways, sought him at last at the lips of the watchmen, sought him everywhere where he was likely to be found. We must enjoy the perpetual fellowship of Jesus. We who love him in our souls cannot rest until we know that he is with us. I fear that with some of us our sins have grieved him, and he has betaken himself to the far-off "mountains of myrrh and hills of frankincense." It may be our lax living, our neglect of prayer, or some other fault, has taken from us the light of his countenance. Let us resolve this morning that there shall be no rest unto our souls until once again he has returned unto us in the fullness of his manifested love, to abide in our hearts. Seek him, brother, seek him, sister. He is not far from any of you, but do seek him with an intense longing for him, for until thou dost thou art not the man to bring him into the assembly of the brethren. Labor to bring Jesus into the chambers of

the church, but first be sure that thou hast him thyself, or thy zeal will be hypocrisy.

In seeking our Lord we must use all ministries. The spouse enquired of the watchmen. We are not to despise God's servants, for he is usually pleased to bless us through them, and it would be ungrateful both to him and to them to pass them by as useless. But, while we use the ministries, we must go beyond them. The spouse did not find her Lord through the watchmen; but she says, "it was but a little that I passed from them, that I found him whom my soul loveth." I charge you, my dear hearers, never rest content with listening to me. Do not imagine that hearing the truth preached simply and earnestly will of itself be a blessing to your souls. Far, far beyond the servant, pass to the Master. Be this the longing of each heart, each Sabbath-day, "Lord, give me fellowship with thyself." True, we are led to see Jesus sometimes, and I hope often, through listening to the truth proclaimed, but, O Lord, it is no outer court worship that will satisfy us we want to come into the holy of holies and stand at the mercy-seat itself. It is no seeing thee afar off and hearing about thee that will content our spirits, we must draw nigh unto thee, and behold thee as the world cannot. Like Simeon, we must take thee into our arms or we cannot say that we have seen God's salvation: like John, we must lean our heads upon the bosom or we cannot rest. Thine apostles are well enough, thy prophets well enough, thy evangelists well enough; but oh, we feel constrained to go beyond them all, for we thirst after fellowship with thee, our Savior. Those who feel thus will bless the church, but only such.

Note, that we must search to the very utmost till we find our Beloved. The Christian must leave no stone unturned till he gets back his fellowship with Christ. If any sin obstructs the way, it must be rigorously given up; if there be any neglected duty, it must be earnestly discharged; if there be any higher walk of grace, which is necessary to continuous fellowship, we must ascend it, fearing no hill of difficulty. We must not say, "there is a lion in the way"—if there be lions we must slay them; if the way be rough we must tread it; we must go on hands and knees if we cannot run; but we must reach to fellowship with Jesus; we must have Christ or pine till we do. Sacrifices we must make and penalties we must endure, but to

Christ we must come, for we are feeble when we are absent from him, and quite incapable of rendering any great service to the church, till once for all we can say, "I found him, I held him, and I would not let him go." O dear brethren and sisters, I know there are some of you who can enter into what I mean; but I would to God there were many more to whom the first thought of life was Christ Jesus. Oh, for more Enochs, men who walk with God, whose habitual spirit is that of close communion with Jesus, meditating upon him, yea, more than that, sympathizing with him, drinking into his spirit, changed into his likeness, living over again his life, because he is in them the monarch of their souls. O that we had a chosen band of elect spirits of this race, for surely the whole church would be revived through their influence; God, even our own God, would bless us; and we should see bright, halcyon days dawning for the bride of Christ. Here, then, is the first point: we must find the Lord Jesus for ourselves, or we cannot bring him into our mother's house.

I would beg every believer here to ask himself a few questions, such as these: "Am I walking in constant fellowship with Christ? If I am not, why not? Is it that I am worldly? Is it that I am proud, or indolent, or envious, or careless? Am I indulging myself in any sin? Is there anything whatever that divides me from Christ my Lord?" Let this be the resolution of every one of the Lord's people: "From this time forth I will seek unto the Lord my Savior, and I will not be satisfied until I can say, 'I am coming up from the wilderness leaning upon the Beloved.'"

II. This brings us to the second point of the subject. If we would be a blessing to the church, and have already found Christ, **WE MUST TAKE CARE TO RETAIN HIM.** "I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and I would not let him go." From this I learn that in order to be of great use to the church of God, it is needful for those who commune with Christ to continue in that communion. How comparatively easy it is to climb to the top of Pisgah! It needs but a little effort; many bold and gracious spirits are fully equal to it. But to keep there, to abide in that mountain, this is the difficulty. To come to Christ, and to sit down at his feet, is a simple thing enough for believers, and many of us have attained to it; but to sit day after day at the Master's feet is quite another matter. Oh, could I always be as I sometimes am! Could I not only rise above but remain

there! But, alas, our spiritual nature is too much like this weather—it is balmy to-day; one would think that spring or summer had come; but, perhaps, to-night we may be chilled with frost and tomorrow drenched with rain. Ah, how fickle are our spirits. We are walking with Christ, rejoicing, leaping for joy; and anon the cold frosts of worldliness come over us, and we depart from him. Ye will never be strong to impart great blessings to others till you cease to wander, and learn the meaning of that text: "Abide in me." Note well, it is not "Look at me;" nor "Come near to me, and then go away from me," but "Abide in me." The branch does not leave the vine and then leap back again to the stock; you never saw a living branch of the vine roaming into the corners of the vineyard, or rambling over the wall; it abides in connection with the parent stem at all times, and even so should it be with the Christian.

Mark, that according to the text, it is very apparent that Jesus will go away if he is not held. "I held him and I would not let him go;" as if he would have gone if he had not been firmly retained. When he met with Jacob that night at the Jabbok, he said, "Let me go." He would not go without Jacob's letting him, but he would have gone if Jacob had loosed his hold. The patriarch replied, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This is one of Christ's ways and manners; it is one of the peculiarities of his character. When he walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, "he made as if he would have gone further:" they might have known it was none other than the Angel of the Covenant by that very habit. He would have gone further, but they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us for the day is far spent." If you are willing to lose Christ's company he is never intrusive, he will go away from you, and leave you till you know his value and begin to pine for him. "I will go," says he, "and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." He will go unless you hold him.

But note, next, he is very willing to be held. Who could hold him if he were not? He is the omnipotent Savior, and if he willed to withdraw he could do so: let us hold him as we might. But, mark his condescension. When his spouse said, "I held him, and I would not let him go," he did not go, he could not go, for his love held him as well as her hands. Christ is willing to be held. He loves that sacred violence which takes him by force,

that holy diligence which leaves not a gap open by which he may escape, but shuts every door, bars every bolt, and saith, "I have thee now and I will take care that if I lose thee it shall be through no fault of mine." Jesus is willing enough to be retained by hearts which are full of his love.

And, brethren, whenever you have Christ, please to remember that you are able to hold him. She who held him in the Song was no stronger than you are; she was but a feeble woman, poorly fed under the Old Testament dispensation; you have drunk the new wine of the new covenant, and you are stronger than she. You can hold him, and he will not be able to go from you. "How," say you, "shall I be able to hold him?" Oh, have you grasped him? Is he with you? Now, then, hold him fast by your faith; trust him implicitly, rest in him for every day's cares, for every moments. Walk by faith and he will walk with you. Hold him also with the grasp of love. Let your whole heart go out towards him. Embrace him with the arms of mighty affection, enchain him with ardent admiration. Lay hold upon him by faith, and clasp him with love. Be also much in prayer. Prayer casts a chain about him. He never leaves the heart that prays. There is a sweet perfume about prayer that always attracts the Lord; wherever he perceives it rising up to heaven there will he be. Hold him, too, by your obedience to him. Never quarrel with him. Let him have his way. He will stop in any house where he can be master; he will stay nowhere where some other will lords it over his. Watch his words; be careful to obey them all. Be very tender in your conduct, so that nothing grieves him. Show to him that you are ready to suffer for his sake. I believe that where there is a prayerful, careful, holy, loving, believing walk towards Jesus, the fellowship of the saint with his Lord will not be broken, but it may continue for months and years. There is no reason, except in ourselves, why fellowship with Jesus should not continue throughout an entire life and oh, if it did, it would make earth into heaven, and lift us up to the condition of angels, if not beyond them, and we should be the men who would bring Christ into the church, and through the church into the world. The church would be blest, and God would be glorified, and souls would be saved, if there were some among us who thus held him, and would not let him go.

I want to call your attention to one thought before I leave this, and that is,

the spouse says, "I held him." Now, a great many persons in the world are holding their creed, and if it is a correct one I hope they will hold it; but that is the main business of their religious life; they do nothing else but hold this doctrine or that. Hold it, brother, hold it: it would be a pity you should let it go if it be the truth, but still it is more important to hold your Lord. Certain others are engrossed in holding scriptural ordinances, and saying, "I hold this and I hold that." Well, hold it brother; if it is God's ordinance do not let it go. But, after all, if there be anything I hold above all else, I hold him. Is not that the best grip a soul ever gets, when she lays hold of Christ? "I held him and I would not let him go." Ah, Lord, I may be mistaken about doctrine, but I am not mistaken about thee. I may, perhaps, be staggered in my belief of some dogma which I thought was truth, but I am not staggered about thee. Thou Son of God made flesh for me, thou art all my salvation and all my desire: I rest on thee only, without a shadow of mixture of any other hope, and I love thee supremely, desiring to honor thee and to obey thee in life and until death. I hold thee, thou Covenant Angel, and I will not let thee go.

Dear friends! make this the mark of your life, that you hold him and will not let him go. You will be the kind of men to bless the church by leading the Well-Beloved into her chambers, if you know how to abide in him yourselves.

III. It appears from the text that, after the spouse had thus found Christ for herself and held him, SHE BROUGHT HIM INTO THE CHURCH—"I brought him to my mother's house." We ought lovingly to remember the church of God. By the Holy Spirit we were begotten unto newness of life, but it was in the church, and through the preaching of the word there that we were brought into the light of life. We owe our conversion, the most of us, to some earnest teacher of the truth in the church of God, or to some of those godly works which were written by Christian men. Through the church's instrumentality the Bible itself has been preserved to us, and by her the gospel has been preached to every age. She is our mother and we love her. I know that many of you, dear friends, the members of this church, love the church, and you can say, "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning." When you are away from this place, and cannot mix in our solemn assemblies, your heart mourns like one in banishment.

Have not I heard you cry, "Ziona, Ziona, our holy and beautiful house, wherein we have worshipped our God, the house which is built of living stones, among whom Christ himself is the corner-stone, even thy church, O Jesus: would God I were in her midst again, and could once more unite my praises with those that dwell within her." Yes, and because we love our mother's house and the chamber of her that conceived us, we desire to bring Christ into the church more and more. Did I hear a harsh but honest voice exclaim, "But, I find much fault with the church?" Brother, if thou lovest her, thou wilt go backward and cast a mantle over all. But, suppose thy candour is compelled to see faults in her; then there is so much the more need of her Lord's presence in her to cure those faults. The more sickly she is, the more she wants him to be her strength and her physician. I say, therefore, to thee, dear friend, above all things, seek to bring Christ into an imperfect church, and a weak church, and an erring church, that she may become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

I have shown you by whom it must be—by those who have found him, and who hold him; and now we will mention the methods by which our blessed Lord can be brought into his church. The saints can bring him in by their testimony. I hope that often Christ is here when I have borne testimony to you of his power to save, of his atoning blood, of his exaltation in heaven, of the perfection of his character, and of his willingness to save. Many a Sabbath day his name has been like ointment poured forth in this place. Is there any subject that so delights you as that which touches upon Christ? Is not that the rarest string in all the harp of scriptural truth? Well, every true minister, by bearing witness for Christ, helps to bring him into the church.

But, others can do it by their prayers. There is a mysterious efficacy in the prayers of men who dwell near to God. Even if they were compelled to keep their beds, and do nothing but pray, they would pour benedictions upon the church. We want our dear sick friends to get well and come among us at once in full health; but I do not know, I do not know; they may be of more service to the church where they are. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest day nor night, till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Now, there

were not some saints kept awake at night by sickness to pray, we should not so fully realize that word, "Give him no rest day nor night." Some of those dear ones, whose faces we miss from among us, keep up the perpetual ministry of intercession. Their incense of prayer goes up at all hours; when the most of us are rightly enough at sleep they are compelled to wake, and therefore are led still to pray. How many blessings come down upon the church of God through the prayers of his feeble saints it is not possible for us to tell; but I believe if all of us were to set apart a special time for praying and pleading with Christ that he would come into his church, we should not be long before we saw a wonderful effect resulting from those pleadings. Wrestling prayers bring Christ into the innermost chambers of the church of God. Let us try the power of prayer.

And, there is no doubt, dear brethren, that Christ is often brought into the church by the example of those eminent saints who abide in Christ. You know what I mean. There is a very manner and air about some Christian men which honors Christ, and benefits his people. They may not be gifted in speech, but their very spirit speaks, they are so gentle, loving, tender, earnest, truthful, upright, gracious. Their paths, like the paths of God himself, drop fatness. They are the anointed of the Lord, and you perceive it. Perhaps you could not say that this virtue or that is very prominent, but it is the altogether; it is their life at home, their life in public, their church life, their private life, their entire conduct makes you see that the Holy Ghost is in them, and when they come into the church they bring the Spirit of God with them, and are thus a great means of blessing to all with whom they associate. I do pray, brethren, that in some way or other, each one of us may try to bring Jesus Christ into the midst of his own people. I am afraid there are some who on the contrary are driving him away—church members that, instead of blessing the church, are a curse to it. I see a great heap before me—a vast heap that God has gathered through my instrumentality; but the winnowing fan is going, and the chaff is flying. Are you, dear friends, among the chaff or the wheat? Are you seed for the sower, or fuel for the flame unquenchable? Oh! live near to Christ; live in Christ; may Christ live in you; then will you enrich the church of God; but if you do not, but only make a profession of love with your lips, what shall I say unto you? I mourn over you. Take heed of living a weak life—a life without God in it—a life without Christ in

it—a life which a Pharisee might live. Seek to live the life of a trueborn child of God, lest you hinder the church's usefulness, and deprive her of her Lord's presence.

IV. This leads me to the last point, which is this, to CHARGE THE CHURCH THAT SHE BE CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB THE LORD'S REPOSE, if we have been enabled by divine grace to bring the Lord into the chambers of our mother's house. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Observe, then, that the Lord Jesus in his church is not indifferent to the conduct of his people. We are not to suppose that because the sin of all God's elect is pardoned, therefore it is of small consequence how they live. By no manner of means. The Master of this great house is not blind nor deaf, neither is he a person who is utterly careless as to how the house is managed; on the contrary, as God is a jealous God, so is Christ a jealous husband to his church. He will not tolerate in her what he would tolerate in the world. She lies near his heart, and she must be chaste to him. What a solemn work the Lord did in the early church. That story of Ananias and Sapphira—it is often used most properly to illustrate the danger of lying; but that is not the point of the narrative. Ananias and Sapphira were members of the church at Jerusalem, and they lied not unto men, which would have been sin enough, but in lying to the church officers they lied unto God, and the result was their sudden death. Now, you are not to suppose that this was a solitary case. Wherever there is a true church of God, the judgments of God are always going on in it. I speak now not only what I have read, but what I have known and seen with mine eyes; what I am as sure of as I am sure of any fact in history. The apostle Paul, speaking of the same in his day, said that in a certain church there was so much sin that many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept; that is to say, there was great sickness in the church, and many died. Judgments are begun in the house of God and are always going on there. I have seen men in the church who have walked at a distance from God, who have been visited with severe chastisements; others who have been of hot and proud spirit, have been terribly humbled; and some who have arrogantly touched God's ark, and the doom of Uzzah has befallen them. I have seen it and do know it. And so it always will be. The Lord Jesus Christ looking around

his church, if he sees anything evil in it, will do one of two things; either he will go right away from his church because the evil is tolerated there, and he will leave that church to be like Laodicea, to go on from bad to worse, till it becomes no church at all; or else he will come and he will trim the lamp, or to use the figure of the fifteenth of John, he will prune the vinebranch and with his knife will cut off this member, and the other, and cast them into the fire; while, as for the rest, he will cut them till they bleed again, because they are fruit-bearing members, but they have too much wood, and he wants them to bring forth more fruit. It is not a trifling matter to be in the church of God. God's fire is in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem. "His fan is in his hand, and he shall thoroughly purge"—what? The world. O no, "his floor," the church. And then, again, "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify"—what? The heathen nations. No, "the sons of Levi"—his own people. So that Christ is not indifferent to what is going on in the church, and it is needful that when he comes to the church to take his repose, and solace himself there, we should not stir him up nor awake him till he please.

But many things will drive our Lord away, and these shall have our closing words. Dear fellow members of this church, may we each one be more watchful lest the Bridegroom should withdraw from us. He will go away if we grow proud. If we are boastful, and say, "There is some reason why God should bless us," and should begin to speak hectoringly towards weaker brethren, the Lord will let us know that "not unto us, not unto us, but unto his name shall be all the glory."

Again, if there be a want of love among us, the Lord of love will be offended. The holy dove loves not scenes of strife; he frequents the calm still waters of brotherly love. There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, where brethren dwelt together in unity. If any of you have half a hard thought towards another, get rid of it; if there be the beginnings of anything like jealousy, quench the sparks. "Leave off strife," says Solomon, "before it be meddled with," as if he said, "End it before you begin it," which, though it seems strangely paradoxical, is most wise advice. "Little children love one another." "Walk in love as Christ also has loved us." May discord be far from us.

Notice the beautiful imagery of the text. "I charge you by the roes and the hinds of the field." In ancient times gazelles were often tamed, and were the favourite companions of Eastern ladies: the gazelle might be standing near its mistress, fixing its loving eyes upon her, but if a stranger clapped his hands it would hasten away. The roes and hinds "of the field" are even yet more jealous things, a sound will startle them, even the breath of the hunter tainting the gale puts them to speedy flight. Even thus is it with Jesus. A little thing, a very little thing, will drive him from us, and it may be many a day before our repentance shall be able to find him again. He has suffered so much from sin that he cannot endure the approach of it. His pure and holy soul abhors the least taint of iniquity.

Let us gather from the text that there are some things in the true church which give our Lord rest. He is represented here as though he slept in the church, "That ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please." Wherever he sees true repentance, real faith, holy consecration, purity of life, chastity of love, there Christ rests. I believe he finds no sweeter happiness even in heaven than the happiness of accepting his people's prayers and praises. Our love is very sweet to him; our deeds of gratitude are very precious, the broken alabaster boxes of self-sacrifices done for him are very fair in his esteem. He finds no rest in the world, he never did; but he finds sweet rest on the bosoms of his faithful ones. He loves to come into a pure church, and there to say, "I am at home. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

Let us be very watchful, too, against all impurity. Anything like uncleanness in a Christian will soon send the Master away from the church. You know what it was that brought the evil upon the house of Eli. It was because his sons made themselves vile even at the tabernacle door. The young people in that case were the immediate cause of the mischief, but it was the fault of the elder ones that they restrained them not. Watch against all evil passions and corrupt desires. Be ye holy even as your Father which is in heaven is holy.

And then, again, a want of prayer will send him away. There are members of some churches who never come to the prayer-meetings, and I should be afraid that their private prayers cannot be any too earnest. Of course

we speak not of those who have good excuse; but there are some who habitually and wilfully neglect the assembling of themselves together; these are worthy of condemnation. Oh, let us continue a prayerful church as we have hitherto been, otherwise the Master may say, "They do not value the blessing, for they will not even ask for it; they evidently do not care about my Spirit, for they will not meet together and cry for him." Do not grieve him by any such negligence of prayer.

So, too, we may grieve the Spirit by worldliness. If any of you who are rich get to imitate the fashions of the world and act as worldlings do, you cannot expect the Lord to bless us. You are Achans in the camp, if such is the case. And if you who are poor get to be envious of others and speak harshly of others to whom God has given more substance than to you, that again will grieve the Lord. You know how the children of Israel in the wilderness provoked him, and their provocation mostly took the form of murmuring; they complained of this and of that: if they had the manna they wanted flesh, and if they had water gushing from the rock they must needs have more. I pray you by the bowels of mercies that are in Christ Jesus, by all the compassion he has manifested towards us, by the high love he deserves of us, since he laid down his life for us, by your allegiance to him as your King, by your trust in him as your Savior, by your love to him as the Bridegroom of your souls, "stir not up nor awake my love till he please."

Let me ask you to be more in prayer; let me pray you to live nearer to him; let me entreat you for the church's sake, and for the world's sake, to be more thoroughly Christ's than you ever have been and may the power of the Holy Spirit enable you in this. I do not fear lest I should lose that which I have wrought, for God will establish the work of our hands upon us, but yet I do put up to him daily the prayer that this church may not be found in years to come to be a building of wood, and hay, and stubble, that shall be consumed in the fire of heresy or discord, or some other testing flame which God may suffer to come upon it; but oh, may you, my beloved brethren and sisters, be gold, and silver, and precious stones, that the workman at the last, saved himself, may not have to suffer loss, nor the Master be dishonored in the eyes of men. May you stand as a sparkling pile of precious gems, inhabited by the eternal Spirit, to the

praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

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The Reason Why Many Cannot Find Peace

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves In the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. - James 4:7-10

WE frequently meet with persons who tell us that they cannot find peace with God. They have been bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus, but they misunderstand the command, and, while they think they are obeying it, they are really unbelievers; hence they miss the way of peace. They attempt to pray, but their petitions are not answered, and their supplications yield them no comfort whatever, for neither their faith nor their prayer is accepted of the Lord. Such persons are described by James in the third verse of the chapter now open before us- "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." We cannot be content to see seekers in this wretchedness, and hence we endeavor to comfort them, instructing them again and again in the great gospel precept, "Believe and live"; yet as a rule they get no further, but linger in an unsatisfactory condition. They assure us that they believe in Jesus, but we see none of the fruits of faith in them, neither can they themselves say that they derive any spiritual benefit from the faith which they profess. Now I fear that comfort is misplaced in these cases. When we have endeavored to cheer such people, I fear we may have been filming over a wound which needs a sharp knife

rather than a soft bandage, a keen lancet rather than a healing liniment. We shall try at this time to show certain uneasy souls why they do not obtain peace, and what they must be brought to by the Holy Spirit before they can rightly claim that they are saved. Though our words may be somewhat caustic they will be uttered in loving faithfulness, and may the Lord our God make them effectual to the ending of the inner strife and the establishment of settled peace.

I fear that many who profess to be Christians are in a very questionable condition: they have no joy of their faith and no success in their prayers. Whether they are Christians or not is a moot point, and the practical James does not waste time in discussing the doubtful question, but speaks to them from both sides of their apparent condition. In his previous chapters he calls them "my brethren," and even "my beloved brethren," and he draws no line of demarcation when he afterwards addresses them as "sinners," whose hands must be cleansed, and as "double-minded" persons, whose hearts must be purified. They were both these: they were professedly brethren, but they were at heart unchaste to Christ; they indulged in grievous sins of contention and malice, and their hearts were divided between the love of sin and the hope of salvation. We will not, therefore, raise personal questions, or try to discriminate where certainty is hard to reach, but we will speak to suspicious characters without determining whether they are believers or not. If such persons claim to be called brethren, we will address them as such, but it will be in a sentence like this, "My brethren, such things ought not to be." On the other hand, we will use no condemnatory title, but leave the question between God and each man's own conscience. We will go to the root of the matter, and set forth the reason for the lack of peace and salvation of which some complain. May the sacred Spirit help us to point out the fatal failure which keeps the soul from rest. If any man be not sure that he is in Christ, he ought not to be easy one moment until he is so. Dear friend, without the fullest confidence as to your saved condition, you have no right to be at ease, and I pray you may never be so. This is a matter too important to be left undecided. Instantly should every man of prudence make assurance doubly sure; and bind all things fast that he may find them fast for eternity—for eternity I say, for thus saith the Lord. Never risk your souls, for your souls are yourselves, your real selves, and nothing

can make up for their loss. If you lose your own souls, it will be no recompense to have gained the whole world. Be careful, then, leave nothing insecure, carefully measure and weigh every important step; consider and examine, lest being so near to the kingdom any of you should seem to come short of it. To help you to a settled peace, let me first of all urge upon you to obey the comprehensive command of our text- "Submit yourselves therefore to God"; and then, secondly, let me further press upon you to practice the other precepts which follow, such as "Resist the devil," "Draw nigh to God," "Cleanse your hands," "Purify your hearts," and "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep;" and "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord."

I. First hearken to THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMAND - "Submit yourselves therefore to God." According to the connection, the lighting spirit within many men shows that they have not submitted themselves to God; lusting, envy, strife, contention, jealousy, anger, all these things declare that the heart is not submissive, but remains violently self-willed and rebellious. Those who are still wrathful, proud, contentious, and selfish, are evidently unsubdued. There are some men to whom the very idea of submission is distasteful; they will be sub to no one, but wish to be their own gods, and a law unto themselves. "Submit" is a galling word to them. They say in their hearts, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" They are willing enough to accept his favors, willing enough after their fashion to say "Thank God," but as to submission, they will have none of it, it suits not their high mightiness. They strive for the mastery, they push for the front place, aiming to advance their own interests, and make great I to be lord paramount. The apostle quietly indicates in the words of our text that many Christian professors need to submit, for at present their unhumbed nature leads them to lustings and strivings, and effectually prevents their asking so as to receive at the Lord's hands.

A want of submission is no new or rare fault in mankind; ever since the fall it has been the root of all sin. When the heart submits to God in sincerity the work of grace is begun, and when it submits perfectly the work is complete; but for this divine grace must display its power, for the heart is obstinate and rebellious. From the moment when our mother Eve stretched out her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit, and her husband

joined her in setting up the human will against the divine, the sons of men have universally been guilty of a want of conformity to the will of God. They choose their own way, and will not submit their wills; they think their own thoughts, and will not submit their understandings; they love earthly things, and will not submit their affections. Man wants to be his own law, and his own master. This is abominable, since we are not our own makers; for "it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves." The Lord should have supremacy over us, for our existence depends on his will. I have heard much of the rights of man: but it were well also to consider the rights of God, which are the first, highest, surest, and most solemn rights in the universe, and lie at the base of all other rights. The Lord has an absolute right to the beings whom he has fashioned, and it is shameful that the great mass of men seem never even to recollect that he exists, much less to ask themselves what is due to him. Alas, great God, how art thou a stranger even in the world which thou hast thyself made! Thy creatures, who could not see if thou hadst not given them eyes, look everywhere except to thee. Creatures who could not think if thou hadst not given them minds, think of all things except thee; and beings who could not live if thou didst not keep them in being, forget thee utterly, or if they remember thine existence, and see thy power, are foolhardy enough to become thy foes! The hemlock of sin grows in the furrows of opposition to God. When the Lord is pleased to turn the hearts of opposers to the obedience of the truth, it is an evident token of salvation; in fact, it is the dawn of salvation itself. To submit to God is to find rest.

The rule of God is so beneficial that he ought readily to be obeyed. He never commands us to do that which, in the long run, can be injurious to us; nor does he forbid us anything which can be to our real advantage. Our God is so kind, so wise, so full of loving forethought, that it must ever be to our best interest to follow his lead. Even if we could be left to choose our own way, and were under no bonds of duty, it would be wise and prudent to choose the way of the Lord, for it is the path of pleasantness and safety. Beloved, the Lord is far too great to have any need to deal unjustly, or unkindly, with his creatures; indeed, he is so great that he cannot desire any personal advantage from his government, but he condescends to govern us because without his rule and guidance we should be utterly undone. It is for our good that like a father in his family

he commands us this or forbids us the other. It is wanton cruelty to ourselves when we break away from the liberty with which Jesus makes us free to place ourselves under the tyranny of selfishness and the baser passions of the mind. It is madness to forsake the honorable service of the great King to become the slave of Satan. O that men would submit themselves unto God and be willing to be blest.

All resistance against God must, from the necessity of the case, be futile. Common sense teaches that rebellion against omnipotence is both insanity and blasphemy. The Lord's purpose must stand, and his pleasure must be done; his power will assuredly crush all opposition, and it is idle to raise it. Why, then, should a man contend against his Master? Wisdom as well as righteousness call upon him to submit himself unto God.

And then let it always be known that submission to God is absolutely necessary to salvation. A man is not saved until he bows before the supreme majesty of God. He may say, "I believe in Jesus," but if he goes on to follow out his own desires, and to gratify his own passions, he is a mere pretender, a wolf in the clothing of a sheep. Dead faith will save no man; it is not even as good as the faith of devils, for they "believe and tremble," and these men believe in a fashion which makes them brazen in their iniquity. No, salvation means being saved from the domination of self and sin; salvation means being made to long after likeness to God, being helped by divine grace to reach to that likeness, and living after the mind and will of the Most High. Submission to God is the salvation which we preach, not a mere deliverance from eternal burnings, but deliverance from present rebellion, deliverance from the sin which is the fuel of those flames unquenchable. There must be conformity to the eternal laws of the universe, and according to these God must be first and man must bow to him: nothing can be right till this is done. Submit is a command which in every case must be obeyed, or no peace or salvation will be found.

Now, it is generally in this matter of submission that the stumblingblock lies in the way of souls when seeking peace with God. It keeps them unsaved, and as I have already said, necessarily so, because a man who is not submissive to God is not saved; he is not saved from rebellion, he is not saved from pride, he is still evidently an unsaved man, let him think

whatever he will of himself. Perhaps by a few personal remarks I may hit upon the reason why certain of my hearers cannot get the peace which the gospel so freely sets before them. There is a want of submission in some point or other. Now, in the saved man there is and must be a full and unconditional submission to the law of God. He must consent unto the law that it is good. If your mind has aforesaid cavilled against the law, you must end the contest, for it is impossible that you should be right while you quarrel with the law of righteousness. If you set yourself up to be a judge of the law, you judge the lawgiver himself, and what is this but the blackest presumption? Traced to its real meaning, the thought of judging the law is treason, and would dethrone God and reign in his stead. How sad to see a sinful mortal criticizing the perfect law of his Maker! Dare you do this? If you say in your heart, "He is too strict in marking sin, and too severe in punishing it," what is this but condemning your Judge? If you say, "He calls me to account for idle words, and even for sins of ignorance, and this is hard," what is this but to call your Lord unjust? Should the law be amended to suit your desires? Should its requirements be accommodated to ease your indolence? If you ask for this you are not saved, for a saved person delights in the law of God after the inward man; he says of it, "the law is holy"; though he weeps as he adds, "but I am carnal, sold under sin." He honors the law as he bows before it and confesses his shortcomings.

Yes, and before a man can have peace with God he must submit himself to the sentence of the law. Though that law in its severity searches the reins and tries the heart, arraigns us before the bar of God, and pronounces sentence upon us, we must own it to be just. Grace working in the heart brings the penitent to plead guilty to the sin, and to own that the penalty is deserved. In my own case I unreservedly own that when the law in my conscience condemned me to hell, I dared not lift a finger nor even think a thought by way of disputing the sentence. The conscience is not divinely quickened, nor the soul renewed, nor the man saved, unless he cries, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." You must submit yourselves to the righteousness and severity of God, or he will resist you as he doth all the proud. There can be no

pardon for a man unless he will honor the law by hearty submission. If your plea be "not guilty," you will be committed for trial according to justice, but you cannot be forgiven by mercy. You are in a hopeless position; God himself cannot meet you upon that ground, for he cannot admit that the law is unrighteous and its penalty too heavy. The Lord cannot be at peace with you while you defy his law. He declares that you are guilty and you dispute this declaration, hence between you and himself there is a quarrel which never can be ended till you own your error and beg for pardon. He can deal with you in mercy when you once stand where mercy can meet with you, namely, in the sinner's place, but if you say "I am not guilty," and begin to vindicate or excuse yourself, you are on a ground which the Lord cannot recognize. If you are professedly righteous how can the Lord deal with you except in justice? And if he deal with you in justice he will readily enough summon his witnesses, and prove you guilty, and condemn you everlastingly. Submit, then, unto God, and say, "Guilty, Lord: I throw down the weapons of my rebellion, and own that I stand condemned before thee, and if saved at all it must be by thy free forgiveness, by thine unmerited mercy, by thy boundless love."

A man must next submit himself to the plan of salvation by grace alone. God meets the sinner on the footing of grace. "I cannot exonerate you," he seems to say, "but I can forgive you; I cannot tolerate your denial of guilt, but if you confess your sin I am faithful and just to forgive you your sin, and to save you from all unrighteousness." Now, are you willing, my dear hearer, are you sure that you are willing to be saved by grace alone and to owe your deliverance from sin and its punishment entirely to the free favor of God? Will you yield to that? I trust you will. But there are some who will not, for they go about to establish their own righteousness and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. They think that so much chapel-going, church-going, sermon-hearing, prayer-meeting attending, Bible reading, and so on, will certainly work up something like a claim upon God. O, sirs, have done with claims. If you come with anything like a claim the Lord will not touch the case at all, for you have no claim, and the pretense of one would be an insult to God. If you fancy you have demands upon God, go into the court of justice and plead them, but the sentence is certain to be against you, for by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified. Try the other way. Come to God with no claim,

and appeal to his pity, saying, "Lord, I cry for mercy. Gladly will I accept thy free grace if thou wilt but give it me." You will be accepted on that footing; for the Lord is gracious and casts out none who come to him confessing their sins.

You must also submit yourselves to God's way of saving you through an atoning sacrifice and by means of your personal faith in that sacrifice. You must receive his Son as divine, and you must believe in that atoning blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins. Surely there should be no difficulty about surrendering the mind to this. Salvation by the great Mediator is such a delightful way of salvation, so just to God, so safe to man, that we ought to clap our hands for very joy to think that such a royal road to heaven is opened for us. What say you, dear hearers? Does the Holy Ghost incline you to trust in the blood of Jesus?

And then there must be a full submission to God in the matter of giving up every sin. Numbers of persons pray for mercy, but they continue in their sins. Such men cannot be saved, because salvation is salvation from sin-not in sin. How can we be saved from sin if we are its slaves? If you come to God and cry, "Lord, deliver me, and have mercy upon me," and yet you practice private drinking, and tittle yourselves into semi-drunkenness, how can you be saved? If you keep on cheating in business, or telling lies, or indulge a malicious or angry temper in the family, or are proud and unkind, selfish and miserly, how can you be saved? I warn you, sirs, that faith itself cannot save you while these things are so, for if your faith were a saving faith it would rescue you from these evils. This, indeed, is salvation, namely, deliverance from the power and habit of sin. Many prayers are semihypocritical; there is a kind of sincerity about them, but there is no whole-hearted desire after holiness, and therefore they will never gain a comfortable answer from God. O seeker, art thou willing to give up every sin? Come, drunkard, thou prayest to be forgiven, but art thou willing to abjure the intoxicating cup once for all? Thou, my brother, askest to be pardoned; it is well, but art thou at the same time desirous to cease from your transgressions? Yes or no! Art thou anxious to search out every false way, and abandon it as soon as it is discovered? Dost thou wish to have a holy, truthful, godly tongue? Dost thou long to be saved from every lust and secret vice? If so, believing in the Lord Jesus

Christ, thou art already saved; thy sigh to be delivered from evil is the commencement of the work of sanctification. But if thou dost say, "I would be saved from every wrong way except my one indulgence, my one secret iniquity," then thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; thy prayers will come back into thy bosom unanswered, and thy pretended faith in Christ will condemn thee. Thy fancied faith cannot save thee, seeing thou huggest thy sin. A certain man has been accustomed to eat of a certain dish which is bad for his health, and when he calls in a physician their talk is after this fashion: "If you trust in me," says the doctor, "I can cure you." "Yes," replies the patient, "I do trust in you heartily." The doctor proceeds, "That dainty of yours must be given up, for it is the cause of your disease, and so long as you eat it you must suffer in consequence." "Well, doctor," he says, "I trust in you, but I cannot give up my favourite food." Is it not apparent to everybody that he is not trusting in the physician at all? Even so when a man declares, "I trust in Christ to save me from sin," and then continues in his wickedness: he mocks the Good Physician, and is in danger of sudden destruction. Either you must cast sin out of your heart or it will keep you out of heaven. This point must be insisted on: receiving Christ is impossible without at the same time renouncing sin.

If we would be saved there must be submission to the Lord as to all his teachings; a very necessary point in this age, for a multitude of persons, who appear to be religious, judge the Scriptures instead of allowing the Scriptures to judge them. Hear, O ye wise men, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Submission to the infallible authority of the inspired word is absolutely required of every disciple of Jesus, but this age delights in the opposite spirit. Even some of those who call themselves ministers of the gospel persistently indulge a spirit which is precisely the reverse of the childlike faith which saves the soul. They industriously endeavor to excite rebellion against the teachings of Christ, and cry it up under the name of "honest doubt." They do not wish men to believe, but to think, and their gospel, practically, is, "Doubt, and do not be baptized, and you shall be saved." Shame upon them! Now our gospel is, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved"; and we are content to teach what Jesus Christ our Lord told his disciples to preach to all nations. If I will never yield my

reason, if I will never believe what I cannot understand, if I will carry an open knife about with me to cut and hack at texts of Scripture, if I will not sit at Jesus' feet with Mary, but want him to sit at my feet that I may tell him what his religion ought to be, and what he ought to have said, how can I be saved? If, after all, we are personally infallible, and are to spend all our days in selecting our opinions, how can we know Christ? If instead of yielding my judgment to the plain teachings of my Lord I must needs revise his doctrines, how can I be saved? If I have not submitted my intellect to God, what peace can there be? Mark this well, ye wise young men who know so much more than your fathers, and are too intellectual to reverence your fathers' God.

And, now, I must ask another question of you who desire peace and cannot find it: have you submitted yourselves to the providential arrangements of God? I know persons who often sit in this house of prayer who have a quarrel with God. He took away a beloved object, and they not only thought him unkind and cruel at the time, but they think so still. Like a child in a fit of the sulks, they cast an evil eye upon the great Father. They are not at peace, and never will be till they have owned the Lord's supremacy, and ceased from their rebellious thoughts. If they were in a right state of heart they would thank the Lord for their sharp trials, and consent to his will, as being assuredly right. I fear that unsubmission on this point affects a great number of persons. They cannot succeed in business, and therefore they are out of temper with God. He knows very well that they are not fit to be made rich, and could not be trusted with a large business; and, therefore, he does not grant their suicidal desires. Some men would never win the race of life if they had an ounce of gold to carry; the only hope for their running at all lies in keeping them unencumbered. We know, also, thoughtful young men who cannot pursue their studies because of failing health: they want to be famous, but they are not strong enough to continue their work for the examination, and so they are vexed with the Lord. Or, it may be, they have less talent than ambition, and they rebel because their Maker has not given them intellects as capacious as that of Solomon. Let them be satisfied to use the talent they have, and cease from contending with their Creator. Many men have a sort of private pique with providence, and sit down like Jonah under their withered gourd and mutter, "We do well to be angry even

unto death." Now, if such be the case with any before me, I would say to them, -leave off quarrelling with your God. What can be the use of it? The very best and wisest thing for you is to make friends with him, and let his will be yours. After all he deals well with you, if you would but see it. Depend upon it there is something to be made out of the position you occupy: gain will come to you out of all those losses, profit will arise even from those sad bereavements, if you will stand still and see the salvation of God. Acquaint yourselves with God and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto you; for unless you do this you may say, "I believe," but you have no faith in God. How can a man believe in God when he charges God with treating him wrongly? Faith begets resignation and submission, but where there is strife and enmity, unbelief is still supreme. Until you submit yourselves to God it cannot be well with your souls, for he resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

This is the long and the short of it: you must, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself at God's feet and say, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and have mercy upon me in thine own way. I dictate not to thee, but I implore thy grace? I humbly beg forgiveness, be pleased to pity me. I yield up myself to thee, asking thee to make me holy. I do from my very heart give up the love of sin. I fear I shall sin, help me to loathe myself when I do so; make me what thou wilt have me to be, and then deal as thou wilt with me. I make no terms nor conditions; mine is an unconditional surrender. Only for thy mercy's sake renew me, make me thy child and save me. As thou biddest me trust thy Son, I do trust him. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." You will have peace when your heart is brought to this point. At present your wound does not heal, because it needs washing, for the grit of pride has fallen into it and is causing a wretched irritation. When pride is gone and you are fully submissive then shall the wound heal and your broken bones shall rejoice. I am not asking you to submit to a priest, I am not asking you to submit to a mere man, but I speak very earnestly when I say, "Submit yourselves unto God": it is natural, it is right; it is good in itself, and fraught with the highest good to you. Submission is essential to salvation, therefore bow before the Lord at once. May the Lord bend that stubborn will and conquer that wayward heart. Yield yourselves unto God, and pray to be delivered from future rebellion. If you have submitted, do so yet more completely, for so shall you be known to be

Christians when you submit yourselves unto God. If you will not submit, your faith is a lie, your hope is a delusion, your prayer is an insult, your peace is presumption, your end will be despair. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. "But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."

II. But now, secondly, having thus spoken upon the great duty of submission, let us consider the other and FOLLOWING PRECEPTS. I think I am not suspicious without reason when I express a fear that the preaching which has lately been very common, and in some respects very useful, of "only believe and you shall be saved," has sometimes been altogether mistaken by those who have heard it. Cases occur in which young persons go on living light, frivolous, giddy, and even wicked lives, and yet they assert that they believe in Jesus Christ. When you come to examine them a little you find that their belief in Christ means that they believe that he has saved them, although everybody who knows their character can see clearly that they are not saved at all: now, what is their faith but the belief of a lie? They are living just as they did live, and hence it is clear that they are not saved from their former foolish conversation, nor from their bad tempers, nor from their old sins; and yet they try to persuade themselves that they are saved. Now, true faith never believes falsehoods: presumption lives upon lies, but faith will only feed on truth. My faith does not teach me to believe I am saved when straight before my very eyes I have the evidence that I am not saved, since I am living in the very sin I pretend to be saved from. Though we would not for a moment cast a doubt upon the doctrine of justification by faith and free salvation, we must also preach more and more that parallel truth, "Ye must be born again." We must bring to the front the grand old word which has been thrown into the background by some evangelists, namely, "Repent." Repentance is as essential to salvation as faith: indeed there is no faith without repentance except the faith which needs to be repented of. A dry-eyed faith will never see the kingdom of God. A holy loathing for sin always attends upon a childlike faith in the Sin-bearer. Where the root grace of faith is found other graces will grow from it.

Now notice how the Spirit of God, after having bidden us submit, goes on

to show what else is to be done. He calls for a brave resistance of the devil. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The business of salvation is not all passive, the soul must be aroused to active warfare. I am to fall into the arms of Christ, that he may save me, and trust in him entirely; but when I depend upon him I receive life, and the very first effort of that life is to smite with all its might the adversary of Christ and of my own soul. I am not only to contend with sin, but with the spirit which fomented and suggests sin. I am to resist the secret spirit of evil as well as its outward acts. "Oh," saith one, "I cannot give up an inveterate habit." Sir, you must give it up; you must resist the devil or perish. "But I have been so long in it," cries the man. Yes, but if you truly trust Christ your first effort will be to fight against the evil habit. Ay, and if it is not a habit merely, nor an impulse, but if your danger lies in the existence of a cunning spirit who is armed at all points, and both strong and subtle, yet you must not yield, but resolve to resist to the death, cheered by the gracious promise that he will flee from you. You shall in the name of Jesus overcome temptation, master evil habit, and escape from bondage: only strike for freedom and disdain the chain of sin. If you are to have peace with God there must be war with Satan; you cannot rest in your spirit and know the peace which faith gives unless you wage war to the knife against every evil and against the patron and prince of evil, even Satan. Are you ready for this? You cannot have peace unless you are.

Next the apostle writes, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." He who believes in Christ sincerely will be much in prayer; yet there are some who say, "We want to be saved," but they neglect prayer. They cannot make out how it is that they have no enjoyment of religion; but why need they be puzzled? Ask your neglected closet, ask your own heart, how you can be happy and prosperous and blessed in divine things if you do not pray. Recollect that the mere saying of prayers is not praying. The essence of prayer lies in the heart drawing near to God: and it can do that without words. Prayer is the feeling that God is present, and the desire of the soul to come near to him, so as to own his influence, to know his love, to feel his power, and to be conformed to his will. This kind of praying can be continued by the power of God's Holy Spirit all the day long. We must know something of this. "Behold he prayeth" is one of the first marks of a saved soul and if you think that by some momentary act of

faith which you suppose you exercised you are therefore saved, while your heart remains at a distance from God, prayerless and careless, you are fatally deceived. Such is not the teaching of Scripture, and there is no warrant for it in the promises of God. If prayer be utterly neglected, the soul is dead.

The next precept is, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." What! does the word of God tell sinners to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts? Yes, it does. Some brother whispers "Ah, that is Arminianism." Who art thou that repliest against God's word? If such teaching is in this inspired book, how dare we question it? It comes with a "thus saith the Lord,"- "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." When a man comes to God and says, "I am willing and anxious to be saved, and I trust Christ to save me," and yet he keeps his dirty black hands exercised in filthy actions, doing what he knows is wrong, does he expect God to hear him? Do I need spend even so many as a half-dozen words to show that this man does not believe and is not really honest before the Most High? "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." Can you ask God to be at peace with you while your hands grasp your sins with loving embrace and are full of bribes, or are foul with lust, or are smiting with the fist of anger and wrath? If you do the devil's work with your hands, do not expect the Lord to fill them with his blessing. It cannot be, you must break off your sins by righteousness, and as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire, so must you. By the power of faith, if it be a real faith, you will be able to purge your outward life. Why, when men talk about being spiritual, and are not even decently moral, it makes us sick to hear them. How dare they talk about being Christians when they do not live as well as Mohammedans or heathens? Oh ye dogs, howling out your shame, what portion have you among the children so long as you bite and devour and love your filthiness? It is idle to talk about salvation while sin is hugged to the heart with both hands. Away with such hypocrisy!

Then it is added, "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Can they do this? Assuredly not by themselves, but still in order to peace with God there must be so much purification of the heart that it shall no longer be double-minded. He who would have salvation must seek it with all his heart, must so seek it that he is resolved to give up anything, and to

endure anything, so that he may but be rescued from sin. "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Get rid of that leering eye of yours towards uncleanness, and that cross eye which squints towards worldly gain; for till your whole heart cries after the Most High he will not hear you. When you can say with David, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God," you shall find the Lord. When you cease trying to serve two masters, and submit yourselves unto God, he will bless you, but not till then. I believe that this touches the center of the mischief in many of those hearts which fail to reach peace; they have not given up sin, they are not whole-hearted after salvation.

Then the Lord bids us "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." I grieve to say that I have met with persons who say, "I cannot find peace, I cannot get salvation," and talk very prettily in that way; but yet outside the door they are giggling one with another, as if it were matter of amusement. The Sabbath day is spent in vain, idle, frivolous conversation-seriousness they do not seem even to have felt. The whole matter appears to be a mere sport. Some converts seem to jump into religion as people do into a bath, and jump out again about as fast; they never weigh the matter, they have no thought, no sorrow for sin, no humiliation before God. Stop that laughter if you are an unsaved soul-for decency's sake, stop that laughter. For you to laugh whilst in danger of being lost sounds to me as ghastly and as grim as if the fiends of hell were to set up a theater and act a comedy in the pit. What right have you with laughter while sin is unforgiven, while God is angry with you? Nay, go to him in fitter form and fashion, or he will refuse your prayers. Be serious, begin to think of death, and judgment, and wrath to come. These are not trifles, sirs, nor things to make sport about, neither is true religion a thing that is to be attended to as easily as when one snaps his finger and says, "Heigh presto! Quick. It's done!" By no manner of means. If you are saved your mind is solemnly impressed by eternal realities and you are serious about matters of life and death; the very thought of sin pains you, and since you meet with it in your daily life you have cause for daily humbling, and are afflicted because of it. Many, I fear, fail to get peace because it is not a solemn matter at all, they trifle with it as if it were a game for boys and girls to play at, and not for the heart and spirit to enter upon with deep

concern.

Then the Lord sums up his precepts by saying, "Humble yourselves in the sight of God." With that I close. There must be a deep and lowly prostration of the spirit before God. If you happen to have a boy who shows a high rebellious spirit against you, and you have chastened him for it, and yet he stands out, you tell him that there must be a humbling of himself before you can forgive him. If he is a wise child, and wishes to escape your anger, he makes a dutiful confession, acknowledges that he was wrong, and appeals to your love, and you freely pardon him: but in many who pretend to come to God there is no humbling. They do not own that they ever did anything particularly wrong, and they do not care if they did: still they hear there is such a thing as believing in Jesus, and they profess to believe, not because there is any need for it, as they think, but for fashion sake. Ah, sirs, Jesus Christ did not come to heal the whole, but the sick, neither did he die to bind up those who are not broken, nor to make alive those who were never killed. There must be in you, and may God give to you, a brokenness of spirit; a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise.

If your heart has never been broken, how can he bind it up? If it was never wounded, how can he heal it? These are weighty matters, and I speak them weightily lest anyone among you should be deceived. God help you to cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

This is the way of salvation, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. But remember that he saves us from our sins, not in our sins. Faith in Jesus Christ does save and will save all who have it, but it is by purging out sin. It assures us that we are pardoned, and thus it makes us love the Christ by whom we are forgiven: this love leads us to abhor ourselves for our sins, and we endeavor to purify ourselves from them by his Spirit. Faith without works is dead, being alone; and though a man is justified by faith and not by works, and by faith alone, and not even in part by his works, yet the faith which saves is a faith which produces good works, and leads into the way of holiness. He who doth not seek after

righteousness and true holiness, let him pretend what he may, is dead while he lives. The Lord have mercy upon you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Reasons For Turning To The Lord

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. - Hosea 6:1-2

Mr. Spurgeon was exceeding unwell and his voice painfully weak, hence the pause in the middle of the sermon, during which the congregation sang part of a hymn to enable the preacher to gain strength enough to resume his discourse. This was the last sermon before Mr. Spurgeon's departure from home to obtain needed rest, and it has been revised by Mr. Spurgeon at Mentone. The sermons are continued regularly every week.

If man had never sinned, what delightful intercourse there would have been between him and God! A fairy vision rises before us of loving obedience and condescending fellowship, holy delight and boundless favor, lowly adoration and fatherly smile, perfect bliss and infinite complacency. Alas! alas! it is no more than a vision! God would have treated man with familiarity and indulgence, lavishing favor and honor upon him. The garden of Eden, fair as were its glades, and lovely as were its flowers, was but a faint image of the things prepared for man had he continued in loyalty to God: inconceivable delights would have filled up the days of our life on earth had not the serpent's trail come across our nature, and slimed it o'er with sin. I shall not attempt any picture of man

dwelling with God, and God revealing himself to man in new forms; ever increasing man's knowledge, and, at the same time, causing his bliss to overflow. Alas! that dream has never been realized. That dangerous fruit which hung upon the tree of knowledge of good and evil has been plucked and eaten, and we will not pause to rehearse the sad story of the foul iniquities and the countless ills which have therefore come upon mankind and severed man from his God.

Because of the fall, and man's depravity, justice now comes in with its rod and sword and changes the complexion of our life. God deals very graciously with man, but not at all after the fashion in which he might have dealt with him: he cannot now perpetually smile, but is led by his holiness to look on him with wrathful countenance. The loving God, compelled by love itself, frowns at sin. He threatens, he denounces. His justice and holiness lead him to use rough words towards his erring creatures; he does more: in infinite love he chastens as well as rebukes. Instead of fatherly caresses the great Lord wisely takes down the rod and lays it on the backs of those whom he most truly loves. "He scourges every son whom he receiveth." Those nearest to his heart and most approved of his soul among the sons of Adam have nevertheless to feel that "our God is a consuming fire." Placed in the crucible, they are thrust into the white heat of the furnace, and there are they called to suffer that their dross may be removed. If thus the Lord is severe to his own people, what are his dealings with the ungodly? "God is angry with the wicked every day." The wise men of modern thought have made a new God of late-one of those gods newly come up that our fathers knew not, and who is quite unknown to the Bible, as false a god as Apollo or Baal. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob these deep thinkers cannot endure, but if you say that God is angry with the wicked every day, these modern god-makers tell you that he is too loving for that,-that he cannot possibly be angry, but loves all, has redeemed all, and will in the long run save all, including Satan himself.

They adore a god made of putty or of wax,-plastic, effeminate, molluscous, with no masculine faculty about him, and no quality that entitles him to the respect of just and honest men, for a being who cannot be angry at wrong- doing is destitute of one of the essential virtues, and a

moral Ruler who is not angry with the wicked, and who refuses to punish crime, is not divine.

We find no such God as this modern saccharine idol when we come to search the Scriptures, for there the true God says, "If ye walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you." "To the froward he will show himself froward." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." He is revealed as a God who "will by no means spare the guilty," but declares that every transgression and iniquity shall have its just punishment of reward.

Since evil obtained sway over the human race God walketh towards men, therefore, not at all as he might have done if men had never fallen. He speaketh to them in the stern accents of a Judge, and handleth them as one who sees the need of a rod. He treats men not so roughly as they deserve, for he is infinitely tender and gentle; but still with such severity as becomes necessary to show that he cannot smile on transgression. The conduct of God towards man is not like his dealing with the angels, not like his dealing with cherubim and seraphim, but, according to our text, he tears, he smites, he kills; and it is of such a God as this that I have to speak to-night, and of such acts as these I have to talk with you. My design is not that any may fly from the Lord, but that as the result of what we have to say many may return unto the Lord, who hath smitten, but who will heal; who hath slain, but who will restore.

There are three things in my text which are to my mind very clear. The first is a smiting God; the second is a believing heart, for he who used such words as my text was no unbeliever; and, thirdly, a persuasive voice—the voice which so pleadingly cries, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." May God the Holy Ghost teach me how to proclaim the name of the Lord, and render the word quick and powerful to the salvation of the blood-bought. How much I need his strength in my extreme weakness! Pray for me, ye saints of God, that once again I may faithfully and effectively do duty as one of the Lord's ambassadors.

I. First, then, in the text I see plainly enough A SMITING GOD: "He hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Notice,

first, that the person who wrote these words discerns the presence of the Lord, for he is convinced that his trials come from God. Ungodly men set down their troubles to chance, and sometimes they even trace them to the devil, as if they expected their father to have dealings with them. Frequently they lay their ills at the door of their fellow men, and grow quarrelsome, malicious, and revengeful. It is a happy day for a man when he knows in whose hand is the rod, and learns to trace his troubles to God. Alas, there are even some children of God who greatly err in this matter when under affliction; they spend their time in bewailing second causes, and do not look at the first cause. This is very brutish. If you strike a dog with a stick he will bite at the stick; had he a little intelligence he would bite at you, and know that the blow came, not from the stick or stone, but from the hand that used these implements. So is it usually with unbelievers in trouble: they look at the secondary agent, and they spend their anger or their thoughts entirely there. If in the day of adversity they would consider, they would perceive that affliction springeth not out of the ground, neither do distresses come by chance; but the hand of the Lord is in all these things. "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" Whichever way the trial came, it came from him. If the trouble was caused by a triumphant enemy or by a deceitful friend, if it came as a loss in business or as a sickness of body, or if it wounded us through the arrows of death piercing the heart of our beloved, in either case it was the Lord.

Learn you that lesson. He hath smitten you: he hath torn you: he hath done it all. He hath ordained our trials for judgment, and established them for correction; let us not despise them by refusing to see his hand or by angrily rebelling against him. We read that "Aaron held his peace" when his two sons were slain with fire, because it was the fire of the Lord that smote them, and what could he say? If even Christian men too often forget the Lord's hand, we need not be at all surprised that unconverted men do so.

Perhaps I am speaking to one who has been followed by a succession of disasters till he is now surrounded by a sea of affliction. You have scarcely escaped from one trouble before you have plunged into another. It seems to you as if your "bad luck," as you call it, were no more absent from you

at any time than your shadow. You cannot get on at anything; whatever you touch withers beneath your hand. You have been ill again and again.

You have lost your best friend when you most needed him. You have lost your situation, and wherever you apply you get no favorable reply. It is true that you are not wise enough to trace some of these misfortunes to your own bad habits- your indolence or your drunkenness. I wish, however, you were even as wise as that, for then you might amend. If you grow wiser still you would say, "It cannot be that I am to have stroke upon stroke, and loss upon loss, without there being some reason for it: for God doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." I should not wonder, my friend, that you are so sorely smitten because the Lord has some great design of love to your soul. Look at the prodigal son in the distant country. He had plenty of money, and he spent it in riotous living: he was in fine health, and lived in the fastest style. Wine and women soon took away his store, and then he said that bad luck had befallen him. Of course it had, and the young squire was obliged to swallow his dignity and independence and seek for a situation. He looked in the daily paper, and searched up and down among his dear friends who had drunk his health in bumpers of his rare old wines: they knew of nothing for him, and gave him the cold shoulder. No money-lender would grant him a loan, and no man gave unto him. He walked his shoes off his feet., but could find nothing to do. He had rags upon him and hunger within him. He was a broken down gentleman, without a trade, and without the physical strength to dig or plough. What could he do? He was "down on his luck," as men of his kind are wont to say, and nobody wanted his society. One person, who had some sort of pity for the poor wretch, found him a situation, and he commenced active life in the noble capacity of a pig feeder,- "he joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." He was now at his lowest, for his occupation was filthy and degrading, and the wages were not enough to keep body and soul together, so that he often envied the hogs that could so readily fill themselves with husks. Yet in this deep distress there was mercy and hope: his way home was round by the swine trough. He might never have come to his father if he had not first come to those pigs and husks. Perhaps, O tried sinner, the way to God for you is through your troubles. If the Lord had prospered you in that piece of betting, for

instance, or if you had got on in that infamous business which you ought never to have touched, you might have been a rich man and have been damned. But you are not to be rich: God does not mean that you should be. He means to follow with stroke upon stroke, and tearing upon tearing, till at last you shall realize that he is saying unto you, "Return unto me, for you will never rest until you do." You shall never know prosperity until you have come clean out, and made your peace with God. Then shall your peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. I am certain that I speak as though I were a prophet to the soul of some who are in this house to-night; and I pray God that, if it be so, they may look on the series of trials through which they have passed as being really sent to them, not by chance or haphazard, nor by the conjunction of the stars, nor by aught of that atheistic foolery which men are so fond of inventing, but sent from God himself with benign intent. He smites, he tears, he slays, but this is all the surgery of love. The person who uttered these words, then, had learned to trace his troubles to God.

Now, notice that it is customary with God to smite his own, according to his own words, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." I remember being severely called to account by a fastidious critic for using the following vulgar metaphor, which I will therefore use again. It may serve for another paragraph for some other superfine reviewer. I think I said that if you were going home, and you saw a number of boys round a house breaking windows, it is ten to one that you would not care much about what they did; but if you saw your own boy doing it, he would be sure to get as sweet a box on the ears as you could manage to convey to him.

Would that be because you loved him less than the rest of the boys? Not so, but because you loved him more. You had something to do with him, and nothing to do with the rest; therefore he obtained the privilege of correction which the others missed. Now, oftentimes the sinner who falls into trouble, or the Christian who endures heavy trial, does not receive such severe treatment because the Lord is about to destroy him, but because he has a secret love to his soul. Thus saith the Lord: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." These chastisements and heavy blows, which are

compared in the text to tearing and to smiting, often fall upon God's own beloved, because they are his beloved, and he cannot in any better way display his love to them.

"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree"; no axe has come to his root, and no blight to his leaf; God has let him alone to fill the earth with his branches. But why? Was it not that he might become fit for the fire when the axe of the feller would lay him low. But look you at the vine which beareth fruit, and you shall see every year, at the proper season, the ruthless knife of the pruner cutting away what seems to be the liveliest shoots, removing the hopeful branches, and leaving the poor vine to bleed, or to appear to be a mere dry stick. Yes, the vine is worth pruning: it belongs to the husbandman's choice plants, and he looks to it for rich clusters. As for the green bay tree-who cared to prune it? What profit would come of blunting the knife on a fruitless tree? Go to, you who are increasing your stores, you who never have ache or pain, who say that no thought of sin will ever depress you, who can drink your fill and eat abundantly without being sick or sorry. Lo, ye are fattened like bullocks for the slaughter, and there shall nothing happen to you till death's poleaxe lays you low. Count it to be one of the most fearful curses that can happen to you to be happy in your sins. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles." Ye who are tossed to and fro, and are broken by sorrow, need not start with dread because ye are made to suffer, for the Lord layeth heavy hands upon his own, and reserveth the ungodly for his wrath.

The dealings of God with men wilt often appear to be very severe. Kindly read the 14th verse of the 5th chapter. "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away." From this it is clear that our text, when it says, "He hath torn," alludes to a lion rending his prey. The Lord seems sometimes to spring upon a man and suddenly to bring him down, and then by terrible trials

he appears to lacerate him from head to foot. Fears, pains of body, awful suggestions within his mind, loss upon loss in business, grief upon grief, his home desolate, his heart broken, his hope gone-such things doth the Lord lay upon men until they know what the Lord meant when he said by his prophet, "I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them." God does this with men, and yet he means them no ill. The case of Hezekiah explains it all. Hear him cry in the bitterness of his soul, "I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. What shall I say?" But his own answer to his own question is, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live."

The text says that the Lord smiles. He uses such force that he leaves bruises and wales; for "by the blueness of the wound the heart is made better." He smites, and he knows how to do it, for he is a wise corrector.

"He that chastiseth the heathen shall not he correct?" He can touch a man in his tenderest place and make the stoutest heart to quail. He knoweth our frame, and when he comes to deal with us in wrath, even though there be love behind it all, yet still he smiteth very sternly. David says: "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning," and in another place he shows that this chastening is no child's play, for he says, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Yes, and according to the text, God may lay a man's soul so low that he may count himself to be as dead and he may continue like one in the grave by the space of two days, and yet on the third day he will raise him up.

This, of course, is not to be taken literally, but represents a considerable period, though a period that hath an end, during which heart and flesh utterly fail. God knows how long to make a man lie under the sentence of death. It will not be four days; that would be too long, for one said of old, "By this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." There shall be three days wherein deadly despair shall rule, but destruction shall not

actually take place, but like as Jesus came up out of the earth on the third day, so those who have felt the sentence of death in themselves shall come out into the joy of resurrection-life to praise and bless his name.

I perceive that I almost startle you while I show you what God doth with the sons of men. But there is one thing I ought to add. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." A man who lies in the hospital half his time hath still more mercy than he could have claimed; and he who shivers in this winter's cold and knows bitter penury, yet still hath more mercy than he deserves. And he amongst us who sinks lowest in soul sorrow, he who seems to go down into the dread abyss till all God's waves and billows go over him, still may bless God that he is not in the torments of hell. He who suffers most may be grateful that justice has not yet taken the plummet and the line, and meted out righteous wrath. At our worst we are indulged with a fullness of mercy compared with what our transgressions deserve.

And, oh, I want to show you that there is love in it all. I do not call him a loving father who sees his boy indulge bad habits, and who never chastens him. I do not call her a loving mother who, when she has seen her child showing ill-temper and displaying self-will, has never chastened her. It is often a wicked self-indulgence which prevents parents from doing what should be done to drive out wickedness and train for a noble life. When a father with the tears in his eyes, has taken his boy alone and said, "I cannot be like Eli, upon whose house there came the curse, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not: but I must chasten you betimes.

If you will thus break my commandments and grieve God and dishonor my family, I must make you smart for it, though every stroke is a pain to me." I say when a father acts in this way he is both wise and kind. Many a young blackguard now in the streets of London might have been a moral young man if his father had done his duty by him. And, mark you, God will never have this to be laid at his door-that he permits sin in his family and leaves his chosen unchastened. His own children must feel the rod and be brought under the bond of the covenant. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Here let me

wait a minute to recover my voice and gather a little strength, for I am very feeble. Could you, do you think, ease me for a moment by singing a verse or two of the 605th hymn in "Our Own Hymn Book," to the tune "Farrant"?

"Come let us to the Lord our God
With contrite hearts return,
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The desolate to mourn.

His voice commands the tempest forth
And stills the stormy wave,
And though his arm be strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save.

Long hath the night of sorrow reign'd;
The dawn shall bring us light:
|God shall appear, and we shall rise
With gladness in his sight."

Tremblingly I will now endeavor to go on to secondly. May the Holy Spirit guide my mind, and heart, and tongue.

II. Secondly, I see in the text A BELIEVING HEART: to my mind a remarkably believing heart, because the man believes in the goodness of God even when he is smarting and suffering. Do notice it. He says, "Come, let us return to the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." It is wonderfully easy to believe in God when you have all you want, and are free from trial, but such fair-weather faith as that is very often a mere sham. True faith believes in God when he is angry, and trusts him when the rod is in his hand; and to my mind, as I have said before, it is a very beautiful instance of faith which we have in this text. The man has been torn, yes, torn as a lion tears his victim,-there are the gashes bleeding and smarting, yet he cries, "Come, and let us return to the Lord." What, to the God who has torn us? Yes, yes. Let us go to him, for he will receive us, and will not cast us away, but, on the contrary, he will heal the wounds he made. You cannot think too

well of God, nor expect too much mercy from him. Beloved, if you believe that he will pardon your greatest sin for Jesus' sake; if you believe tonight that he will cheerfully receive you to his bosom because of his dear Son; if you believe that he can make you an heir of heaven by faith in Christ-you will not believe too well of God. I shall challenge you to try and make your thoughts of the Lord too high and honorable, and if you attempt the task you will certainly be foiled in it.

This believing heart in my text actually finds an argument in the blows of God why we should trust him. Doth he not say, "He hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up"? Yes, and there is argument here. When a physician finds a man's bone badly set and breaks it again, what am I sure that he is going to do? Why, to set it, and set it right next time. When I see a physician using a very severe remedy in a very difficult case, say a blister, or some form of bleeding, or the like-I feel certain that he does not mean to leave his patient to bleed to death, and that he does not wound without a purpose. If a tent should be inserted in order that the wound may be kept open till the proud flesh is taken away, I know that the physician does not do that out of unkindness, but that he intends the good of his patient. He means to do something which for the time the patient cannot appreciate, but about which he must exercise faith.

If I were at any time to be subject to the surgeon's knife I should have no hesitation in feeling that if he wounded me he would see me through the operation, and do his utmost for my restoration. Now, God is the great Surgeon of men's souls, and sometimes he has to put man upon the table and cut, and cut to the very bone, but he never means to kill. He never takes the knife of discipline except with the intent to bind up every wound he makes, and set the man upon his feet again, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. "Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." So, you see, that he who wrote the text did well to argue from the tearing and the smiting that God must mean well to the afflicted soul.

And, do notice, such is the faith of this text that the writer expects to be restored though he writes himself down among the dead men. "After two

days," saith he, "will he revive us." I know-I wonder whether you know-what it is to feel as though utterly dead to all spiritual power, all natural hope, all claim on mercy, and, sometimes even to all possibility of salvation. I may be addressing one to-night who feels as though his death - warrant had been signed and sealed. He has the sentence of death in himself. But, dear brother, still have faith, for so the text has it- "We shall live in his sight." You know what Job said: to my mind it is the grandest thing a man ever did say. He was not reigning on a throne, but sitting on a dunghill, covered with boils and scraping himself with a potsherd, yet he was more than royal. Glorious old Job bravely said, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." This was grand! Can you imitate it? Though you feel as if you were slain, though you sit in your pew to-night and say, "Well, it is of no use; I know I am undone," yet I charge you to trust the Lord, your Redeemer, over the head of it all. Trust the covenant God in the teeth of everything. Believe God to be true, and every fact and circumstance and thought and feeling to be a liar. Cling you still to the eternal mercy of God, who casts out none that come unto him by Jesus Christ. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be empty, and to believe that God can fill you; to be nothing, and to believe that he can make you his child; to be lost, and to believe that the Lord can save you; to feel condemned and yet to believe that Christ can justify you. Oh, to sink and sink and sink, even into the grave of all natural hope, and yet to feel that you shall rise again when the third day has come! This is the faith of God's elect.

Notice that the faith of my text looks for brighter things, for it says, "In the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." You are afraid of God now, perhaps, but when he comes and lifts you up out of your state of spiritual death-gloom you will delight to see him, to feel him near, to know that he has quickened you, and to spend your new life in delightful communion with him. You shall live in his sight. What heavenly living that must be! Life under the eye of the Lord! Life such as he calls life! Life which he can look upon with pleasure! In his presence is fullness of joy, and this his wounded ones shall know when he has healed them.

I wish I could say what I want to say, but I am very feeble, and therefore not much at ease in speaking: yet I do not know but what broken words

may after all be best: when voice will not answer to mind, and we have to bring out our discourses piecemeal, the morsels may be all the sweeter to the afflicted. But this is what I want to say: do, do, I pray you, never yield to that temptation of the devil which would lead you to cry "God is dealing roughly with me: he will never save me." No, expect quite the contrary; because of these blows and strokes, and because of your misery of heart, because of your troubled conscience, because of your inward distress, you may all the more have hope. Nothing is more dreadful than to be without sensation; that is a token of death; but to be broken in pieces all asunder, to feel your thoughts to be like a case of knives cutting to the very center of your heart-this at the very least proves that life is in you still. Besides, remember that the path to joy is sorrow, the door to life is by death, the road to salvation is by condemnation in the conscience. The way to enjoy God's love is, first of all, to be troubled under God's wrath.

That brings me to my third point, upon which I must be brief, but I would be earnest. Oh, Spirit of God, enable me.

III. The text has in it A PERSUASIVE VOICE. Oh that I could say it in wooing tones; but though the music of love is in my heart, my voice is hoarse. Bear with me, however, while I cry, "Come! Come! Come, let us return unto the Lord."

This persuasive voice is to be attentively regarded, in the first place, because it pleads for a right thing. Dear friends, if we have wandered away from God, and if God is angry with us, what ought to be our first step?

Why, to get back to God. If I had offended any man or felt that I had done him an injustice, I hope I should not need much persuasion to go to him and confess my wrong and ask him to give me his hand. I trust it is the same with you. Now, since you have grieved the Lord you ought to be the first to seek reconciliation, and if instead of it he is first and comes to you with overtures of peace, surely you should not need much persuasion to end the quarrel. Come, poor erring child, you have acted sinfully towards your loving Father; does not your heart itself suggest to you the resolve,-

"I will arise and go unto my Father"? You have grieved him, and because you have grieved him he has smitten you that you may know for yourself the evil of your doings; let the first smitings suffice, and yield at once to his reproofs. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." A great part of the persuasiveness of the text lies, not merely in the rightness of it, but in the speaker putting himself with the people whom he entreats to return. He says, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." My dear hearers, willingly enough, without any sort of mock humility, do I feel constrained to put myself among you. If you have never returned to the Lord, come let us go together, for I know the way, and have good cause to tread it o'er again. I went to him, I almost forget how many years ago, but I was only a stripling of fifteen years of age. Deeply conscious of my guilt, I sought the Lord God of my fathers in much brokenness of spirit. He had smitten me, he had torn me, he had slain me by the law of his mouth.

Where could I go? I tried every helper, and I found all carnal hopes to be mockeries. I went with trembling to my God and pleaded the precious blood of Jesus, and he healed me, he bound me up, and he gave me to live in his sight. To this I bear my solemn and sure witness. But though I went to him so many years ago I have been many times since. I have felt sin upon the conscience; I have had my own inward depravity to mourn over; I have had to feel myself to be nothing, yea, and to be less than nothing; and I have been very heavy in soul; and therefore driven by distress I have gone to my Lord. Yes, I have gone to him a thousand times; and therefore I did not boast when I said I knew the way. Ah, poor helpless soul, I know your downcastings and distractings, for I know the heart of a stranger by having felt myself to be an alien to my mother's children, unworthy to be numbered with the family of God. I have comforted God's people, but sometimes could not comfort myself. I have tried to fill others while mourning my own emptiness. But I bear witness that I never went to my Lord in vain. Come, give me your hand, one on this side, one on that, and let us return unto the Lord. Come, let us make a ring all round the place and hand in hand let us return unto the Lord. You who do not know the way will, perhaps, be helped by brotherly sympathy as we tell you how we resolved to return. You that think yourselves the biggest, blackest sinners, you do not think so badly of yourselves as I often think, and rightly think, of myself; but though of sinners the chief and of saints

the least, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day." And you, dear friend, though up till now you have never sought Jesus, I hope that you will seek him now and find abundant satisfaction in laying hold upon him.

Notice that this exhortation is put in the present tense. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." It is not to-morrow, it is not next year, it is so written that it means- "Let us return to the Lord now." If at all, why not at once? The sooner a good thing is done the better. As far as I am concerned there is a very personal reason for pressing upon any unconverted person here that he should return to the Lord now. I reckon it to be a great privilege to be able to stand here and bid you come to the Lord, though the exercise of that privilege has worn me out and made me brain-weary, and full of pain. That privilege I shall not enjoy for some little time, and it would charm me if I might win you now. Oh that my Lord would make this last sermon of mine for a while-perhaps for ever-to be a weight cast into the scale to decide a hesitating will for Christ. I see the balances; how evenly they are poised! I see them trembling; a decision is to be arrived at one way or the other. This scale for God-shall this go down? Is there weight enough? Satan clings to the chains of that evil scale, he seeks to drag it down, he casts in new temptations. Which will win? With all my heart would I throw earnest entreaties into the scale of right that salvation may win the day. But which shall it be? Which shall it be? Perhaps the turn it takes to-night will be the turn it takes for eternity. God grant that it may be for God, for truth, for Christ, for heaven; and not for the world, for sin, for self, and for eternal perdition. O Holy Spirit, work mightily to decide men aright.

The pleading of my text-and with this I close-is rendered all the more powerful, because it is full of pleasing expectancy. Imagine that you had to try to make up a quarrel, and the offending person were to say to you, "Well, suppose I agree to end this dispute, will the other party be satisfied?" Upon the answer to that question your hope of success would very greatly depend. It has sometimes been my lot to have some such work as that to do, and I have not felt quite sure that I should succeed till I had crossed that bridge. The aggrieved individual has been in a very

high temper, and I could not altogether wonder, for he had been shamefully treated. "Well," I have said, to the offender, "I will try my best, you know, and it will greatly strengthen me if I can say that you bitterly feel that you were in the wrong, and desire to offer an ample apology." My client has said, "I should not mind going a good way, in apologising, but it can only be on the condition that I shall be kindly met. If I am to be repulsed-well, I shall not say anything until I have some idea of the temper and spirit of my opponent." When I have been able to say "The person whom you have offended is grieved for you as much as for himself; he is quite willing to receive you at any time, and will give you every token of forgiveness; he hardly wants you to make any confession at all, he is so ready to forgive you, and nothing will give him greater pleasure than to have your friendship": why then the other party has said, "What, does he say so? Does he speak kindly of me after what I did? Did he really say that he would be glad to see me at his house? Did he speak of me as still being his friend? Then be so good as to tell him that I am very sorry, and I will be round to say it myself directly." Now, my God, my gracious God, bids me say that he is a God ready to pardon. You have not to go and propitiate him, and make him tender, and plead with him in prayer till you melt his heart. No: he waiteth to be gracious to you. He hath come to-night, by his poor feeble servant, to entreat you to accept his love and grace. Let my broken accents reach the ears of your hearts. Repent of sin, believe in Jesus Christ, and look to him for mercy. May God help you to do so, and to do it now. Do not let returning unto the Lord be left to be talked of when you get outside: return ere you rise from your seat. I dread that vain companion who waits for you at the door I am afraid of that idle chat on the road home. Do not even allow the exhortation of the text to wait to be thought of when you get home, for perhaps it may then be forgotten: but now, upon that seat, or standing where you are, may God help you to respond to the gracious invitation, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal. The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

God bless you, dear friends. May his richest blessing rest upon every one of you. Other voices will be heard here for a few weeks, but none will speak more lovingly than mine, all broken, cracked, hoarse, and unmusical though it be. May those brethren who speak to you have more

strength than I have, and more grace. If they shall be the means of bringing some to Jesus whom I have never reached I shall be glad indeed. I want you all, members of the church, to be very, very diligent in helping in the February meetings by your efforts and your prayers. My dear brothers Clarke and Smith are well fitted for their work. You ought to have this Tabernacle crowded every night of the week: that is what I want to hear of. Each one of you must get to work to get the outside people into the house that they may hear and live. The evangelists will be here for the best part of the month; and if you all work hard and earnestly to gather the crowds together when those two brethren speak and sing, I do not doubt that a blessing will rest upon them like that which came upon our brethren Moody and Sankey in years gone by. Pray for me, I beseech of you, and having done so, prove the sincerity of your prayers by helping on the Lord's work; this will be as medicine to your sick pastor's soul and body. I rely upon you, each one, to see these services made a success, God the Holy Spirit helping you.

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The Redeemer's Prayer

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundations of the world. - John 17:24

When the High Priest of old entered into the most holy place, he kindled the incense in his censer, and waving it before him, he perfumed the air with its sweet fragrance, and veiled the mercy seat with the denseness of its smoke. Thus was it written concerning him, "He shall take a censer full

of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring *it* within the veil: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* upon the testimony, that he die not." Even so our Lord Jesus Christ, when he would once for all enter within the veil with his own blood to make an atonement for sin, did first offer strong crying and prayers. In this 17th chapter of John, we have, as it were, the smoking of the Saviour's pontifical center. He prayed for the people for whom he was about to die, and ere he sprinkled them with his blood, he did sanctify them with his supplications. This prayer therefore stands pre-eminent in Holy Writ as *the* Lord's Prayer - the special and peculiar prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ; and "if," as an old divine hath it, "it be lawful to prefer one Scripture above another, we may say, though all be gold, yet this is a pearl in the gold; though all be like the heavens, this is as the sun and stars." Or if one part of Scripture be more dear to the believer than any other, it must be this which contains his Master's last prayer before he entered through the rent veil of his own crucified body. How sweet it is to see that not himself, but his people, constituted the staple of his prayer! He did pray for himself - he said, "Father, glorify thou me!" but while he had one prayer for himself, he had many for his people. Continually did he pray for them - "father, sanctify them!" "Father, keep them!" "Father, make them one!" And then he concluded his supplication with, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Melancthon well said there was never a more excellent, more holy, more fruitful, and more affectionate voice ever heard in heaven or in earth, than this prayer.

We shall first notice *the style of the prayer*; secondly, *the persons interested in it*; and thirdly, *the great petitions offered* - the last head constituting the main part of our discourse.

I. First, notice THE STYLE OF THE PRAYER - it is singular: it is, "Father, *I will*". Now, I cannot but conceive that there is something more in the expression, "I will" than a mere wish. It seems to one, that when Jesus said "I will," although perhaps it might not be proper to say that he made a demand, yet we may say that he pleaded with authority, asking for that which he knew to be his own, and uttering an "I will" as potent as any *fiat*

that ever sprang from the lips of the Almighty "Father, I will." It is an unusual thing to find Jesus Christ saying to God, "I will" You know that before the mountains were brought forth, it was said of Christ, "in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do *thy will*, O God." and we find whilst he was on earth, that he never mentioned his own will, that he expressly declared, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." It is true you do hear him when addressing men, saying "I will," for he saith, "I will, be thou clean;" but in his prayers to his Father he prayed with all humility;

"With sighs and groans he offered up,
His humble suit below."

"*I will*," therefore, seems to be an exception to the rule; but we must remember that Christ was now in an exceptional condition. He had never been before where he was now. He was now come to the end of his work; he could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and therefore, looking forward to the time when the sacrifice would be complete and he should ascend on high, he sees that his work is done, and takes his own will back again and saith, "Father, I will."

Now, mark, that such a prayer as this would be totally unbecoming in our lips. We are never to say, "Father, *I will*." Our prayer is to be, "Not my will, but thine be done." We are to mention our *wishes*, but our *wills* are to subside into the will of God. We are to feel that whilst it is ours to desire, it is God's to will. But how pleasant, I repeat, it is to find the Saviour pleading with such authority as this, for this puts the stamp of certainty upon his prayer. Whatsoever he has asked for in that chapter he shall have beyond a doubt. At other times, when he pleaded as a Mediator, in his humility he was eminently successful in his intercessions; how much more shall his prayer prevail now that he takes to himself his great power, and with authority cries, "Father, I will." I love that opening to the prayer, it is a blessed guarantee of its fulfillment, rendering it so sure that we may now look upon Christ's prayer as a promise which shall be assuredly fulfilled.

II. Thus much concerning the style of the prayer; and now we NOTICE

THE PERSONS FOR WHOM HE PRAYED, "Father, I will that *they also, whom thou hast given me*, be with me where I am." This was not an universal prayer. It was a prayer including within it a certain class and portion of mankind, who are designated as "those whom the Father had given him." Now we are taught to believe that God the Father did, from before the foundation of the world, give unto his Son Jesus Christ a number whom no man can number, who were to be the reward of his death, the purchase of the travail of his soul; who were to be infallibly brought unto everlasting glory by the merits of his passion, and the power of his resurrection. These are the people here referred to. Sometimes in Scripture they are called the elect, because when the Father gave them to Christ he chose them out from among men. At other times they are called the beloved, because God's love was set upon them of old. They are called Israel; for like Israel of old, they are a chosen people, a royal generation. They are called God's inheritance, for they are especially dear to God's heart; and as a man careth for his inheritance and his portion, so the Lord careth especially for them.

Let me not be misunderstood. The people whom Christ here prays for, are those whom God the Father out of his own free love and sovereign good pleasure ordained unto eternal life, and who, in order that his design might be accomplished, were given into the hands of Christ the Mediator, by him to be redeemed, sanctified, and perfected, and by him to be glorified everlastingly. These people, and none others, are the object of our Saviour's prayer. It is not for me to defend the doctrine; it is Scriptural, that is my only defense. It is not for me to vindicate God from any profane charge of partiality or injustice. If there be any wicked enough to impute this to him, let them settle the matter with their Maker. Let the thing formed, if it have arrogance enough, say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" I am not God's apologist, he needs no defender. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Hath he not, like the potter, power over the clay, to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" Instead of disputing, let us enquire who are these people? Do we belong to them? Oh! let each heart now put the solemn query, "Am I included in that happy throng whom God the Father gave to Christ?" Beloved, I cannot tell you by the mere hearing of your names; but if I know your character, I can tell you decisively - or rather, you will

need no telling, for the Holy Spirit will bear witness in your hearts that you are amongst the number. Answer this question - Have you given yourselves to Christ? Have you been brought, by the constraining power of his own free love, to make a voluntary surrender of yourself to him? Have you said, "O Lord other lords have had dominion over me; but now I reject them, and I give myself up to thee.

'Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;'

and as I have no other refuge, so I have no other Lord. Little am I worth, but such as I am, I give all I have and all I am to thee. It is true, I was never worth thy purchasing, but since thou hast bought me, thou shalt have me. Lord, I make a full surrender of myself to thee." Well, soul, if thou hast done this, if thou hast given thyself to Christ, it is but the result of that ancient grant made by Jehovah to his son long ere the worlds were made. And, once again, canst thou feel to-day that thou art Christ's? If thou canst not remember the time when he sought thee and brought thee to himself, yet canst thou say with the spouse "I am my beloved's?" Can you now from your inmost soul say, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! If so, trouble not your minds about election, there is nothing troublesome in election to you. He that believes is elected, he who is given to Christ now, was given to Christ from before the foundation of the world. You need not dispute divine decrees, but sit down and draw honey out of this rock, and wine out of this flinty rock. Oh, it is a hard, hard doctrine to a man who has no interest in it, but when a man has once a title to it, then it is like the rock in the wilderness, it streams with refreshing water whereat myriads may drink and never thirst again. Well does the Church of England say of that doctrine, "is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons." And though it be like the Tarpeian rock, whence many a malefactor has been dashed to pieces in presumption, yet it is like Pisgah, from whose lofty summit the spires of heaven may be seen in the distance. Again, I say, be not cast down, neither let your hearts be disconsolate. If you be given to Christ now, you are among the happy number for whom he intercedes above, and you shall be gathered amongst the glorious throng, to be with him where he is, and to behold

his glory.

III. I very briefly pass over these two points, because I desire to dwell upon the third, which is, THE PETITIONS WHICH THE Saviour OFFERS.

Christ prayed, if I understand his prayer, for three things - things which constitute Heaven's greatest joy, Heaven's sweetest employment, and Heaven's highest privilege.

1. The first great thing he prayed for, is that which is *heaven's greatest joy* - "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." If you notice, every word in the sentence is necessary to its fullness. He does not say - "I pray that those, whom thou hast given me, may be where I am;" but, "*with me* where I am." And he does not only pray that they might be *with him*, but that they might be with him in the same place *where he is*. And mark! he did not say he wished his people to be in heaven, but with him in heaven, because that makes heaven heaven. It is the very pith and marrow of heaven to be with Christ. Heaven without Christ would be but an empty place it would lose its happiness, it would be a harp without strings; and where would be the music? - a sea without water, a very pool of Tantalus. He prayed then that we might be with Christ - that is our companionship, with him where he is - that is our position. It seems as if he would tell us, that heaven is both a condition and a state - in the company of Christ, and in the place where Christ is.

I might, if I expose, enlarge very much on these points, but I just throw out the raw material of a few thoughts, that will furnish you with topics of meditation in the afternoon. Let us now pause and think how sweet this prayer is, by contrasting it with our attainments on earth. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Ah! brothers and sisters, we know a little of what it is to be with Christ. There are some happy moments, sweet pauses between the din of the continued battles of this wearied life there are some soft times, like couches of rest, wherein we do repose. There are hour when our Master comes to us, and makes us, or ever we are aware, like the chariots of Amminadib. It is true, we have not been caught up to the third heaven, like Paul, to hear words

which it is unlawful for us to utter; but we have sometimes thought that the third heavens have come down to us. Sometimes I have said within myself, "Well, if this be not heaven, it is next door to it" and we have thought that we were dwelling in the suburbs of the celestial city. You were in that land which Bunyan calls the land Beulah. You were so near to heaven, that the angels did flit across the stream and bring you sweet bunches of myrrh, and bundles of frankincense, which grow in the beds of spices on the hills, and you pressed these to your heart and said with the spouse, "A bundle of myrrh, is my well beloved unto me. he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," for I am ravished with his love and filled with his delights He hath made himself near to me, he hath unveiled his countenance and manifested all his love. But, beloved, while this gives us a foretaste of heaven, we may nevertheless use our state on earth as a complete contrast to the state of the glorified above. For here, when we see our Master, it is but at a distance. We are sometimes we think in his company, but still we cannot help feeling that there is a great gulf fixed between us, even when we come the nearest to him. We talk, you know, about laying our head upon his bosom, and sitting at his feet; but alas! we find it after all to be very metaphorical, compared with the reality which we shall enjoy above. We have seen his face, we trust we have sometimes looked into his heart, and tasted that he is gracious, but still long nights of darkness lay between us. We have cried again and again with the bride, "Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." We were with him but still he was in an upper-room of the house, and we below; we were with him but still we felt that we were absent from him, even when we were the nearest to him.

Again, even the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are! Christ comes and goes very much like an angel; his visits are few and far between with the most of us, and oh! so short - alas, too short for bliss. One moment our eyes see him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see him, our beloved withdraws himself from us; like a roe or a young hart he leaps over the mountain of division; he is gone back to the land of spices, and feeds no

more among the lilies.

"If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within"

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not see him at a distance, but face to face. There is a sermon in those words, "face to face." And then we shall not see him for a little time, but

"Millions of years our wondering eyes,
Shall o'er our Saviour's beauties rove;
And myriad ages we'll adore,
The wonders of his love."

Oh, if it is sweet to see him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face for aye, and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe! Blest days! when shall ye come, when our companionship with Christ shall be close and uninterrupted?

And let us remark, again, that when we get a glimpse of Christ, many step in to interfere. We have our hours of contemplation, when we do draw near to Jesus, but alas! how the world steps in and interrupts even our most quiet moments - the shop, the field, the child, the wife, the head, perhaps the very heart, all these are interlopers between ourselves and Jesus. Christ loves quiet; he will not talk to our souls in the busy market place, but he says, "Come, my love, into the vineyard, get thee away into the villages, there will I show thee my love." But when we go to the villages, behold the Philistine is there, the Canaanite has invaded the land. When we would be free from all thought except thought of Jesus, the wandering band of Bedouin thoughts come upon us, and they take away our treasures, and spoil our tents. We are like Abraham with his sacrifice; we lay out the pieces ready for the burning, but foul birds come to feast on the sacrifice which we desire to keep for our God and for him alone. We have to do as Abraham did; "When the birds came down upon

the sacrifice, Abraham drove them away." But in heaven there shall be no interruption, no weeping eyes shall make us for a moment pause in our vision, no earthly joys, no sensual delights, shall create a discord in our melody; there shall we have no fields to till, no garment to spin, no wearied limb, no dark distress, no burning thirst, no pangs of hunger, no weepings of bereavement; we shall have nought to do or think upon, but for ever to gaze upon that Sun of Righteousness, with eyes that cannot be blinded, and with a heart that can never be weary; to lie in those arms for ever; throughout a whole eternity to be pressed to his bosom, to feel the beatings of his ever faithful heart; to drink his love; to be satisfied for ever with his favor, and full with the goodness of the Lord! Oh! if we have only to die to get to such delights as these, - death is gain, it is swallowed up in victory.

Nor must we turn away from the sweet thought, that we are to be with Christ where he is, until we have remembered, that though we often draw near to Jesus on earth, yet the most we ever have of him, is but a sip of the well. We sometimes come to the wells of Elim and the seventy palm trees, but when sitting beneath the palm trees, we feel that it is just like an oasis; to-morrow we shall have to be treading the burning sands, with the scorching sky above us. One day we sit down and we drink from the sweet soft spring, to-morrow we know that we have to be standing with parched lips over Marah's fount, and crying, "Alas, alas! it is bitter; I cannot drink thereof" But oh, in heaven, we shall do what holy Rutherford says, we shall put the well head to our lips and drink right on from that well that never can be drained, we shall drink to our souls utmost full. Ay, as much of Jesus as the finite can hold of infinity shall the believer receive. We shall not then see him for the twinkling of an eye and then lose him, but we shall see him ever. We shall not eat of manna that shall be like a small round thing, a coriander seed, but the manna whereof we feed shall be mountains, the broad hills of food, there we shall have rivers of delight, and oceans of ecstatic joy. Oh, it is very hard for us to tell, with all that we can guess of heaven, how large, how deep, how high, how broad it is. When Israel ate of that one fair branch which came from Esheol, they guessed what the clusters of Canaan must be; and when they tasted the honey they guessed the sweetness. But I warrant no man in all that host, had any idea of how full that land was of fertility and

sweetness; how the very brooks ran with honey, and the very rocks did teem with fatness. Nor can any of us who have lived the nearest to our Master, form more than the faintest guess of what it is to be with Jesus where he is.

Now all that is wanted to help my feeble description of being with Jesus, is this - if you have faith in Christ, just think over this fact, that in a few more months you will know more about it than the wisest mortal ere can tell. A few more rolling suns, and you and I shall be in heaven. Go on, O Time! with thy swiftest pinions fly! A few more years, and I shall see his face. O canst thou say, my hearer, "I shall see his face?" Come, thou gray-headed one, nearing the goal of life, canst thou with confidence say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth?" If thou canst say that, it will fill thy soul with joy. I can never think of it without being moved to tears. To think that this head shall wear a crown; that these poor fingers shall strike the harp-strings of everlasting song; that this poor lip, which now faintly tells the wonders of redeeming grace, shall join with cherubim and seraphim, and rival them in melody. Is it not too good to be true? Does it not seem sometimes as if the very greatness of the thought overwhelmed our faith? But true it is, and though too great for us to receive it, it is not too great for God to give. We *shall* be with him where he is. Yes, John; thou laidst thy head upon thy Saviour's bosom once, and I have oftentimes envied thee; but I shall have thy place by-and-bye. Yes, Mary; it was thy sweet delight to sit at thy Master's feet, while Martha was cumbered with her much serving. I too, am too much cumbered with this world; but I shall leave my Martha's cares in the tomb and sit to hear thy Master's voice. Yes, O spouse, thou didst ask to be kissed with the kisses of his lips, and what thou askedst for poor humanity shall yet see. And the poorest, meanest, and most illiterate of you, who have trusted in Jesus, shall yet put your lip to the lip of your Saviour, not as Judas did, but with a true "Hail, Master!" you shall kiss him. And then, wrapped in the beams of his love, as a dim star is eclipsed in the sunlight, so shall you sink into the sweet forgetfulness of ecstasy, which is the best description we can give of the joys of the redeemed. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." That is heaven's sweetest joy, - to be with Christ.

2. And now the next prayer is, "that they may behold my glory which thou

hast given me." This is *heaven's sweetest employment*. I doubt not there are many joys in heaven which will amplify the grand joy with which are have just started; I feel confident that the meeting of departed friends, the society of apostles, prophets priests, and martyrs, will amplify the joy of the redeemed. But still the sun that will give them the greatest light to their joy, will be the fact that they are with Jesus Christ and behold his face. And now there may be other employments in heaven, but that mentioned in the text is the chief one, "That they may behold my glory." O for the tongue of angel-O for the lip of Cherubim! for one moment to depict the mighty scenes which the Christian shall behold when he seeth the glory of his Master, Jesus Christ! Let us pass as in a panorama before your eyes the great scenes of glory which you shall behold after death. The moment the soul departs from this body, it will behold the glory of Christ. The glory of his person will be the first thing that will arrest our attention. There will he sit in the midst of the throne, and our eyes will first be caught with the glory of his appearance. Perhaps we shall be struck with astonishment. Is this the visage that was more marred than that of any man? Are these the hands that once rude iron tore? Is that the head that once was crowned with thorns. Oh, how shall our admiration rise, and rise, and rise to the very highest pitch, when we shall see him who was -

"The weary man, and full of woes
The humble man before his foes,"

now King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. What! are those fire-darting eyes the very eyes that once wept over Jerusalem? Are those feet shod with sandals of light; the feet that once were torn by the flinty acres of the Holy Land? Is that the man, who scarred and bruised was carried to his tomb? Yes, 'tis he. And that shall absorb our thoughts - the godhead and the manhood of Christ; the wondrous feet that he is God over all blessed for ever, and yet man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. And when for an instant we have noted this, I doubt not the next glory we shall see will be the glory of his *enthronement*. Oh, how will the Christian stop at the foot of his Master's throne and look upward, and if there could be tears in heaven, tears of rich delight will roll down his cheeks when he looks and sees the man enthroned. "Oh," saith he "I often used to sing on earth

Crown him! crown him! crown him! King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!" And now I see him, up those hills of glorious light, my soul doth not dare to climb. There, there he sits! Dark with unsufferable light his skirts appear. Millions of angels bow themselves around him. The redeemed before his throne prostrate themselves with rapture. Ah! we shall not deliberate many moments but taking our crowns in our hands we shall help to swell that solemn pomp, and casting our crowns at his feet, we shall join the everlasting song, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Can you imagine the magnificence of the Saviour? Can you conceive how thrones and princes, principalities and powers, all wait at his beck and command? Ye cannot tell how well the tiara of the universe doth fit his brow, or how the regal purple of all worlds doth gird his shoulders; but certain it is, from the highest heaven to the deepest hell, he is Lord of Lords - from the furthest east to the remotest west, he is master of all. The songs of all creatures find a focus in him. He is the grand reservoir of praise. All the rivers run into the sea, and all the hallelujahs come to him, for he is Lord of all. Oh, this is heaven - it is all the heaven I wish, to see my Master exalted; for, this has often braced my loins when I have been weary, and often steeled my courage when I have been faint "The Lord also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth."

And then the believer will have to wait a little while, and then he shall see more glorious things yet. After a few years, he will see the glories of the latter day. We are told in prophecy, that this world is to become the dominion of Christ. At present, idolatry, and bloodshed, and cruelty, and lusts, do reign. But the hour is coming; when this Augean stable shall be cleansed once and for ever, when these huge shambles of Aceldama shall yet become the temple of the living God. We believe that in these times, Christ with solemn pomp will descend from heaven to reign upon this earth. We cannot read our Bibles and believe them literally, without believing that there are bright days coming, when Christ shall sit upon the throne of his father David, when he shall hold his court on earth, and reign amongst his ancients gloriously. But oh, if it be so, you and I shall see it, if we belong to the happy number, who have put their trust in

Christ. These eyes shall see that pompous appearance, when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. "Mine eyes shall see him, and not another's." I could almost weep to think, that I have lost the opportunity of seeing Christ on earth as crucified. I do think the twelve apostles were very highly favored, but when we shall see our Saviour here, and shall be like our head, we shall think that all deficiencies are made up in the eternal weight of glory. When from the center to the poles the harmony of this world shall all be given to his praise, these ears shall hear it, and when all nations shall join the shout, this tongue shall join the shout also. Happy men and happy women who have such a hope, so to behold the Saviour's glory.

And then, after that a little pause. A thousand years shall run their golden cycle, and then shall come the judgment Christ, with sound of trumpet, in pomp terrific, shall descend from heaven - Angels shall form his body-guard. surrounding him on either hand. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The whole sky shall be clad with wonders. Prodigies, and miracles shall be as rife and as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees. The earth shall totter at the tramp of the Omnipotent; the pillars of the heavens shall stagger like drunken men, beneath the weight of the eternal splendour - heaven shall display itself in the sky, while on earth all men shall be assembled. The sea shall give up its dead; the graves shall yield their tenants from the cemetery, and the graveyard, and the battle-field, men shall start in their thousands; and every eye shall see him, and they who have crucified him. And while the unbelieving world shall weep and wail because of him, seeking to hide themselves from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, believers shall come forward, and, with songs and choral symphonies, shall meet their Lord Then shall they be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and after he hath said, "Come, ye blessed" they shall sit upon his throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; they shall take their seats as assessors upon that awful judgment bench. and when at the last he shall say, "Depart, ye cursed," and his left hand shall open the door of thunder, and let loose the flames of fire, they shall cry, Amen; and when the earth shall vanish, and men shall sink into their appointed doom, they gladly seeing the triumph of their Master, shall shout again, again, again the shout of victory - "Hallelujah, for the Lord God hath triumphed over all."

And to complete the scene, when the Saviour shall ascend on high for the last time, his victories all completed, and death himself being slain, he, like a mighty conqueror about to ride through heaven's bright streets, shall drag at his chariot wheel hell and death. You and I, attendants at his side, shall shout the victor to his throne, and while the angels clap their bright wings and cry, "the Mediator's work is done," you and I

"Louder than them all shall sing
While heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of sov'reign grace."

We shall behold his glory. Picture whatever splendor and magnificence you please if you do but conceive it rightly, you shall behold it.

You see people in this world running through the streets a king or a queen ride through them. How they do climb to their house-tops to see some warrior return from battle. Ah! what a trifle! What is it to see a piece of flesh and blood though it be crowned with gold. But oh! what is it to see the Son of God with heaven's highest honors to attend him, entering within the pearly gates, while the vast universe resounds with "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

3. I must close by noticing the last point, which is this. In our Saviour's prayer *heaven's greatest privilege* is also included. Mark, we are not only to be with Christ and to behold his glory, but we are to be like Christ and to be glorified with him. Is he bright? So shall you be. Is he enthroned? So shall you be. Does he wear a crown? So shall you. Is he a priest? So shall you be a priest and a king to offer acceptable sacrifices for ever. Mark, that in all Christ has, a believer has a share. This seems to me to be the sum total, and the crowning of it all - to reign with Christ, to ride in his triumphal chariot, and have a portion of his joy; to be honored with him, to be accepted in him, to be glorified with him. This is heaven, this is heaven indeed.

And now, how many of you are there here who have any hope that this shall be your lot? Well said Chrysostom, "The pains of hell are not the

greatest part of hell; the loss of heaven is the weightiest woe of hell;" to lose the sight of Christ, the company of Christ, to lose the beholding of his glories, this must be the greatest part of the damnation of the lost.

Oh, you that have not this bright hope, how is it that you can live? You are going through a dark world, to a darker eternity. I beseech you stop and pause. Consider for a moment whether it is worth while to lose heaven for this poor earth. What! pawn eternal glories for the pitiful pence of a few moments of the world's enjoyments. No, stop I beseech you; weigh the bargain ere you accept it. What shall it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul, and lose such a heaven as this?

But as for you who have a hope, I beseech you hold it fast, live on it, rejoice in it -

"A hope so much divine,
May trials well endure,
May purge your soul from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."

Live near your Master now, so shall your evidences be bright; and when you come to cross the flood, you shall see him face to face, and what that is only they can tell who enjoy it every hour.

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Redemption Through Blood, The Gracious Forgiveness Of Sins

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace. - Ephesians 1:7

Read the chapter, and carefully note how the apostle goes to the back of everything, and commences with those primeval blessings which were ours before time began. He dwells on the divine love of old, and the predestination which came out of it; and all that blessed purpose of making us holy and without blame before him in love, which was comprehended in the covenant of grace. It does us good to get back to these antiquities—to these eternal things. You shake off something of the dust of time, as you no longer walk adown its restless ages; but traverse the glorious eternity, where centuries seem no more than fallen leaves by the way. Thousands of years are less than a drop of a bucket compared with the lifetime of the Almighty. How sublime a thing to climb, in contemplation, to the everlasting God and the eternal council-chamber, and to see the heart of love beating towards the chosen people before all time, and the infinite mind of God devising and purposing their good! This is an exceeding great refreshment, and the wonder is that so few believers dare to ascend this sublime hill of the Lord, there to commune with him that was, and is, and is to come.

After the apostle had briefly touched upon that subject, he then began to speak of present blessings - matters of actual experience; and he commenced by saying, "In whom we have redemption." The grace of the eternal past is a matter of faith; but here is something which is within our grasp and enjoyment. The other we believe; but this we actually and literally receive. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

And here let me say what a charming thing it is to deal with experimental divinity; not with theories, but with matters of fact, great facts which are dear to you, because they have been wrought in you, and you have not been merely a delighted spectator of them, but you have been the subject and object of them. "In whom we have redemption." Whether others have it or not, we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." We do not hope for it, but we have it. We do not merely think so, but we know that we have it. We are redeemed; we are free from bondage; we are forgiven, and are no longer under condemnation.

At this time, as God shall help me, I shall dwell upon the forgiveness of sins. We have not time to plunge into the deeps of the eternal purpose, nor even to dive into the full doctrine of redemption; but, as the swallow with his wing touches the brook, and then is up and away, so must it be with my thought at this time—a mere touch of the river of the water of life will be a blessing to myself; and as I cast a little spray over you, I hope it will refresh you also. May the Holy Spirit help our meditation!

I. The first observation, taken distinctly from the text, is this—**THAT THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS A GRAND BLESSING.** The apostle has mentioned it, if you notice, amongst the great things of God—his electing love, his adoption of us by Jesus Christ, his acceptance of us in the Beloved. Side by side with these colossal mercies he puts this one, that we have "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is a blessing of no mean stature, for it marches with the giants of election and adoption. Let it stand prominently out before us at this time.

What is this "forgiveness of sins"? Too often, in popular talk, it is supposed that the chief and main thought of the forgiven sinner is that he has escaped from hell. Salvation means much more than this; and what it further means is too much kept in the background, but yet I will begin with rescue from punishment; for if sin be pardoned, the penalty is extinguished. It would not be possible for God to forgive, and yet to punish. That would be a forgiveness quite unworthy of God. It would, indeed, be no forgiveness at all. We are certain that the everlasting punishment of sin declared in Scripture, will never happen to the man who is forgiven. When transgression is removed the soul stands clear at the bar of God, and there can be no further penalty. "I absolve thee," says the great Judge; and that carries with it weight, so that a man that is forgiven is cleared of the punishment which he must otherwise have borne. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Yet divine favor restored is a still brighter result of forgiveness to many. Speaking from my own experience, while I was under conviction of sin I

had less apprehension of the punishment of sin than I had of sin itself. I do not know that I very frequently trembled at the thought of hell: I did so whenever it came before my mind; but when I was in the hand of the Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of bondage convincing me of sin, my great trouble was that God was angry with me—properly and rightly so. I mourned that I had offended my Maker, that I had grieved the living God, that I had sinned against his righteous will, and that I could not rejoice in his favor, nor sun myself in his smile. I felt that it was right on the part of the holy God to be displeased with me. I believe that the great joy of forgiveness, to the believer, is that God has taken away his anger from him. That sweet hymn, which we often sing, is a paraphrase of a passage in Isaiah -

"I will praise thee every day,
Now thine anger's turned away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice."

"Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Forgiveness means this among men. A person has grieved and wronged me. I feel hurt in my mind about it. When I forgive him, I no longer feel grieved or angry with him: I think of him as aforetime, and we are on good terms. If my forgiveness is genuine—and in God's case it is emphatically so—then there is no resentment left. The offense is as though it had never been committed. I say to the person who did me wrong, "I take a sponge, and I wipe it all off the slate: give me your hand, let us stand as we stood before." The pardon of sin by God is after such a fashion. He blots out the sin as the Oriental erases with his pencil the record made upon his waxen tablet, so that no trace of it remains. He smiles where else he must have frowned; he gives complacent love where else there must have been indignation and wrath. Do you not think that this is the sweetest way of looking at the forgiveness of sin? If you are at this time under legal work, feeling the tortures of a guilty conscience, you will appreciate such a pardon very highly. In the case of the poor penitent prodigal, it was the kiss of his father's lip, it was his restoration to his father's heart, it was the cheering words of his father's love, that constituted to him the sweetest fragrance of the rose of forgiveness. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ has come, that we poor, guilty ones may be restored to the favor of God, and walk consciously in the light of his countenance,

because sin is removed.

This pardon of sin, being of this full and sweet character, involving both the reversal of the penalty of sin, and the ending of the distance that intervened between us and God, brings with it the removal of much distress and sorrow from the heart! I do not think that there can be any grief outside of hell that is more terrible to bear than the wounds of conscience. We read that "David's heart smote him"; and, believe me, the heart can smite as with an iron mace, and smite where the bruise is felt intensely. Give me into the power of a roaring lion, but never let me come under the power of an awakened, guilty conscience. Ay, shut me up in a dark dungeon, among all manner of loathsome creatures—snakes and reptiles of all kinds—but, oh, give me not over to my own thoughts when I am consciously guilty before God! This, surely, is the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. I do not speak now what I have merely heard of; though, if you will read Mr. Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," you will find a striking account of it there; but I speak of what I have felt in my own soul. No pains of body can rival, for a moment, the agonized feeling of the heart, when the hot irons of conviction burn their way through the soul. When God sets up the conscience, and makes it a target for his arrows, they drink up the life blood of our spirit, till we cry out, and wonder how such anguish can come to a creature so insignificant. Our soul seems too small a cup to contain such an ocean of misery—too narrow a field for so cruel a battle. It is not the Lord that is the author of the misery; but he is giving us up for a while, that we may be filled with our own ways, and learn the bitterness of our own sin. When the Lord comes to us with a forgiving word, these sorrows are gone, like the mists of the morning when the sun arises. We grieve still to think that we have sinned; but that gnawing remorse, that vulture eating up the liver, is smitten with death, and the man breathes hopefully again. Though the penitence remains, the torment is removed from me, when God has forgiven me.

Let me say here, that full forgiveness of sin, consciously enjoyed, will not only lift an enormous weight from off the soul, but it will breathe into the heart a great joy. When you know that sin is forgiven, you cannot be sad as before. The thought of perfect pardon, if it does but fill the spirit, will

thrust out gloom, and remove apathy. It will make the lame man leap as a hart: he may still be lame, but he will leap as if he were not. And the tongue of the dumb, even though untrained to speech, shall be made to sing concerning free grace and dying love. When the thoughts are concentrated upon the enjoyment of complete forgiveness, full reception into the divine favor, and the blotting out of sin, then is the heart lifted into the suburbs of heaven. My dear hearers, do you know what I am talking about Some of you do, blessed be the name of the Lord; but I am afraid that some of you do not; and you never can know the sweetness of mercy until you first have tasted the bitterness of sin. You will never know how grace can heal until you have felt how sin can wound. There is no clothing you till you are stripped; there is no making you alive till you are killed; there is no filling you till you are empty. The Lord filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away. God himself will never comfort you till you are driven to self-despair; and if you have already come to that, it is a great privilege to me to be allowed to tell you that the fact of forgiveness of sin is not only a doctrine of the creed, but it is a promise of God's Word. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins:" this is no mere formula, but a realized fact with me. Removal of the penalty, removal of God's offense against us, the clearing away of all the turbid waters within the heart, and the creation of joy and peace through perfect reconciliation to God—this is a summary account of the forgiveness of sin. It is a blessing vast and rich.

II. And now, secondly, **THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS BOUND UP WITH REDEMPTION BY BLOOD.** Take the text, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Redemption and forgiveness are so put together, as to look as if they were the same thing. Assuredly they are so interlaced and intertwined that there is no having the one without the other. Do you ask—"How is it that there should always need to be redemption by blood, in order to the forgiveness of sin?" I call your attention to the expression, "Redemption through his blood." Observe, it is not redemption through his power, it is through his blood. It is not redemption through his love, it is through his blood. This is insisted upon emphatically, since in order to the forgiveness of sins it is redemption through his blood, as you have it over and over again in Scripture. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." But they say—

they say—that substitution is not just. One said, the other day, that to lay sin upon Christ, and to treat him as guilty, and let him die for the unjust, was not just. Yet the objector went on to say that God forgave men freely without any atonement at all. Of this wise critic I would ask—Is that just? Is it just to pass by breaches of the law without a penalty? Why any law at all? and why should men care whether they keep it or break it? It was stated by this critic that God, out of his boundless love, treated the guilty man as if he were innocent. I would ask—if that be right, where is the wrong of God's treating us as innocent because of the righteousness of Christ? I venture to affirm that pardon is needless, if not impossible, upon the theory that the man, though guilty, is treated as if he were not guilty. If all are treated alike, whether guilty or not guilty, why should any one desire pardon? It were easy to answer cavillers, but they really are not worth the answering. It is to me always sufficient if I find a truth taught in Scripture: I ask no more. If I do not understand it, I am not particularly anxious to understand it: if it be in the Scriptures, I believe it. I like those grand, rocky truths of the Bible which I cannot break with the hammer of my understanding, for on these I lay the foundations of my soul's confidence. Redemption by blood is here linked with forgiveness of sins, and in many other Scriptures we find it plainly stated. It is so. Let that stand for a sufficient answer to all objectors.

And it is so, if we come to think of it, because this reflects great honor upon God. They say, "Let God simply forgive the sin, and have done with it." But where, then, were his justice? "Shall not the Judge of the earth do right?" He threatened sin with punishment. If he does not execute his threatening, what then? Can we be sure that he will fulfill his promise? If he break his word one way might he not break it another? If all the Lord should not execute the penalty which he has threatened to sin, would it not look as if he made a mistake in threatening a penalty at all? Would it not seem as if he had been too severe at the first, and then had to catch himself up, and revise his own judgment afterwards? And shall that be? Might it not be supposed that, after all, God made much ado about nothing, and that he was really jesting with men when he threatened them with fearful punishment on account of sin? Shall God say, "Yea," and "Nay"? Shall he speak and unspeak? This is according to the folly of man. Sometimes it may even be wisdom in a fallible man to reverse his

word, and retract his declaration; but with God this cannot be. It is needful for the vindication of his own justice, his wisdom, and his holiness, that he shall not forego one of his threatenings, any more than one of his promises; and, since it is just that sin should be punished, and that, though the sinner should in wondrous mercy be permitted to go free, it is wise and just that Another should step in—God's own Self should step in—and bear for the sinner what is due to the justice of the Most High. The substitution of our Lord in our room and stead is the central doctrine of the gospel, and it greatly glorifies the name of God.

Besides that, beloved, that sin should not be pardoned without an atonement, is for the welfare of the universe. This world is but a speck compared with the universe of God. We cannot even imaging the multitudes of beings over which the great Lawgiver has rule; and if it could be whispered anywhere in that universe that, on this planet, God tampered with law, set aside justice, or did anything, in fact, to save his own chosen, so that he threw his own threatening behind his back, and disregarded his own solemn ordinance; why, this report would strike at the foundations of the eternal throng! Is God unjust in any cave? Then how can he judge the universe? What creatures, then, would fear God, when they knew that he could play fast and loose with justice? It were a calamity even greater than hell itself that sin should go unpunished. The very reins of moral order would be snatched from the hand of the great Charioteer, and I know not what of mischief would happen. Evil would then have mounted to the high throne of God, and would have become supreme throughout his domains. It is for the welfare of the universe, throughout the ages, that in the forgiveness of sins there should be redemption by blood. Let lovers of anarchy cavil at it; but let good men accept the sacrifice of the Son of God with joy as the great establishment of law and justice.

Moreover, this also is arranged for our comfort and as assurance of heart. I protest before you all that, if I had been anywhere assured, when I was under conviction of sin, that God could forgive me outright without any atonement, it would have yielded no sort of satisfaction to me; for my conscience was sitting in judgment upon myself, and I felt that if I were on the throne of God, I must condemn myself to hell. Even if I could have

derived a temporary comfort from the notion of forgiveness apart from atonement, the question would afterwards have come up—how is this just? If God does not punish me, he ought to do so; how can he do otherwise? He must be just, or he is not God. It must be that such sin as mine should bring punishment upon itself. Never, until I understood the great truth of the substitutionary death of Christ, could my conscience get a moment's peace. If an atonement was not necessary for God, it certainly was necessary for me; and it seems to me necessary to every conscience that is fairly instructed as to the absolute certainty that sin involves deserved sorrow, and that every transgression and every iniquity must have its just recompense of reward. It was necessary for the perpetual peace of every enlightened conscience that the glorious atonement should have been provided.

Besides that, the Lord meant to save us in a safe way for the promotion of our future reverence for the law. Now, if sin had been blotted out so readily, and nothing more said of it, what effect would that have had on us in the future? I think that everyone who has felt the burden of sin, and has stood at the foot of the cross, and heard the cries of the great Sacrifice, and read God's wrath against sin written in crimson lines upon the blessed and perfect person of the innocent Savior—every such person feels that sin is an awful thing. You cannot trifle with transgression after a vision of Gethesmane. You cannot laugh at it, and talk about the littleness of its demerit, if you have once stood on Golgotha, and heard the cry, "Eli, Eli, lame sabachthani?" The death of the Son of God upon the cross is the grandest of all moral lessons, because it is a lesson that affects the very soul of the man, and changes his whole idea of sin. The cross straightens him from the desperate twist which sin gave him at the first. The cure of the first Adam's fall is the second Adam's death—the second Adam's grace, which comes to us through his great sacrifice. We love sin till we see that it killed our best Friend, and then we loathe it evermore. I say, again, that if the great Father did forgive you, and said, "There is nothing in it; go your way, it is all over;" you would have lacked that grandest source of sanctified life which now you find in the wounds of him who has made sin detestable to you, and has made perfect obedience, even unto death, the subject of your soul's admiration. Now you long to be unto the great Father, in your measure, what your great Redeemer was to him

when he magnified the law, and made it honorable. This is no mean benefit.

O beloved friends, I do bless the Lord, at this time, for the forgiveness of sins through redemption by blood. There is something worth preaching in this truth. You can live on it; you can die on it. I am constantly—almost every week—at the death-beds of our members here: we are so large a church that one or two every week are going home. When we begin to talk about the precious blood of Jesus—the blood of the everlasting covenant, you should see the brightness of dying eyes! I mark the quiet of the departing spirit; and as my dear friends grip my hand, their testimony is unvaryingly, "Jesus is the Rock of our confidence, and all is well."

O Lord Jesus, hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes! O blessed Redeemer, what will a man do in death who has not thy death to be the death of his sin? How can a man live who has never seen thee lay down thy life in his stead, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God"? Whatever others may say, let us repeat our text, with solemn assurance, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

III. But now, thirdly—and the text is very clear upon this, as upon the other two points—THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN IS STILL A MATTER OF GRACE, AND OF RICH GRACE. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

I admit that the forgiveness of sins, on God's part, is a matter of justice, now that the redemption by blood has been completed. The man believes; the man confesses his sin; and it is written, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The sacrifice is so great that it justly puts away the sin, and it is righteously forgiven. But observe this: the act of God in forgiving is not one atom the less gracious, because, in his infinite wisdom, he has so contrived that it is unquestionably just. If any make this assertion, they will be called upon to prove it; and they can prove it.

Pardon is the more gracious to us that it does not come to us in an

unrighteous way. We see God's great prudence and wisdom in planning the method by which he may "be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth." Those thoughts and plans on God's part are all tokens of great love to us. Beloved, it is only by grace that we are justified; yet that this grace is exercised in a way of justice causes the grace to be not less, but even manifestly more gracious.

The death of Christ, the redemption by blood, instead of veiling the grace of God, only manifests it. Put the thing before your own minds. Suppose that somebody has offended you, and you say, "Think no more of it; it is all forgiven." Very well: that is kind of you, and commendable. It shows the graciousness of your character. But suppose, on the other hand, you were in office as a judge, and felt compelled to say, "I am willing to forgive you, but your offense has resulted in such and such great mischiefs, and all these things have to be cleared away. I will tell you what I will do. I will clear them away myself. I will bear the result of your sin in order that my pardon may be seen to be most sure and full. I will pay the debt in which you have involved yourself. I will go to the prison to which you ought to go, as the consequence of what you have done. I will suffer the effect of your wrongdoing instead of condemning you to suffer it." Well, now, the forgiveness that dost you so much would manifest your graciousness much more than that which costs you nothing beyond a kind will, and a tender heart. Oh, if it be so, that God, the Divine Ruler, the Judge of all the earth, says to guilty man, "I will pardon you, but it is imperative that my law be carried out; and this cannot be done except by the death of my dear Son, who is one with me, who is very God of very God, who himself wills to stand in your stead, and vindicate my justice, by suffering the penalty due to you"—then I say that the grace of God is a thousand-fold more clearly shown than by the free forgiveness which "modern thought" pleads for! Pardon which has cost God more than it cost him to make all worlds—which has cost him more than to manage all the empires of his providence—which has cost him his Only-begotten Son, and has cost that Only-begotten Son a life of sorrow and a death of unutterable and immeasurable anguish—I say that this pardon is pre-eminently gracious. Love is more displayed in this, infinitely more, than by a mere word and a wave of the hand, which would dismiss the sinner, without any attempt at an atoning sacrifice.

Besides, beloved, be this always remembered, that it is in the application of redemption, and the personal pardon of any sinner, through the blood of Jesus, that the grace of God is best seen by that sinner. To each one pardon through the Lord Jesus comes, not only according to grace, but "according to the riches of his grace." I can understand that God should forgive you, all of you. I could hear it with full belief, and it would not astonish me. But that he should pardon me—that I should have the forgiveness of sins, and redemption by blood—that does astonish me. And I believe that any person, under a sense of sin, sees more of the grace of God in his own salvation than in the salvation of anybody else. He may be quite conscious that he has never been a thief, or a drunkard, or a murderer; and yet, when he comes to look at it, he may see reasons why the pardon of sin in his case should be more remarkable than even in the case of a drunkard, or a thief, or a murderer. There may be elements in his own case which may make him seem to have sinned even more grievously than open transgressors, because he transgressed against greater light, with less temptation thereto, and with a direr presumption of rebellion against the Most High. That Jesus died, is unutterable grace; but that he loved me, and gave himself for me, this is overwhelming grace, and makes the heir of heaven say with emphasis, Blessed be God that, in Jesus, I have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace!

Do you not feel at this time, you that have been pardoned, that nothing but the riches of God's grace could ever have pardoned you? No scanty grace could have provided an atonement equal to your iniquities. Poverty of grace would have left you ruined by your debt of sin. Riches of grace were wanted, and riches of grace were forthcoming in redemption by blood, and in the full, perfect, irreversible forgiveness which God gave you in the day when you believed on Jesus Christ your Savior. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would help you to sing of the grace of God to-day and every day!

IV. Thus far have I brought you, then, in three remarks. Kindly follow me in the fourth one, upon which I will not be long.

Fourthly, THIS FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS ENJOYED BY US NOW. "In whom we have"—we have—"redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." I remember the astonishment with which I sat in a ministers' meeting, and heard one, who professed to be a preacher of the gospel, assert that he did not think that any one of us could be sure that he was forgiven. I ventured at once to say that I was sure; and I was pleased, but by no means surprised, to find that others dared to say the same. I hope I have hundreds before me who enjoy the same assurance.

Brethren, if there be no consciousness of the forgiveness of sins possible, how can there be any rest for the conscience? Yet Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What rest is possible to the condemned? Can you go to bed to-night with your sins unforgiven? Some of you may have the foolhardiness to do that, but I would not dare to do it. See where you are. Within a moment you may be dead. Within that moment you will be in hell, past all hope. In a single instant you may be eternally lost: can you endure the thought? Our breath has but to stop, or the heart to cease beating, and instantly life is over. How can you be at peace, while sin is unforgiven? Unless sin had made men mad, they would never rest till they were cleared from their sins. There cannot be any true rest without a consciousness of forgiveness. Yet that rest is promised; therefore the present enjoyment of an assurance of forgiveness must be possible.

And, next, where could there ever be that great love in the hearts of men and women which we read of in Scripture? She that washed the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head—would she have done so if she had not known that she was forgiven? She loved much, because she had had much forgiven her. And the stimulus, the zeal, the fervor that spurs on a man in his service and suffering for the Lord Jesus, must arise out of the consciousness that the Lord has done great things for him, and the conclusion that therefore he must do great things for his Lord. Surely, you have robbed Christianity of its highest moral force, if you have denied the possibility of knowing that you are pardoned.

Moreover, where is there any testimony of the power of grace? We that come and preach to you may be liars unto you if we ourselves have never tasted and handled pardoning grace. We do, at any rate, but retail to you a second-hand gospel, which we have never tested and proved for ourselves. If I did not know, in my very soul, that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin, how could I dare to face you with the gospel message? I have not impudence enough to tell you of what might be, or might not be, about which I am uncertain myself. God grant me grace to break stones, or sweep chimneys, sooner than come and tell you a cunningly-devised fable, or a tale about which I have no assured certainty, derived from personal knowledge! Could I say to you, "I dare say there is bread, but I myself am hungry, I have never eaten a mouthful of the provision which I offer you"? Think of my saying to one perishing of thirst, "There is living water flowing from the rock; but personally I am thirsty." You might say to me at once, "Then go home to your house, and next time you appear, be sure of the truth of what you tell us. If you do not believe it, how should we believe it?" Beloved, there are thousands, there are tens of thousands, on earth still who know that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins; and there are myriads in heaven who passed to their felicity confident that they had been forgiven, and they sang on earth the same song that they sing in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They know it, they have no doubt about it. Many of us know it here, and rejoice therein at this moment.

Dear friend, what would you give to have this assurance? Thou mayest have it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Whoso believeth in him is justified from all sin. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Oh, that God's grace may lead you to cast away all other confidences, and to lay your guilty spirit down at Jesus' feet! Then shall you go your way rejoicing that you also, with us, can say, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

V. Fifthly—and this is only a brief head; but it is a point that must not be left out—THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS BINDS US TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Let us read the text again. "In whom we have

redemption through his blood." We have nothing apart from Jesus. Every blessing of the covenant binds us to Christ. Covenant gifts are so many golden chains to fasten the soul of the believer to his Lord. Our wealth of mercy is all in Christ. There is nothing good outside of Christ. When are we pardoned, brethren? When have we forgiveness? Why, when we are in him, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." O son of Adam, living without Jesus, hear and take warning! So long as thou art out of Christ, thou must bear thine own burden till it crush thee to the dust; but as soon as thou hast touched the hem of his garment, there is a link of connection; and if thou canst rise from that to holding him by the feet, the union is closer; and if thou canst from that become like Simeon, who took him up in his arms, then mayest thou cry, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." When thou hast Christ to the full, thou hast grace to the full. It is as you are in Christ—in connection and communion with Christ—that you receive the pardon of sin, for all the pardon is in him. Do you see that?

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." The forgiveness is not so much in his office, and in his work, as in himself. When thou gettest Christ, thou hast redemption; for he is redemption. When thou gettest Christ, thou hast forgiveness of sins; for he is the propitiation for our sins. He has put the sin away by the sacrifice of himself. Get Christ, and thou hast the proof, the evidence, the sum, the substance of perfect pardon. If thou acceptest the Beloved, thou art "accepted in the Beloved." When thou art in him, then thou art forgiven; but thy forgiveness is alone in him. In him thou hast redemption: out of him thou art in bondage.

Beloved, every day, as we go afresh to God for a sense of pardon, let us know that we can never get it except as we come still viewing Jesus. I notice that some believers, when they get rather dull and cold, begin the work of self-examination. This may appear very proper, but it is dreary work. I do not believe, dear friends, if you are very poor, that you will ever get rich by looking through all your empty cupboards. If it is very cold, and you have no coals in the cellar, you will not become warm by going into the cellar, and seeing that there is nothing below but an empty coal-hole. No, no; if our graces are to be revived, we must begin with a

renewed consciousness of pardon through the precious blood; and the only way to get that sense of pardon is to go to the cross again, even as we went at the first. I sometimes wonder that you do not get tired of my preaching, because I do nothing but hammer away on this one nail. I have driven it in up to the head, and I have gone round to the other side to clinch it; but still I keep at it. With me it is, year after year, "None but Jesus! None but Jesus!" Oh, you great saints, if you have outgrown the need of a sinner's trust in the Lord Jesus, you have outgrown your sins, but you have also outgrown your grace, and your saintship has ruined you! He that has the mind of Christ within him must still come to his Lord, just as he came at the first.

I frankly confess that still I cry to my Lord Jesus -

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

Still, to this day, I have no redemption in myself, but only in Jesus. I am not an inch forwarder as to the ground of my trust. Is it not so with you? Do we not still say of Jesus—"In whom we have redemption through his blood"? To this day we find no reason for forgiveness in ourselves. The precious blood is still our one plea. Lost and condemned are we apart from the one offering of our Great High Priest. But cleansed and justified are we in him.

"Oh! how sweet to view the flowing
Of his sin-atonement blood,
With divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."

You know the story of the poor bricklayer, who fell from a scaffold, and when they took him up, he was so much injured that they fetched a minister to him, who, stooping over him, said, "My dear man, you have a very short time to live. I entreat you to make your peace with God." To the surprise of the minister, the man opened his eyes, and said, "Make my peace with God, sir? It was made for me nearly nineteen hundred years ago, upon the cross of Calvary, by him that loved me, and gave himself for

me." Oh, the joy which this creates in the heart! Yes, it is in Jesus that the peace is made—effectually made, made for me, made for you, made for all believers. In Jesus is perfect redemption. In Jesus pardon is provided, proclaimed, presented, and sealed upon the conscience. Go and live on Jesus; live with Jesus; live in Jesus; never go away from Jesus; and may he be dearer to you every day of your lives! Blessed be his adorable name! Amen, and Amen.

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